

SECRET

AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH

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WAR DIARY OF THE GERMAN

AFRICA CORPS, JUNE 1942

TRANSLATED BY

AIR MINISTRY, A. H. B. 6

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1 June 1942

30: The Army order arrives for 1 June. (Army Operations Officer).

A Corps order (by telephone) based on an Army order is issued for 1 June, that the Africa Corps is to repulse an expected enemy tank attack from north and north-east, and hold itself in readiness to move up within 2 hours on a special order, for a counter-attack in a general direction north-east and north. The supply route through the minefield at Capuzzo road (Trigh Capuzzo) is to be guarded by the 21st Panzer Division. After the mopping up of the pocket to the north of Got el Ualeb, salvage units armed with artillery were sent in and salvaged some of our tanks in the forward area west of the Bir Hacheim road (Trigh Bir Hacheim). Reconnaissance Unit 33 is directly subordinated to Panzer Army Africa.

About 0300 hours, the enemy supported by tanks attempts an attack from a north-westerly direction, against a strongpoint of the Brescia Division. A counter-thrust carried through in the early morning hours by units of Panzer Regiment 8 drives the enemy back into his original position. A Mark II is shot up.

0: The 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions move up to the attack against the encircled enemy.

In the face of tough resistance the attack, supported at 0800 hours by an effective dive-bomber attack, is making good headway. At the same time as units of the Africa Corps, the 90th Light Division has moved up to the attack from the south. About 1000 hours the Trieste Division moves up from the south-west. The encircled enemy is putting up a stubborn defence. Part of the time, individual positions have to be taken dugout by dugout in close combat. Because of too extensive fire from the Trieste Division the left wing of the Africa Corps (I/Panzer Regiment 8) remains at a standstill and does not renew the advance until the firing range has been shortened.

10: 21st Panzer Division reports link-up with the north wing of the Trieste Division, while at the same time the 15th Panzer Division has made contact with the 90th Light Division. The pocket is overrun and a considerable number of prisoners are being fetched out. It is worth remarking on the excellent camouflage of the enemy positions, which were supported by tanks dug in.

The Panzer Army Africa is continually informed about the position.

GOC expresses his admiration to the 15th Panzer Division for the carrying through of the attack.

In the battle for the enemy positions the battle echelon of the Africa Corps distinguished itself in prudence and pluck under the leadership of Major Block.

5: Order to 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions to leave behind weak defences on the field of combat, go back into the positions ordered and stand in readiness according to Corps order of 1 June.

During the whole of the day, enemy air activity was on a remarkably small scale.

According to reports picked up, the British at first intended a relief attack from the north against the Africa Corps, but this was not carried out.

5: General Nehring is instructed by telephone by the C. in C. about intentions for 2 June, and the engagement of the 90th Light Division and the Trieste Division to wipe out the enemy group near Bir Hacheim. A feint attack towards the east of the Africa Corps must be carried out to turn the enemy aside, so that tanks may be salvaged. The combat group is to stay prepared for a thrust towards the north.

Because General Gause is wounded the Chief of General Staff of the Africa Corps immediately takes over the duties of Chief of the General Staff of Panzer Army Africa.

/2130:

2130: Order by telephone to General Nehring to carry out feint movements with 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions. Advance towards the north by the 21st Panzer Division on special order.

Major Lindemann, O.C. Flak Battalion 617, takes over the command of the battle echelon of the Africa Corps.

2 June 1942

The night passes quietly without anything of note to report.

0330: The Army order arrives. Panzer Army Africa intends to attack Bir Hacheim with 90th Light Division and the Trieste Division. The Africa Corps is to make a feint attack towards the east against enemy armoured units and continue the recovery of the booty. Reconnaissance Company 580 is subordinated to it. In the afternoon hours of 2 June the Africa Corps is to hold itself in readiness to move up in a direction Eluet et Tamar and Hill 209. The feint attack by the Africa Corps towards the east and the advance on Eluet et Tamar are to be supported by Army Artillery.

0415: Order by telephone from Operations Officer of Africa Corps to O.C. Reconnaissance Corps 580: Reconnaissance Corps 580, subordinated to the Africa Corps, is to carry out armed reconnaissance towards the east and north-east past Bir Harmat, as a feint attack on the enemy to deflect him from the thrust directed against Bir Hacheim. Their old task (guard duty at the mine barrier) remains. In the reconnaissance advance the number and condition of our unserviceable tanks will be established at the same time.

A battle group from each of the 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions (tanks, guns, artillery) is engaged for the advance towards the east as a decoy group. Moving up at 0700 hours.

About 0800: The decoy group of the 15th Panzer Division has thrust forward about 4 km. towards the east and is there coming face to face with heavy gunfire from the enemy. From the south-east the enemy, in unknown strength, is reported on the move forward. In a further thrust, a large number of tanks of the decoy group move eastwards. Heavy gunfire prevents any further progress of the attack.

The battle group also of the 21st Panzer Division is coming up against strong gunfire.

0830: Colonel Bayerlein (Deputy Chief of the General Staff of Panzer Army Africa) explains the intention of the Panzer Army Africa that the Africa Corps should move up at 1500 hours to Eluet et Tamar with the 21st Panzer Division in order to block the Via Balbia, front towards the west. An advance group for this undertaking (21st Panzer Division) is to be prepared, so that moving up may be started as from 1500 hours. A later move of the 15th Panzer Division for the lengthening of the south wing of the 21st Panzer Division is dependent on the situation near Bir Hacheim and with XX (Italian) Motorised Corps.

0845: The order to be ready for marching is given to the 21st Panzer Division, and at 0915 hours the Operations Officers of the 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions are informed of the intention.

In the course of the forenoon a sandstorm comes on, which towards noon continues increasing in strength. Visibility is now scarcely 30-50 metres, at times even less.

/1130:

30: On account of the weather O.C. 21st Panzer Division makes the proposal not to move up for the planned undertaking at Eluet et Tamar until about midnight, because in the sandstorm, marching had to be in very close formation, and there was danger of units lagging behind. Besides this there was the possibility that the division might be dispersed by a surprise artillery bombardment.

On the command of GOC these considerations are brought before the Chief of the General Staff of Panzer Army Africa by the Operations Officer of the Africa Corps. Decision of the C. in C. is received by radio.

15: Order by telephone to 21st Panzer Division to prepare for the undertaking in the direction Eluet et Tamar so that moving up can be started at 1500 hours. Before moving up however, a final order from GHQ. Africa Corps is to be received at 1445 hours.

30: The Operations Officer of the 15th Panzer Division announces that the division intends to transfer Panzer Regiment 8 into the present area of Panzer Regiment 5 during an advance by the 21st Panzer Division, in order to be able to advance from there at any time towards the north and east. Patrols are to maintain constantly in contact with the south wing of the 21st Panzer Division.

30: Order to 15th Panzer Division to take over in direct cooperation with 21st Panzer Division, the minefields, the cleared mine lanes and their defence until the evening.

40: The decision of the C. in C. with regard to the moving up of the 21st Panzer Division is not yet to hand. The division is still holding itself in readiness.

00: The 21st Panzer Division announces that it cannot be ready to march before 1800 hours, since as a result of the sandstorm which has become even more severe, withdrawal of the units engaged in the front and moving them into marching formation can be carried out only at a walking pace.

20: The command of Panzer Army Africa arrives by telephone: moving up not before 2000 hours. This order is issued to the 21st Panzer Division and for information to the 15th Panzer Division. 21st Panzer Division has to be ready to march at 2000 hours.

30: XX (Italian) Motorised Army Corps reports that tank movements are observed before the Ariete Division and an attack is expected. Recognised assembly positions are being bombarded by artillery.

At the same time the Operations Officer of the 15th Panzer Division reports that the decoy group of tanks have been attacked with artillery, and tanks are still observed in front of the neighbour on the right (Ariete Division). The decoy group must not allow itself to be tied up or outflanked.

50: The 21st Panzer Division reports that an enemy tank attack has been launched on the division preparing itself for the attack towards the north. Panzer Regiment 5 has moved up for the counter-attack. The enemy is withdrawing towards the north-east.

The sandstorm has somewhat abated in the meantime; visibility has improved to 100 yards.

00: GOC explains the situation to the Chief of the Army General Staff. He expresses his conviction that it would be pointless for the 21st Panzer Division to move up in complete darkness. Chief of the General Staff agrees that it is out of the question to move up before moonrise.

25: 21st Panzer Division reports a tank engagement in the north-east of the division, about 100 motor vehicles, among them Mark III Pilot tanks. By the counter-attack of Panzer Regiment 5 the enemy is repulsed towards the north, some enemy tanks are shot up, 5 guns destroyed. After the conclusion of the engagement the division places itself in preparation again for the thrust towards the north.

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The division is informed that the moving forward will not be ordered before moonrise.

1925: The order reaches the 21st Panzer Division that from 2 June it is to stand ready at moonlight, to press forward in a northerly direction on a special order and gain the Eluet et Tamar - Hill 209 area; to defend itself and prevent a breakthrough of the enemy in a west-east direction or vice versa, to block Via Baldia by gunfire or mines.

15th Panzer Division, while carrying on with its previous allocated tasks, is to defend the Corps flank still open towards north-east, north and north-west and maintain contact with 21st Panzer Division by patrols. The advance of the 15th Panzer Division towards the north for the lengthening of the south wing of the 21st Panzer Division is dependent on the development of the situation near Bir Hacheim and in front of XX (Italian) Motorised Army Corps.

The battle groups of the 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions sent forward towards the east to decoy the enemy are having to retire to their original positions until the evening, because of an enemy thrust.

Superior enemy groups are in position before the armed patrols of Reconnaissance Company 580.

Owing to the sandstorm only slight enemy flying activity in the early morning hours.

As a final report the 21st Panzer Division announces at 2100 hours that without any material losses to ourselves, 19 Mark III Pilot tanks have been shot up, 7 guns, 1 glider destroyed and 20 lorries, some captured and some destroyed. A number of prisoners were taken.

2240: The Army order is received by telephone that the planned advance of the 21st Panzer Division is not to be carried out until the afternoon of 4 June. The precise moment is left to the Africa Corps and is for Panzer Army Africa to announce.

Order by telephone to 21st Panzer Division based on the Army order at 2225 hours: position reached to be held, if necessary by active combat. In accordance with Army order, no moving up until a special order on the following afternoon. Till then, continuation of the attack forbidden.

The 15th Panzer Division is informed of this order.

GOC has expressed in writing his appreciation of the Battle Echelon of the Africa Corps for the success on 1 June; likewise of Flak Regiment 135 for the success achieved since the formation of the regiment.

There is submitted to Panzer Army Africa a report of successes and losses for the period 26-31 May, and a losses report for 31 May - 1 June.

So that supplies may be guaranteed, a forwarding station is set up with X Army Corps for the supply columns.

3 June 1942

Sporadic nuisance gunfire again in the night, otherwise however nothing of note to report.

According to a reconnaissance at dawn, the 21st Panzer Division reports that the success figures of yesterday's combat are increasing. There have been destroyed or captured:-

/26 tanks

26 tanks  
 2 gliders  
 2 armoured patrol cars  
 7 guns  
 14 motor vehicles  
 1 officer and 31 men were taken prisoner.

GOC again directs 21st Panzer Division that the battle is to be mobile and on no account must the panzer regiment allow itself to be cut off from the division.

0825: Reconnaissance Unit 580 reports that south of Bir Harmat to the east of the minefield are 300-400 stationary vehicles. Lorries with guns have been observed near entrenchments.

Details will be confirmed.

According to reports overheard, the enemy is going to attack with 2nd and 4th Armoured Brigades. The divisions are informed of this. No preparations for attack are as yet to be observed.

0905: Telephone discussion between Operations Officer of the Africa Corps and Operations Officer at Army HQ to settle the exact time for the moving up of the 21st Panzer Division towards the north. (See Army order for 2 June 2240 hours). It is ordered by the Army that the moving up of the 21st Panzer Division is not to be carried out until an Army order is received, as zero hour must depend on the general situation.

The area where the motor vehicles are to be found which were reported by Reconnaissance Unit 580 is to be dive-bombed. The raid is ordered.

1115: Colonel Bayerlein arrives at battle headquarters of the Africa Corps and informs the Operations Officer of the Africa Corps on the probable further conduct of the battle and the intentions of Panzer Army Africa. Colonel Bayerlein makes an enquiry to 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions by telephone as to whether the divisions can guarantee to be ready to march in an hour. Both divisions report that they can guarantee to be ready in one hour.

1400: The situation near Bir Hacheim has still not yet settled. The enemy is resisting obstinately. Extended minefields slow down the attack of our own troops. After an advance by the 21st Panzer Division towards the north probably nothing more is to be expected today.

1810: Chief of the Army General Staff informs the Operations Officer of the Africa Corps by telephone of the situation near Bir Hacheim. Operation North is not to go forward until Bir Hacheim has been encircled and destroyed without trace.

The C. in C. desires the extension of the area of the 15th Panzer Division in order to effect a dispersal of the motor vehicles.

1945: It is agreed upon in a telephone discussion between the Operations Officer of the Africa Corps and Operations Officer at Army HQ that the Africa Corps area is to extend towards the south to about the area Get el Ualeb.

The old duty (protection and defence) still remains. The mine lanes at the Capuzzo road and Mteifel es Seghier will also have to be protected by the Africa Corps, as the Italians have taken over the reconnaissance unit and after its withdrawal are no longer guarding the lanes.

2010: An Army order announces that units of the divisions are to be transferred further towards the south. Suggestions are to be made about this.

The divisions are given the option of removing their forward sections during the night, as an enemy nuisance night attack is to be expected and day positions are certainly observed by the enemy.

/2150:

2150: An order is issued based on the report to the C.in C. from GOC Africa Corps on the situation near Bir Hacheim (the C.in C. holds the view that it will be surrendered in June):-

- (1) 21st Panzer Division is to leave units in the areas now reached, to protect their whole area and defend it in the event of an enemy attack. Contact is to be maintained with the right wing of the Brescia Division. Advance against Eluet et Tamar probably not before the afternoon of 4 June.
- (2) 15th Panzer Division, while continuing to fulfil its task of protection and defence is to extend its area as far as the Got el Ualeb district. Readiness of both divisions to march is ordered 2 hours after receiving this order. Both divisions are to keep ready an assault group for quick engagement in counter-attack in the event of an enemy attack.

2200: Order to 21st Panzer Division through Africa Corps Operations Officer that Panzer Regiment 5 is to be transferred to the west wing of the division's area to close the gap in front of the Brescia Division. Departure at moonrise.

Enemy situation:

East to north of the Africa Corps area enemy patrols and small vehicle concentrations, driven back about 6 - 7 km. by our most advanced units. No enemy advances in the course of the day, intentions to attack cannot be observed. In front of the south wing of the Ariete Division eastwards of the mine barrier there are several hundred motor vehicles.

During the whole of the day heavy gunfire at intervals, some of it on the most advanced units of the 21st Panzer Division.

Slight enemy flying activity.

4 June 1942

Apart from the usual nuisance fire the night passes quietly and without anything of note to report.

On inquiry whether Reconnaissance Unit 580 is still subordinate to the Africa Corps, reply from Panzer Army Africa: not since 3 June at 2000 hours.

0420: The Chief of the General Staff of X (Italian) Army Corps, Colonel Duranti, arrives in the strongpoint for a conference with the Operations Officer of the Africa Corps. The strongpoints of X Army Corps on the Capuzzo road are to be evacuated because of the need to close the gap between X and XXI Army Corps. The Africa Corps has no duties there, as the defence of the mine lane has been taken over by the 15th Panzer Division. Colonel Duranti is informed about the situation with the Africa Corps. It is agreed that the Brescia Division will also maintain contact with the left wing to the 21st Panzer Division.

1120: Panzer Army Africa orders that the entrance to the supply depot south-east of Abiar Belafarit is to be protected by the Africa Corps. The order is passed on to the division at 1500 hours.

According to information from Panzer Army Africa, it is intended that on 5 June, the Africa Corps should undertake salvage operations in the area 5 km. round Bir el Harmat. In a telephone conference with the Operations Officer of Panzer Army Africa, the Operations Officer of the

/Africa

Africa Corps points out that according to an order from the C. in C., the mine lane lies a good distance away from the area of the Africa Corps.

All steps are to be taken by the 15th Panzer Division to protect the lane.

The divisions are informed of the salvage operations planned for 5 June; all preparations are to be made. 21st Panzer Division will probably be responsible; order follows.

1445: The order is given by telephone by the Operations Officer at Army HQ to the Operations Officer of the Africa Corps that:-

- (1) The Africa Corps has to protect with a defence group the mine lanes south-east of Abiar Belafarit,
- (2) 15th Panzer Division is to extend its area still further towards the south, to carry out reconnaissance of the enemy forward defences.

Operations Officer of the Africa Corps points out that an extension towards the south by the removal of the panzer regiment has already taken place. To take both forces out of the front is not possible.

Panzer Army Africa is in agreement. Previous extension will be enough, if a defence group is transferred to the mine lane, as planned.

1515: A corresponding order reaches 15th Panzer Division.

1625: Panzer Army Africa order: 15th Panzer Division is to make ready for the removal towards the south. GOC is to report to the battle headquarters of Panzer Army Africa.

The order is immediately issued to 15th Panzer Division.

1700: GOC returns from the battle headquarters of Panzer Army Africa.

1800: The commanders of both divisions are at a conference with GOC at the Corps battle headquarters. They are informed about the situation by GOC and receive an order by word of mouth corresponding to the Corps order in writing for 5 June.

The Koehnen Company, which in accordance with an Army order is directly subordinated to the Africa Corps, is already engaged near Belafarit. In accordance with an Army order the 15th Panzer Division is to reach the area between the El Abd road and the southern border of the previous area on the afternoon of 4 June, and to press forward by moonlight from here with a reinforced motorised infantry regiment at first towards the south-east and then towards the east through the minefield, and build a bridgehead and hold itself in readiness in the new area, so that it can thrust forward south-east and north-east out of the bridgehead, as soon as an order is received.

The 21st Panzer Division will take over the 15th Panzer Division's previous defence sector, as well as the protection of the mine lane at the Capuzzo road.

2100: A liaison officer of the Panzer Army Africa artillery reports and is informed on the situation by the Operations Officer of the Africa Corps. Engagement of the Panzer Army Africa artillery and support of the advance of the battle group of the 15th Panzer Division is being discussed.

On 5 June a liaison officer is to be sent to the 15th Panzer Division.

At 1930 hours the 15th Panzer Division arrived in the new area. 21st Panzer Division takes over sector of 15th Panzer Division.

/Encmy

Enemy picture: During a day a screen of patrol cars before the whole front, generally about 6 - 8 km. away, little gunfire, slight enemy flying activity.

5 June 1942

About 0100 hours very heavy gunfire is to be heard from a south-easterly direction. But it is not yet clear whether it is part of a night attack by the British with strong artillery preparation or only reinforced nuisance gunfire. However the fire increases in strength about 0200 hours. A question by telephone to the liaison officer of XX Corps establishes that the fire is still being trained on the further forward units of the Ariete Division. Intentions for attack cannot yet be established.

0155: The order to the Africa Corps comes by telephone from Chief of the General Staff at Army HQ: both divisions prepare to march immediately.

The order is at once passed to the Operations Officer of the divisions. 15th Panzer Division reports that it is ready to march. 21st Panzer Division is likewise already prepared for marching.

The gunfire still continues. At 0225 hours the Corps signals detachment, battle echelon and H.Q. staff of Africa Corps also receive the order to prepare for marching.

The enemy gunfire however gradually dies off, quietening right down to isolated nuisance fire about 0300. The liaison officer with XX (Italian) Army Corps reports that the enemy has been putting up barrage fire before the front of the Ariete. None of the intentions for the attack can be ascertained.

0345: The Operations Officer of the 15th Panzer Division reports that a motorised infantry company of the Baade Group has already moved east of the mine barrier into the bridgehead.

According to a telephone conference between the Operations Officer of the Africa Corps and the Operations Officer at Army HQ, the Africa Corps is to be ready to march at 0425 hours.

About 0500 hours heavy gunfire is directed on the area of the 21st Panzer Division.

The increasing noise of battle is also to be heard from an east-south-east direction.

0537: The Operations Officer of the 15th Panzer Division reports that an enemy tank attack is to be observed in front of the Ariete Division. Isolated Ariete tanks retiring. Enemy tanks in unknown strength reported by a patrol to be situated 6 - 8 km. in the north of the front of the Division.

Panzer Army Africa is informed on the situation.

0550: It was reported from the Corps battle headquarters of the 21st Panzer Division that the Ariete is retreating.

The Africa Corps is informed about the situation by Panzer Army Africa. The Ariete Division is expecting a strong enemy tank attack and has withdrawn its own tanks behind Bir et Tamar. There is still infantry to the east of Bir et Tamar.

At the same time the 21st Panzer Division announces that Panzer Regiment 5 is in combat in the north-west with 40 enemy tanks. To the north before

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the front at a distance of 10 km. there are 35 enemy tanks (Mark II). Near the right battalion of Motorised Infantry Regiment 104, infantry and tank attack on the Ariete Division observed. Units of the Ariete Division are in retreat.

0620: Koehnen Company receives the order to move up to attack in area 177 to the right of Panzer Regiment 5. At the same time 15th Panzer Division receives the order to hold the tanks ready for any attack to the north-east or north.

0630: The 21st Panzer Division reports that 20 enemy tanks advancing from a north-easterly direction have been brought to a halt by our own gunfire.

Panzer Army Africa is informed about the situation. Panzer Army Africa intends, in case the Ariete Division should retreat or the enemy break through near the Ariete, to subordinate the division to the Africa Corps. The situation is then to be cleared up by the Africa Corps.

About 0700 hours an enemy tank attack is in progress to the north of the division. Panzer Regiment 5 is making a counter-attack and up to now has shot up 15 tanks. Vehicle assembly points, probably infantry, are observed to the north. However the enemy vehicles are already within range of the machine gun fire of our own tanks. No clear survey can yet be made of the situation with the Ariete Division. The battle echelon of the Africa Corps is engaged to form a screen towards the south and south-east for the defence of the Corps battle headquarters. From the Corps battle headquarters towards the east may be seen motor vehicles on the move at the Djebel border. A patrol of the battle echelon which has been engaged on reconnaissance in the area, reports that these are enemy tanks. The enemy has broken through on the left wing of the Ariete Division and is going on towards the south.

Enemy nuisance fire is being trained on the Corps battle headquarters and is slowly increasing. For this reason the battle headquarters is transferred 1000 metres to the west.

0730: Already 22 enemy tanks have been shot up and enemy infantry beaten back by the 21st Panzer Division. Shortly afterwards the division announces that 40 enemy tanks from point 173 are en route from the south-west towards the Ariete Division.

0800 O.C. Panzer Regiment 8 reports to the Corps battle headquarters. Fresh order by word of mouth from GOC: keep prepared for the present; do not attack independently except in the case of extreme emergency if there should be too broad an enemy advance.

0815: The Operations Officer of Panzer Army Africa informs the Operations Officer of the Africa Corps about the situation. The 40 advancing enemy tanks are also already reported by the Ariete Division. Otherwise there are no new reports forthcoming from the Ariete Division. The division has the order to attack.

0830: The enemy is 500m. in front of the Ariete Division and is digging himself in with defences. Panzer Army Africa considers that the moment has arrived for the engagement of Panzer Regiment 8. According to a report on the position by the liaison officer of XX Army Corps the situation with the Ariete Division looks as if our own tanks are situated 2 km. to the south-west of Bir el Aslagh. The division intends to advance to the north via point 158 (2 km. east-south-east of Bir el Aslagh) and point 160. Near point 165 east of Bir et Tamar there is enemy infantry with anti-tank guns.

0850: Army artillery is directly subordinated to the Africa Corps.

0855: Operations Officer at Army HQ to Operations Officer of the Africa Corps: Got el Aslagh has been surrendered by Ariete Division. Africa Corps is to press forward via 165/158 in a northerly direction, to wipe out enemy infantry.

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On an enquiry to Panzer Army Africa by GOC it is decided that 15th Panzer Division is at the disposal of the Africa Corps for the battle. This order is also communicated to the 15th Panzer Division.

Army artillery is informed about the intended advance of Panzer Regiment 8.

0925: The panzer regiment is to move up at once and thrust forward past Bir et Tamar, so that it can then pivot to the south-east to engage the enemy tank attack in the flank. The left flank of the regiment is to be protected by I/Flak Battery 43. The regiment is instructed to cooperate with the Army artillery. Meanwhile tanks of the 21st Panzer Division are being supplied with ammunition.

Up to now 30 enemy tanks have been shot up, 7 officers and 100 men taken prisoner.

1045: Inquiry by radio to the C.in C. whether the bridgehead (Baade Group) may attack towards the north-east of the mine barrier.

1100: It appears that the situation near the 21st Panzer Division is that the enemy is situated in the north 10 km. before the front. In the east he can hardly be seen, in the north-east armoured their patrol cars about 8 km. before our own front. Light scattered gunfire on defences on the right wing of the division.

Inquiry from the division: Is Panzer Regiment 5 to attack towards the east after being armed? Tanks have still only half their complement of ammunition.

According to the division there is still one strongpoint of the Brescia Division in the mine lane to the north of Mteifel es Seghier on the eastern edge of the minefield.

The attack by Panzer Regiment 8 south-eastwards of Bir et Tamar is gaining ground.

1135: Order to 21st Panzer Division, Panzer Regiment 5 is to withdraw into its old area.

1140: An enemy bombing attack was made on Corps battle headquarters. Some casualties were caused and several vehicles destroyed.

1215: According to a report on the situation by the liaison officer with XX Army Corps, the forward line lies near 176 - to the north of 173. Near 165, to the south of Bir el Aslagh, there is the enemy. Bir el Harmat is under Italian gunfire.

1245: GOC goes to Panzer Army Africa battle headquarters and receives there from the C.in C. the order for the attack on enemy forces near and to the north of Bir el Harmat in the afternoon hours of 5 June.

The Africa Corps to attack in the direction of Bir el Harmat (first objective) with the 15th Panzer Division at 1700 hours from the bridgehead to the south of the El Abd road, and with tank forces from the area reached. After gaining this area it is to thrust with 15th Panzer Division on Bir Belafaa.

At 1700 hours the 21st Panzer Division is to attack Hahing es Sidra while at the same time maintaining the defence of the north flank of Panzer Army Africa along the Djebel border, and is to close the pocket from the north.

The attack by the Baade Group is accompanied on the right wing by forces which up till now have been Army reserves, under the personal command of the C.in C.

/Attacks

Attacks by the Luftwaffe are ordered from 1700 hours on the area round the crossing of the Capuzzo road and the Bir Hacheim road.

- 1320: After the return of GOC from the Corps battle headquarters corresponding warning orders are given to 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions.
- 1340: Commanders of 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions and commander of Army Regiment 221 arrive at the Corps battle headquarters and receive information on the situation, and verbal orders for attack.
- 1620: 21st Panzer Division reports that 20 enemy tanks are attacking from the north. On inquiry whether the division shall move up to the attack in these circumstances, GOC orders that the enemy tanks coming from the north are first to be attacked and beaten, then the division is to attack towards the north.

1700: 15th Panzer Division moves up to the attack.

1730: Captain Koehnen arrives at the Corps battle headquarters for instructions for his company and is attached by the Operations Officer of the Africa Corps to the 21st Panzer Division and Ariete Division.

1830: Situation in the Ariete Division area: to the south of Capuzzo near point 165, 18 enemy tanks are advancing towards the south-west. XX Army Corps requests that 21st Panzer Division with tanks establish contact with Ariete Division.

Operations Officer of the Africa Corps makes it clear that this is not possible for the time being, as 21st Panzer Division is in action with enemy tanks from the north. The enemy thrust must be checked by the Ariete alone.

Situation in the 15th Panzer Division area: Panzer Regiment 8 is advancing towards the east. Baade Battle Group has taken Bir el Harat.

Situation in the 21st Panzer Division area: to the north-west and north-east Panzer Regiment 5 is opposed by about 80 enemy tanks, which withdraw when we attack but straightway proceed to push back again when we retire. In these circumstances a push towards the east is not possible, as the enemy can thrust into our own open flank. The division asks for orders.

Panzer Army Africa is informed about the situation and directs that the Ariete Division must at all costs stand fast.

GOC, who had gone to the 15th Panzer Division at 1700 hours in order to observe the course of the battle, is informed about the situation by radio.

1930: Operations Officer of the Africa Corps discusses by telephone with the Operations Officer of the 21st Panzer Division whether it should advance towards the south-east or remain in the old position. The possibility of a thrust during the hours of darkness is debated. An advance towards the south-east is not possible in the present situation, since if Panzer Regiment 5 is removed from the left wing there will arise the danger of an enemy breakthrough.

In the telephone discussion between Operations Officer at Army HQ and Operations Officer of the Africa Corps the latter proposes to engage our own mobile battle groups with artillery for the defence of the north front against both the enemy groups, in order to hold the enemy at bay under fire, and then to employ the tanks for the task ordered by Panzer Army Africa.

At the same time the order from the GOC arrives: 21st Panzer Division to move up at least some units. Operations Officer at Army HQ is informed about this order.

1945: 21st Panzer Division receives by telephone from Operations Officer of the Africa Corps the order to move up at least some units at once towards the east.

/15th

15th Panzer Division receives the order from GOC that a strong forward thrust must be made in twilight. 21st Panzer Division is informed about this order and announces that the division will lead the advance ordered towards the south-east with a motorised infantry battalion reinforced by a light artillery battalion and a tank battalion.

The battle group of the 21st Panzer Division arrives at 2100 without tanks.

2055: Order to both divisions: dig in; night defence.

2225: On inquiry by Operations Officer of the Africa Corps to Operations Officer at Army HQ: no Army order to be expected. Task for Africa Corps remains the same, form up at moonlight.

A corresponding order is issued to both divisions.

Enemy situation: As at 1830 hours.

Results: There were destroyed by 21st Panzer Division 49 tanks, 2 armoured patrol cars, 24 motor vehicles, 1 anti-tank gun. 16 officers, 131 men were taken prisoner. Report on results from the 15th Panzer Division is not yet to hand.

The 21st Panzer Division has shot up 214 tanks since the beginning of the operations. Request is made for mention in the Wehrmacht report.

6 June 1942

About 0700 hours the Liaison Officer of XX Army Corps reports on the situation: During the night Bir el Harmet and point 173 were reoccupied by the British. Ariete Division has retreated. Operations Officer of the Africa Corps directs that both points must at all costs be retaken by the division.

In the course of the night Panzer Regiment 8 became involved in a mine barrier and did not free itself again until the hours of the morning. Also an enemy strongpoint which was situated at the north corner of the minefield, is taken.

According to information from Panzer Army Africa the order from the C. in C. comes through that the 15th Panzer Division is to be prepared to mop up the pocket and then thrust towards the east. According to a report from a reliable source the 22nd and 2nd British Armoured Brigades are going to attack from the east, and the 4th Armoured Brigade from the north.

0740: In the 21st Panzer Division area, Mueller Group is situated near point 166. Strong enemy groups to the south of it. Gunfire from south-east and north-east. Rather strong enemy tank groups in the north.

At the same time the 15th Panzer Division and Ariete Division report on the situation. As there is a gap between the right wing of the 21st Panzer Division and the left wing of the Ariete Division, there is danger that the enemy encircled at the Capuzzo road may break through towards the west and the Kochnen Company is therefore to be moved forward.

0800: The battle group under the personal command of the C. in C. has reached Belcfaa, according to a statement from Panzer Army Africa, and is pushing on further towards the north-east. At the same time the Ariete Division has reached its old bases again in the attack and is making contact to the north with the Mueller Group.

/0840:

- 0840: The Operations Officer at Army HQ reports that the Ariete Division is ordered to move up to Bir Aslagh. At the same time it appears that the time has come for the Mueller Group also to attack towards the east. Position of C.in C. is given as 300 left 1.
- 0930: The Mueller Group is advancing towards point 164. The attack by the Ariete Division is gaining ground. In front of the Mueller Group the enemy can be observed to be withdrawing. According to reliable reports the enemy intends to withdraw to Belefaa. The 15th Panzer Division is instructed to make contact with Kiehl Battle Group.
- 1000: The situation has so developed that in the pocket points 161 - 164 - 158 - the Bir Hacheim road - point 161 about 500 vehicles are encircled, among them tanks. The Mueller Group is instructed to push forward to the south. C.in C. 's group has moved up in the direction of Acroma.
- 1017: 21st Panzer Division receives the order to advance with Mueller Group to the crossroads (point 161).
- 1030: The Mueller Group is on the defensive against a tank attack from the north-east; the heavy artillery of the Mueller Group is out of action through the enemy gunfire. A further advance is at the moment not possible for the group. The pocket is therefore not at present closed towards the north.
- 1100: Order from GOC to 15th Panzer Division to thrust to the east past Bir Belefaa, Hill 174 and north-east from there to Acroma and gain the area Hill 174 - main crossroads at Acroma and defend the area east of the minefields. The Via Balbia is to be blocked at night. 21st Panzer Division is to hold the junction near the main crossroads and the pocket. (Owing to strong enemy activity this order is not carried through).
- The Baade Group of the 15th Panzer Division has advanced towards the north and about 1100 hours has gained contact near point 161 (crossroads) with the Mueller Group of the 21st Panzer Division.
- 1200: Army order by telephone through Operations Officer at Army HQ to Operations Officer of the Africa Corps. On the command of the C.in C. the Fuerguth Group, without 17 cm. gun batteries, is subordinated to the Africa Corps and is to be sent to the 15th Panzer Division. It is stressed that the pocket is to be cleared as soon as possible.
- The attack by the 90th Light Division near Bir Hacheim is making good progress. On inquiry the 21st Panzer Division reports that the Mueller Group is being attacked from the south and north and in consequence cannot at the moment press forward into the pocket.
- 1300: The 15th Panzer Division reports that the pocket is facing destruction. The Panzer Army Africa points out that no units are coming through from the pocket towards the south. For the protection of our own tanks, guns are to be installed.
- 1600: The 21st Panzer Division reports that II/Panzer Regiment 5 has been withdrawn and sent in on the right wing, as the battalion of Motorised Infantry Regiment 104 engaged there is very weak in defence and the panzer battalion can be usefully employed to clear the pocket. The enemy in the north has not pressed forward any farther.
- According to reports from reliable sources the American Mark III Pilot tanks have ammunition difficulties.
- 1620: Renewed instruction from Panzer Army Africa that the pocket is to be cleared as far as possible without bringing in tanks. The Ariete Division is

/instructed

instructed to hold itself ready for defence on both sides of the Capuzzo road at the crossroads. Near Bir Harmat a strengthened battalion strongpoint is to be established. This will not be done until the pocket near Bir el Aslagh has been mopped up. 15th Panzer Division remains for the time being in the area to the north of Bir Harmat.

1830: Report on the situation from 21st Panzer Division:

II/Panzer Regiment 5 at the Bir Hacheim road, facing north, enemy tanks in front.

I/Panzer Regiment 5 was sent in against the pocket and is to be withdrawn to point 151 and placed at the disposal of the division. The battalion had been engaged because Motorised Infantry Regiment 104 had too little anti-tank artillery at its disposal and there existed the danger of a breakthrough from the pocket towards the north-west.

2100: Situation report from XX Army Corps:

The Ariete Division has reached the crossroads at 1830 hours with the main part of the tanks and one Bersaglieri battalion. Main part of the artillery still en route there. On an enquiry to 21st Panzer Division it is explained that Panzer Regiment 8 and guns are situated at the crossroads, extending 2 km. towards the south, and are firing to the east and north-east. There was nothing to be seen of an alleged enemy breakthrough, nor is there an enemy tank attack to be observed.

The Ariete Division is situated near Bir el Aslagh and to the east of it.

2115: Telephone message from C.in C. to GOC, intentions and duties: Africa Corps to turn to the defensive; to close mine lanes in the minefield to the west of Bir el Harmat. Ariete Division is to attack early at dawn on 7 June along the Bir Hacheim road, towards Bir el Harmat (this was reported during the evening to be occupied by the enemy). 15th Panzer Division is to make an extensive attack eastwards when the situation is more settled, and push the enemy into the minefield. A thrust by the enemy is to be checked by counter-measures. Retreat columns are to be formed ready to fake a withdrawal at an enemy attack, in order to lure the enemy within range of our own armament. Army artillery is instructed to cooperate. Wolz Battle Group (reconnaissance battalion and flak) is not being engaged against Bir Hacheim, but is to go forward with Kiehl Battle Group to the furthest west wing. GHQ is to be transferred on 7 June into the area Got el Aslagh.

2145: Telephone discussion between GOC and O.C. 21st Panzer Division: Information on the situation from 15th Panzer Division and intentions with regard to Bir el Harmat. The new adversary in the east is the 4th Armoured Brigade, to the north then is free. Enemy thrust in the north-west weaker today than on the previous days. O.C. 21st Panzer Division points out that the sector of the division and especially the gap between the Mueller Battle Group (21st Panzer Division) and the bulk of the division is very broad.

Order to 21st Panzer Division: one panzer battalion is to be brought up to the area south of the crossroads by 0430 hours, and placed at the disposal of the 15th Panzer Division. Defence of the division front towards the north. Koehnen Company is to be subordinated. Contact with the Ariete Division is to be gained and maintained by Mueller Battle Group at the crossroads.

2215: Order to 15th Panzer Division as a result of the conference between the C.in C. and GOC.

2400: Army order for 7 June received.

/Note:

Note:

Report on results and evening report, as well as incoming and outgoing decisions for 6 June have been lost through enemy action.

7 June 1942

- 0500: The operational group at HQ is moving to the new Corps battle headquarters at Got el Aslagh. At the same time the GOC goes to the 15th Panzer Division battle headquarters 3 km. to the south-west of Knightsbridge crossroads. The division stands ready for an attack on Bir el Harmat. A more precise order as to whether an attack is to take place will not be given until during the course of the forenoon by the C.in C.
- 0730: Panzer Army Africa orders an engineer company to be detailed off at the mine lane 316 right 6. Africa Corps suggests that this company should be withdrawn from the 21st Panzer Division front, but this is refused since that front is already thinly enough held.
- 0915: On inquiry from Panzer Army Africa the taking over of a strongpoint in the mine lanes which was formerly occupied by X Army Corps must be refused on the same grounds. Africa Corps suggests that it would be better in that case to close the mine lane.

Situation in front of the 21st Panzer Division is similar to that on the previous days. Vehicle concentrations at present on the north front; about 30 enemy tanks observed.

- 1000: The C.in C. arrives at the battle headquarters of the 15th Panzer Division and informs GOC and O.C. 15th Panzer Division on the situation as a whole and further intentions: the fall of Bir Hacheim is expected on 8 June. 21st Panzer Division is engaged as before with the Africa Corps. 15th Panzer Division is not to attack Bir el Harmat, but attack in the afternoon of 7 June in order to gain the area around the crossroads and the steep ascent to the north of it. By means of this attack the way will be paved for the going into action of the Ariete Division, which is to relieve the 15th Panzer during the night. After the relief the 15th Panzer Division is to group itself in the Bir et Tamar - Bir el Aslagh - point 176 area in such a way that it can support the defence of the Ariete Division. Bir el Harmat is to be defended by a reinforced company of the 15th Panzer Division until the arrival of a battalion of the Ariete Division.
- 1030: O.C. Ariete Division arrives at the battle headquarters of the 15th Panzer Division. Attack and relief are discussed with him in detail.
- There is the usual nuisance gunfire on the area of the 15th Panzer Division. Enemy tanks are to be observed in the north-east as on the previous days.
- 1120: The 21st Panzer Division is informed about the intended operation by the 15th Panzer Division.
- 1400: The 15th Panzer Division and the Ariete move up to the attack. The gunfire is increasing; the attack itself is making good headway. The enemy is apparently withdrawing towards the south.
- 1505: 15th Panzer Division reports that the attack has gone forward 2 km.; out of three enemy batteries there remains only one in action.
- 1535: A report from the 21st Panzer Division also confirms that the attack of the 15th Panzer Division is making good headway. According to the view of the 21st Panzer Division the enemy is withdrawing towards the north-east.

/1630:

- 1630: The 15th Panzer Division has reached with the Ariete Division the area ordered.
- 1710: A tank attack is developing against the 15th Panzer Division. The wireless interception makes it known that the enemy intends to attack with 2nd Armoured Brigade from the north, the 22nd Armoured Brigade from the east and the 4th Armoured Brigade from the south-east. The attack is however carried forward only haltingly; the artillery support is very slight. GOC is making for the south wing of the 15th Panzer Division in order to be able to go into action immediately in case an encircling move is threatened there.
- 1735: It is reported to Panzer Army Africa that the crossroads have been passed in the face of stiff enemy opposition.
- 1830: The enemy begins to withdraw and to cease gunfire.
- 1840: It is reported to Panzer Army Africa that about 100 enemy tanks are attacking the 15th Panzer Division from the east. This report was based on a false and belated announcement (by telephone) from the 15th Panzer Division and is later withdrawn.
- 2000: GOC returns to the Corps battle headquarters.

With the 21st Panzer Division the situation has remained unchanged during the day. Before the front there is a screen of patrol vehicles; slight nuisance fire is being trained on the division's sector. The right wing has contact with the Ariete Division. I/Panzer Regiment 5, previously engaged on the left wing of the 15th Panzer Division, is directly subordinated as Corps reserve to the Africa Corps.

- 2040: An order from the GOC reaches the subordinated units that they are to ensure the carrying out of all orders in all circumstances and without any excuses.
- 2054: Operations Officer at Army HQ is informed on the situation by Operations Officer of the Africa Corps. It is pointed out that something must be done to defend the supply columns in the area to the west of the minefields. Convoy guard hitherto posted by the troops appears to be no longer sufficient, as surprise attacks on the supply columns by the reconnaissance units advancing from the south and also from the Gazala front are increasing. Panzer Army Africa intends to put an anti-tank battalion in the gap between XXI and X Army Corps.
- 2130: The C.in C. informs the GOC on the situation. The C.in C. is counting on the fall of Bir Hacheim on 8 June. Also it is intended: either an advance towards the north with objective point 174, in order then to pivot towards the west and come into the rear of the enemy - this advance is planned with 2 reconnaissance battalions, flak and units of the 90th Light Division - or else an advance through Gubi to El Adem may be carried out and so on till the evening of 8 June. The Africa Corps is afterwards to attack early on 9 June towards the north.
- 2300: Because of the heavy losses in men the Africa Corps requests Panzer Army Africa that troops of the first line reinforcement battalions which had been placed at the disposal of the Quartermaster General may be sent back to it.
- 2335: An instruction is issued to the divisions to defend the tanks as far as possible and to make an increased use of anti-tank units and artillery for the task.

/8 June 1942

8 June 1942

The night passes quietly. Relief of the 15th Panzer Division by the Ariete has been carried out.

Panzer Army Africa reports immediate plans for 8 June. The report contains for the Africa Corps nothing new on the information conveyed by telephone by the C. in C. the evening before.

- 0935: Call from Panzer Army Africa: the Ariete Division is not in the area ordered. It is to be reported whether it has successfully taken over from the 15th Panzer Division.
- 0940: Inquiry of the 15th Panzer Division proves: 15th Panzer Division has given over the positions according to plan. The crossroads itself is a point in a defence in depth; it is being probed and is now under anti-tank fire. The strongpoint of the Italians therefore lies 1 km, north-west of point 16. A British strongpoint lies east of the crossroads near 163 - 166 - the Capuzzo road. This strongpoint is strongly fortified.
- 1040: Nothing fresh to report from the divisions. Nuisance gunfire and screen of patrol cars before the 21st Panzer Division as on the previous days. The enemy is keeping quiet before the Ariete Division as well.
- 1115: The 15th Panzer Division reports that according to information from the Ariete Division, the enemy is evacuating a camp which is situated 10 km, north-east of Bir el Harmat.
- 1145: Bombing raid on GHQ; 2 seriously wounded, 1 with minor injuries, 1 vehicle destroyed.
- 1220: Operations Officer at Army HQ makes it known that the Italian strongpoint at the mine lane 4 km. to the north of the Capuzzo road has been evacuated by the Italians. The gap must be guarded by patrols of the 21st Panzer Division. The corresponding order is issued to the 21st Panzer Division.
- 1235: The subordination of the I/Flak Battery 43 to 15th Panzer Division is terminated. The battery has again moved up as Corps reserve to the battle echelon of Africa Corps.
- 1425: 15th Panzer Division announces that the two mine lanes to be prepared at the El Abd road will be ready by 1500 hours. The corresponding report is made by telephone to Panzer Army Africa.
- The enemy is continuing to be quiet. South-east of Harmat there was a vehicle concentration observed, which however has withdrawn towards the east. Nothing of note from the 21st Panzer Division.
- 1730: 15th Panzer Division reports that 9 km, south-east of Bir el Harmat an enemy column of 60 vehicles is moving from south towards the north. About 30 enemy tanks have appeared before the most northerly strongpoint of the Ariete Division.
- 1740: The Ariete Division is attacked by about 30 enemy tanks. For the defence, the tank battalion of the Ariete has been engaged.
- 1750: O.C. 15th Panzer Division informs GOC on the situation.
- GOC makes it perfectly clear that the 15th Panzer Division is responsible for the support of the Ariete Division and that units of the 15th Panzer Division must of necessity, be engaged for defence against the enemy attack.

/1830:

- 1830: 21st Panzer Division reports that the Bersaglieri strongpoint 2 km. to the south-east of the crossroads is being attacked from the south by about 30 enemy tanks. At the same time about 40 enemy tanks attack from the east. A third enemy group goes forward in the direction of Bir el Harmat. Panzer Regiment 5 makes contact with Panzer Regiment 8, in order to come to the aid of the Italian strongpoint should the occasion arise, in case the engagement of Panzer Regiment 8 should become necessary near Bir el Harmat. Shortly afterwards, O.C. 15th Panzer Division gives the same report of the situation. GHQ is not sure that everything necessary has been done by the 15th Panzer Division for the defence of the Ariete Division.
- 1900: 21st Panzer Division reports that the tank attack against the Ariete Division appears to be weaker than on the past day. All quiet still in the north.
- 2000: 15th Panzer Division reports that the enemy has issued a code word, which indicates the intention of a withdrawal.
- 2020: Report by the 21st Panzer Division confirms this assumption. The enemy is withdrawing to the north-east. II/Panzer Regiment 5 maintains contact with neighbouring strongpoint of the Ariete Division in order to be able to come to its aid in case of need.
- 2055: Orders are still coming through to the 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions with regard to support of the Italians.
- 2330: GOC points out to O.C. 15th Panzer Division the necessity to support the Ariete Division. Artillery is to be used with advance observers so that the enemy can be effectively bombarded by the concentrated fire of several battalions. The strongpoint company at the north-eastern corner of the minefield is to be reinforced with anti-tank fire.
- The supply situation, especially with regard to gun ammunition, is becoming more and more serious. The divisions receive the order to report how they stand for gun ammunition. It turns out that for each gun there are available only about 30 - 40 rounds. In addition to the difficulties connected with the long supply route, daily attacks are being carried out on supply columns even when proceeding with convoy guard. Africa Corps forbids proceeding alone on the supply track.
- The employment of 2 cm. flak for convoy guard is no longer sufficient.
- In order to help forward stationary columns near the forwarding station of X Army Corps, the Africa Corps orders 2 tanks of the Africa Corps battle echelon to be sent off under the command of Captain Distel.
- On the verbal orders of the C.in C. the Africa Corps issues "The basic directions of the Commander in Chief (No.1)".

9 June 1942

The Army order regarding the destruction of all abandoned tanks is passed on, as is the order that only the desert track at the front will be used. Movements will not be carried out by single vehicles.

- 0030: 15th Panzer Division reports that the Bersaglieri regiment strongpoint at 162 has been evacuated.
- 0630: It turns out that the Bersaglieri regiment has transferred the strongpoint 1 km. south-east of 161, as the terrain is supposed to be more favourable in that area.

/Apart

Apart from this the night passes quietly. At dawn 40 enemy tanks were observed in front of the 15th Panzer Division. These advanced at first but then fell back again.

0730: Army is informed of the situation. Africa Corps requests that it be allowed to choose the division for the intended thrust northwards. In the opinion of the Africa Corps the 21st Panzer Division is more suitable for this operation, as the 15th Panzer Division has been under a greater strain recently.

0800: The GOC goes to 21st Panzer Division battle headquarters. The Operations Officer of the 15th Panzer Division is also ordered to report there. The GOC reports as follows:

After the battle for Bir Hacheim has been concluded an attack will probably be made northwards on 10 June. It is expected that the 21st Panzer Division will carry out this operation, as it knows the terrain and the enemy, particularly his artillery, and is stronger in tanks. Anti-tank Battery 33 will be placed under the command of the 21st Panzer Division for artillery reconnaissance operations. The 15th Panzer Division will cover the east flank to begin with, and will later follow up or be sent in to counter-attack. The 15th Panzer Division will however also make preparations to attack northwards without prejudice to this plan.

1100: The GOC goes on to the advanced battle headquarters of the 15th Panzer Division to discuss similar points with Colonel Grasemann. A conversation with General de Stefanis on operations by the Ariete Division follows. The GOC calls special attention to the willing cooperation on the part of the Ariete division.

1200: The GOC returns.

1311: Operations Officer at Army HQ transmits the following order: One battalion of Motorised Infantry Regiment 115 and one field howitzer battery under the command of Colonel Baade will arrive at advanced Army battle headquarters by 1800 hours for operations at Hacheim. Colonel Baade and the battery commander will precede the rest. As little baggage as possible is to be taken.

1320: This order is sent to the 15th Panzer Division by radio.

1330: The same order is passed on verbally to the Operations Officer of the 15th Panzer Division after telephone lines have been repaired.

1532: 15th Panzer Division reports that the reinforced battalion has formed up, and that Colonel Baade and the battery commander have gone ahead.

1700: GOC requests that units which can be spared from Artillery Survey Battalion be used for reconnaissance operations immediately. It is also requested that Army artillery be put into position on both sides of the Capuzzo road in the approximate area of Bir et Tamar. A liaison officer will be attached to the 21st Panzer Division. Lt. Colonel Held draws attention to the fact that considerable difficulties as regards ammunition exist at present, mortar and medium field howitzer battery stocks being temporarily exhausted.

1815: 15th Panzer Division reports that according to Italian reconnaissance reports, the British are laying mines in front of the Ariete Division.

1855: This report is cancelled. Armoured reconnaissance cars of the Ariete Division have meanwhile discovered that it was their own sappers. The Ariete Division has received orders from the C. in C. to lay an extensive minefield east of the Bir Hacheim road.

Apart from this all is quiet in the east.

/The

The enemy situation has also remained unchanged in the north.

2210: Colonel Bayerlein telephones the Operations Officer of the Africa Corps: Army agrees to the 21st Panzer Division carrying out the intended attack northwards. The 15th Panzer Division will follow up later. German units will push west pass the strongpoint north-east of crossroads 161. To save time the strongpoint will not be stormed.

The supply situation is still strained. Africa Corps again orders the immediate return of all empty transport columns. The Quartermaster is instructed to set up a reception post so that better use may be made of convoy escorts operating between the Africa Corps and Temrad. In addition, all tanks going into and coming out of repair will be used for escort duties.

During the course of the day the Army has been reminded several times of the need for protecting the supply route.

10 June 1942

The night passes quietly. In the morning enemy tanks from the east attack the Ariete Division. The 15th Panzer Division brings up one panzer company. This unit soon knocks out 12 enemy tanks without loss. The armoured attack is halted and the enemy force retires eastwards.

GHQ issues a provisional draft of the Corps order for the thrust northwards, summarising plans discussed yesterday.

Artillery was active as usual during the day. Vehicle concentrations screened by tanks and armoured cars were observed in front of the Axis lines.

- 1700: 40 enemy tanks again approach the Bersaglieri strongpoint but do not attack.
- 2020: Orders are received by telephone to hold the 15th Panzer Division in readiness for operations northeastwards on 11 June.
- 2120: O.C. 21st Panzer Division is informed of the Army order.
- 2137: C.in C. reports that Plan A is cancelled. The C.in C. expects the GOC at Army battle headquarters on 11 June.
- 2148: The order regarding the cancellation of Plan A is passed on to the 15th Panzer Division by telephone.
- 2220: 15th Panzer Division is ordered to withdraw Engineer Battalion 33 again. The divisional commanding officer and the Operations Officer are ordered to report at Army battle headquarters at 0600 hours.
- 2230: The order regarding the re-subordination of Engineer Battalion 33 to the 15th Panzer Division is passed on to the Operations Officer of 21st

I/Panzer Regiment 5 and 2 light batteries are to be sent in south of Bir el Aslagh to ensure support for the Ariete Division.

The dummy minefield cannot be laid as ordered owing to lack of sappers. Army will be notified accordingly.

As a result of an Africa Corps request Army orders the withdrawal of all

/troops

troops of the first line reinforcement battalions placed at the disposal of the Quartermaster General.

11 June 1942

The night passes quietly. The 15th Panzer Division carried out its movements according to plan.

0430: The new area is reached. The 21st Panzer Division morning report does not contain anything of particular importance.

The GOC and O.C. 15th Panzer Division go to Army advanced battle headquarters north of Bir Hacheim.

0700: The following orders are issued at Army advanced battle headquarters:

The 15th Panzer Division will advance through the minefields north-east of Hacheim and prepare to attack behind the Ariete Division in the direction of Got el Baar. The attack will open at 1500 hours. The Trieste Division will advance on the left and reconnaissance units and the 90th Light Division will attack on the right, moving in the direction of El Adem. The Baade Group will be subordinated and brought up.

Afterwards this order is discussed in detail with O.C. 15th Panzer Division.

0755: The 21st Panzer Division is informed, and will also carry out feint manoeuvres by allowing tanks to be seen.

GOC goes to Bir Hacheim to contact Colonel Baade. As from midday advanced Corps battle headquarters is situated at the Hacheim road level with the lane through the minefield. Only absolutely essential vehicles are taken, and most of the operations staff is at the old Corps battle headquarters.

1335: 15th Panzer Division has reached the assembly area. Weak enemy forces can be observed in front of the German lines and the division is under light artillery fire. According to agents' reports the enemy seems to be expecting a thrust north-eastwards after the fall of Bir Hacheim.

1500: The 15th Panzer Division attacks according to plan, the Baade Group moving in soon afterwards.

1600: The El Abd road is passed. Enemy tanks in front of the division retire to the north and north-east, fight a brief action and then fall back again.

1700: The southern part of the area ordered is reached. The division is under light harassing fire from the north-west and there are some 50 enemy tanks on its left flank. According to intercepted signals, the enemy has issued a code word, the meaning of which is unknown, and the 4th Armoured Brigade has stopped its attack towards the south-east.

GHQ has advanced in close contact with the staff of the 15th Panzer Division. Views were exchanged several times and further measures discussed.

Reconnaissance units advanced to the right of the 15th Panzer Division, but contact was not established until the early evening. Contact was not established with the 90th Light Division, which is in action further to the right. This division's attack was delayed.

The Luftwaffe did not provide direct support for the 15th Panzer Division advance, and only one attack was made on El Adem between 1600 and 1700 hours.

1800: The 15th Panzer Division has gained the whole of the area ordered. The division is taking up defensive positions against the enemy armoured forces

/which

which are still situated in front of it. GHQ expects an enemy counter-attack on 12 June and gives to the 15th Panzer Division the necessary instructions for defensive operations. The division will hold the line Got Scerfat - Got el Ghesseusc with front facing north-west, and will probably counter-attack and follow up with a thrust in a north-westerly direction later. The 21st Panzer Division will probably support this attack by a thrust in the enemy rear.

1950: The C.in C. arrives at the Africa Corps battle headquarters. He shares the GOC's views and approves orders issued for 12 June.

In general the day passed quietly on the 21st Panzer Division front.

12 June 1942

Nothing of importance occurred during the night. The 15th Panzer Division and Corps battle headquarters have been under artillery fire since dawn. The Corps battle headquarters will be transferred.

The C.in C. remained in the vicinity of the Africa Corps battle headquarters. As there are no signs of an enemy attack, orders are issued to move forward at 0530 hours, the right wing advancing on Bir Lefa - 176 to the north-west.

0600: 15th Panzer Division is ordered to attack, concentrating on the right. The Africa Corps intends to encircle and destroy the enemy east of Knightsbridge. The attack will commence at 0730 hours. Protection etc. on the right is particularly emphasised. The 21st Panzer Division is notified accordingly and ordered to prepare for artillery bombardment of the enemy rear.

0810: 15th Panzer Division opens the attack, the commencement of which was delayed by essential regrouping. Strong enemy forces are situated opposite the divisional front, and some 100 tanks have been counted. The attack is not making progress, and the GOC, who can view the battle area from advanced battle headquarters, has the impression that tank formations are too loose and do not possess the necessary striking power. The division is again instructed to protect the flanks.

Although the enemy will probably retire northwards soon, the attack is not making progress. The GOC is also of the opinion that long-range artillery fire is not proving effective. Motorised Infantry Regiment 115 is sent in on the right wing at 0930 hours to push forward the attack, which has gained no ground yet as tank formations are apparently still too dispersed. The regiment turns off too far north-east, however, and the attack cannot be brought forward. The enemy still holds the line on the high ground, but is withdrawing a little to the north on the left wing. An outflanking movement on the right now appears all the more important.

No clear estimate of the 2nd and 4th Armoured Brigades opposite the 15th Panzer Division can be obtained from intercepted enemy signals. It is not known whether the enemy is going to attack or hold the high ground.

As regards the situation of units on the flank it is known that the 90th Light Division is advancing on El Adem.

1100: The right wing of the 90th Light Division has passed the Capuzzo road and reached El Adem. The reconnaissance units are thought to be in the area south-west of El Adem. Contact is being maintained on the left with the Trieste Division at the El Abd road. 21st Panzer Division reports that the enemy armoured force east of the Bir Hacheim road has disappeared. It seems, therefore, that the enemy has concentrated all his forces against

/the

the 15th Panzer Division. It is suggested that the 21st Panzer Division attack towards the east to hold down enemy forces, but GHQ will not issue a direct order owing to the unclarified situation in the north.

- 1152: The enemy is continuing to hold the hesitant and dispersed 15th Panzer Division attack. The division is again ordered to speed up the attack by Motorised Infantry Regiment 115. The battle will continue in front of Hill 169 even if the enemy makes a slight withdrawal towards the north.
- 1200: The C.in C. orders the attack to stop, apparently on the basis of agents' reports. The Africa Corps reports that the enemy has not attacked as yet. The 15th Panzer Division is ordered to establish contact on the right. The right wing of the division is in sight of the 90th Light Division. The 21st Panzer Division is notified that Army artillery will also participate in operations against retreating enemy forces. The 15th Panzer Division reports its defensive preparations in the event of an enemy attack, but no signs of this have been observed so far.

Several fighter-bomber attacks are made on the divisions during the morning. The Luftwaffe has not carried out operations as yet.

- 1300: GHQ thinks that the enemy will continue defensive operations or fight a delaying action during the day so as to withdraw northwards during the night. The 21st Panzer Division is therefore ordered to prepare to bring harassing fire to bear on routes along which the enemy will probably retire. Army still expects an attack towards the south.
- 1310: 15th Panzer Division reports that the enemy is withdrawing northwards. German forces must now follow up quickly in the same direction. An attack to the east by a panzer battalion of the 21st Panzer Division has doubtless had a favourable effect.
- 1400: The enemy is falling back all along the front. According to agents' reports the enemy will probably withdraw eastwards, as armoured cars of the Trieste Division have also appeared in his rear.
- 1416: Hill 169 has been captured. A dive-bomber attack is made on retreating enemy forces at Bir Lefa, and further Luftwaffe operations are requested.

Regarding the situation on the right, the only information available is that Reconnaissance Unit 2 is advancing northwards. I/Panzer Regiment 5 has carried its attack forward quickly. The 21st Panzer Division reports that 21 enemy tanks have been destroyed so far. The 15th Panzer Division's attack is making good progress. The enemy is still falling back towards the north, but in the Capuzzo road depression he is apparently retiring eastwards, covered by the 22nd Armoured Brigade.

- 1600: 15th Panzer Division takes Bir Lefa in a quick advance.
- 1700: Panzer Regiment 8 is 1 km. south of the objective for the day, the high ground at Hagiagh er Raml. The regiment has only occasional loose contact with its neighbours. The 15th Panzer Division is again ordered to link up with the Trieste Division to close the break still existing. The division is also instructed to deploy its forces in depth and to protect the flanks.

- 1845: A dive-bomber attack is made on the 15th Panzer Division. GHQ learned of this attack so late that it was not possible to warn the division in time.

At dusk the 15th Panzer Division had reached its objective for the day in spite of considerable enemy resistance. The C.in C. gives the division its orders for the night and for 13 June at divisional battle headquarters.

The division will hold the high ground between point 174 and the Bir Hachim road, mop up areas covered by the day's fighting, and be ready for further

/operations

operations as from midday tomorrow. Shortly after orders had been issued the GOC arrived at battle headquarters and, after the C.in C. had described the situation, discussed details of the new orders with O.C. 15th Panzer Division.

2050: 21st Panzer Division is ordered to withdraw I/Panzer Regiment 5 again. The division's orders in general - to cover the north-western flank - remain unchanged. I/Panzer Regiment 5 has knocked out a total of 43 enemy tanks. According to agents' reports the 22nd Armoured Brigade has suffered particularly heavy losses and the 4th Armoured Brigade has changed position to Babus or Rigel. 21st Panzer Division reconnaissance located weak artillery positions and barbed wire entanglements north-west of Eluet et Tamar.

The 90th Light Division has reached the high ground north of El Adem.

15th Panzer Division is not in direct contact with the Trieste Division as the latter has not attacked and is not in the area ordered.

13 June 1942

0205: Orders given verbally to the 15th Panzer Division yesterday evening are issued again in written form. XX Army Corps and the 21st Panzer Division are informed of plans, the latter will hold an assault group in readiness.

The night passes quietly.

0530: 15th Panzer Division attacks westwards. More than 50 enemy tanks, which later attempt to retire northwards, are reported in front of the division.

0700: A conference with the C.in C. takes place at Corps battle headquarters. Army artillery in action with the 21st Panzer Division is instructed to cooperate with the Africa Corps. In view of yesterday's dive-bomber attack on our own troops a warning is issued to the 15th Panzer Division.

0755: The speedy advance of the 15th Panzer Division is soon halted by a mine-field running southwards from the high ground in the direction of the Capuzze road. The division is not in contact with the Ariete Division. In the opinion of the 15th Panzer Division there are still strong enemy forces in front of it, the enemy having apparently withdrawn only motorised units. After getting through the first minebelt the division is soon held up by a second. The enemy appears to be reinforcing his north wing, and according to intercepted enemy signals, the 4th Armoured Brigade is to be brought up to the south flank of the 2nd Armoured Brigade.

0935: While en route to the 15th Panzer Division, the GOC is recalled to Army battle headquarters where he receives the following information:

There is apparently a large enemy force in the Bir Ailet el Maguri area north-east of Hagiagh Batruna, and the possibility of an attack by this group on the extended right flank of the 15th Panzer Division must be taken into account. The high ground at Hagiagh Batruna will be occupied by infantry as a protective measure.

The commanding officer of I/Motorised Infantry Regiment 115, who was instructed to report at Corps battle headquarters, receives this order personally.

0930: 21st Panzer Division is ordered to attack the crossroads 6 km. north-east of the high ground to help the 15th Panzer Division to advance and

/at

at the same time to close the pocket to the west. The division reports that the enemy tanks located north-west of Sidi Muftan have been withdrawn south-east, apparently for operations against the 15th Panzer Division.

The operations by units of the 21st Panzer Division is in accordance with the wishes of the 15th Panzer Division, which is still held up by superior enemy forces, particularly on the right wing.

1135: The division receives orders to hold the right wing, but to make an immediate attack on the enemy strongpoint in front of its left wing.

In the opinion of the GOC there is no longer any objection to the 21st Panzer Division also attacking northwards. After the enemy has moved his forces to the south-east the north-west flank can be covered by small forces. 21st Panzer Division, which has meanwhile reported that it will attack in the direction of Mabus er Riegel at 1200 hours, will first attack towards the north and then turn east.

1145: The GOC puts this suggestion to the C.in C., who approves it. Orders are issued accordingly. Army artillery will be used during the 21st Panzer Division attack.

1200: On contacting the Trieste Division it is learned that 167 is clear of the enemy. The Trieste Division is also being held up by a minefield, and a sapper company of the 15th Panzer Division will be placed at its disposal. The Trieste Division is not in contact with enemy forces.

In the meantime the 15th Panzer Division has made no further progress. Tanks have been transferred from right to left as the division does not consider infantry operations advisable. On the left wing the division has contact with the Trieste Division, which is advancing slowly.

1305: Motorised Infantry Regiment 115 is informed through the 15th Panzer Division that the former east wing of the Army is being sent in to the north-west, increasing the importance of rear cover provided by the Baade Group.

1340: Conference between the C.in C. and GOC at Army battle headquarters.

1410: Colonel Baade again receives detailed instructions from the GOC with regard to his orders.

1435: 21st Panzer Division moves forward in the direction of Mabus er Riegel.

1445: Africa Corps battle headquarters is transferred 5 km. to the west. The GOC goes to 15th Panzer Division battle headquarters. The division's advance is still slow. A heavy sandstorm is in progress. Some 35 tanks north of the high ground withdraw northwards. Cooperation with the 21st Panzer Division is discussed in detail with Colonel Crasemann.

1540: Advanced units of the 21st Panzer Division have taken the area directly west of Bir el Riegel.

1610: 21st Panzer Division has also reached the area 1 km. east of Bir el Riegel.

Corps battle headquarters is situated 3 km. south of point 174. The operations staff, which is still at Got el Aslagh, is informed of the necessity of protection towards the north.

XX Army Corps is informed of the situation and plans.

According to intercepted enemy signals it appears that the 2nd Armoured Brigade is advancing on Bir el Riegel from the east.

1710: 21st Panzer Division reports that it is attacking this enemy force.

The situation remains unchanged on the Baade Group sector. Visibility is bad because of the sandstorm, and the enemy may exploit this to attack.

1800: 21st Panzer Division reports that it is engaged in a tank action at Bir el Riegel. According to agents' reports the 2nd Armoured Brigade is now falling back, whereas the 4th Armoured Brigade is attacking the flank of the 21st Panzer Division from the north-east. A British artillery position has been overrun.

At the moment the GOC is at 15th Panzer Division battle headquarters. The division is continuing to advance slowly, and 20 enemy tanks have been destroyed so far. The GOC emphasises that the division must advance and link up with the 21st Panzer Division.

1845: The GOC is ordered to report to the C.in C., whom he meets on the hill slope in the area of 174. The C.in C. reports as follows:

The reconnaissance units are advancing in the direction of Acroma. Tomorrow the Africa Corps will advance northwards in the direction of Hill 209, block the Via Balbia and encircle enemy forces in the Gazala position. Afterwards the GOC returns to the 15th Panzer Division, which is now advancing quickly. The GOC accompanies the tank attack on the left wing in his car.

1915: 21st Panzer Division reports the expected enemy attack from the north-east. The division carries out defensive operations for a time, but later clears the enemy position at Mabus er Riegel and takes up defensive positions there.

2050: The 15th Panzer Division attack continues to make good progress. The white house has been reached. The attack will be continued through the night.

2224: 15th Panzer Division has reached the Bir Hacheim road. The enemy suffered heavy losses and the GOC commends both divisions. Although the 15th Panzer Division was late in reaching the Hacheim road, it is now possible for both divisions to make a combined thrust towards the Via Balbia on 14 June.

2335: Army orders for 14 June are received. They correspond to those already given verbally. The divisions receive orders for an attack in the direction of the Via Balbia on 14 June.

14 June 1942

0445: 15th Panzer Division moves forward to continue its advance westwards, turning northwards later. III/Motorised Infantry Regiment 115 will be used for covering operations against the enemy strongpoint in the south. The division is soon engaged in fighting with enemy forces, including armour, but the attack continues to gain ground with the enemy retiring northwards. The Baade Group orders remain unchanged. Army intends to bring up the 90th Light Division in the rear, releasing the Baade Group for further operations.

21st Panzer Division wishes to go over to the defensive until the 15th Panzer Division comes up, particularly with units protecting the north-western flank. GHQ orders the Division to attack regardless of the 15th Panzer Division.

0744: 15th Panzer Division continues to make good progress. It almost seems as if the division turned off too far east. The division points out that the 21st Panzer Division must attack, as otherwise, it will have to bear the brunt of the fighting singlehanded.

The enemy has apparently retired to Eleut et Tamar - El Cuscia. The strongpoint situated where the desert tracks cross was evacuated during the night.

The 15th Panzer Division suggestion for the withdrawal of the Baade Group has not been passed on as there is no chance of its being acted on.

- 0822: 21st Panzer Division is again ordered to attack northwards. According to agents' reports 50 enemy tanks are attacking from the switch line in a southerly direction. 21st Panzer Division is ordered to attack this enemy force in the flank. Units of the division so far used for flank protection are released for this operation.
- 1000: The GOC arrives at 21st Panzer Division battle headquarters. The division launched an outflanking attack against the strong enemy forces situated opposite it at 0900 hours.
- 1030: According to a 15th Panzer Division report, Panzer Regiment 5 is held up in front of a minefield on a level with the enemy strongpoint at El Cuscia. Both divisions are in contact with one another. There are also strong enemy forces opposite Panzer Regiment 8, but these soon fall back eastwards. According to agents' reports it is the 4th Armoured Brigade. In view of superior enemy forces it is not possible for armoured units to advance alone. The division is waiting for infantry to come up.
- 21st Panzer Division is again ordered to echelon and reconnoitre on the left. 15th Panzer Division is informed of the possibility of an enemy armoured attack from the Acroma direction.
- The GOC remains on the battlefield. The attack is making only slow progress and lanes must first be cut through extensive enemy minefields.
- 1200: The 15th Panzer Division is still held up.
- 1400: The attack is continued.
- 1500: The enemy strongpoint is penetrated.
- 1600: The 21st Panzer Division attacks again. Enemy resistance is slight. By order of the GOC 21st Panzer Division will also use lanes cut through minefields by 15th Panzer Division.
- 1700: The bulk of Panzer Regiment 5 has passed through the minefield lanes. 15th Panzer Division is also making good progress now. According to an Army report the enemy is moving back along the Via Balbia. 15th Panzer Division is therefore ordered to push forward and block the Via Balbia.
- 1750: The enemy strongpoint has been taken. 15th Panzer Division is pushing further north through the minefields.
- 1804: The GOC decides that 15th Panzer Division will push forward to Acroma and block the enemy there while 21st Panzer Division will cut the Via Balbia. The latter is still held up by minefields. The importance of 15th Panzer Division's task is again stressed. Army is informed that the German Africa Corps has passed through the minefields in face of strong enemy resistance.
- 21st Panzer Division is ordered to block the Via Balbia by artillery fire by night as well as during the day.
- 2000: 21st Panzer Division is ordered to block the hill route and the Via Balbia to all traffic. The division reaches the high terrain during the evening.
- 2015: 15th Panzer Division receives orders regarding preparations for the attack on Acroma and the blocking of the Via Balbia by fire.

/2100:

- 2100: Army again issues instructions regarding the importance of blocking the Via Balbia, along which the enemy is retreating in three columns. 21st Panzer Division is again reminded of the importance of its task.
- 2240: Orders regarding the blocking of enemy escape routes are issued to 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions. 15th Panzer Division will prevent a breakthrough between the coast and Bir ez Zebli and keep a mobile unit in readiness. The 21st Panzer Division will block enemy forces between the hill route and the coast, as has already been ordered. 15th Panzer Division orders were altered in consideration of the fact that there may still be strong enemy forces in the Gazala position, although according to previous estimates of the enemy situation there were only rearguards covering the withdrawal of remaining enemy forces in front of the Africa Corps. The Africa Corps has reached its objectives for the day. Earlier capture of the hill terrain would have been desirable, in which case operations to block the Via Balbia could have been commenced during the day instead of at night, as was now necessary. It is doubtful whether German forces will succeed in blocking the route in view of terrain difficulties (steep Ghebel slope).
- During the day GHQ operations staff was brought forward from Got el Aslagh. Corps battle headquarters was situated west of Bir ez Zebli in the evening.

15 June 1942

- Nothing of importance occurred during the night. The Via Balbia has been under harassing fire from the 15th Panzer Division since 0130 hours. GHQ fears have been realised; neither division has succeeded in pushing a blocking group forward to the Via Balbia.
- 0500: 21st Panzer Division reports that the blocking group is now moving forward; remaining units will follow. Panzer Regiment 5, operating on the hill terrain, has not encountered enemy forces. Large transport jams are observed on the Via Balbia. No enemy attempts to break out towards the south have been observed.
- The GOC goes to the 15th Panzer Division. Advanced Corps battle headquarters is situated on the hill descent with a good view of the coastal plain. The 15th Panzer Division blocking group is also moving forwards. The descent into the plain is especially difficult.
- The C. in C. also arrives at 15th Panzer Division battle headquarters. After a short description of the situation orders are issued for the withdrawal of the 21st Panzer Division, which will be sent in as a pursuit group in the direction of Bir Lefa - El Adem. The division will be under direct Army command. Units blocking the Via Balbia will remain in position until relieved by the 15th Panzer Division.
- 0810: 21st Panzer Division points out the possibility of an enemy breakthrough after its units have been withdrawn. However, the orders remain unchanged. The GOC discusses details with divisional commanders at 21st Panzer Division battle headquarters. III/Motorised Infantry Regiment 104 and I/Artillery Regiment 155 will remain in position, moving back this evening. I/Motorised Infantry Regiment 115 will be withdrawn again and placed under 15th Panzer Division command.
- According to aircraft reports there are still some 1,800 vehicles in the Gazala pocket.
- 1020: Advanced units of the 15th Panzer Division are approaching the sea. The enemy is also advancing from the east. The 15th Panzer Division

/is

is hard pressed at the moment owing to difficulties of terrain, inadequate forces and enemy attacks from the east and west.

- 1100: The 21st Panzer Division attacks. Zero hour, which was set for 1000 hours according to a verbal report, has therefore been delayed an hour. Owing to a misunderstanding another light artillery unit as well as I/Artillery Regiment 155 remains behind. The unit will be brought up later.
- 1445: On the coast strong enemy forces continue to push eastwards. The 15th Panzer Division has suffered considerable losses. III/Motorised Infantry Regiment 104 and I/Artillery Regiment 155 will be subordinated to the division. I/Flak Battery 43, formerly Corps reserve, will also be sent in to support operations.

XXI Army Corps advancing from the west, has reached km.107 - Uadi Edber.

The situation remains unchanged during the course of the afternoon. Heavy losses are caused by unskilful use of tanks.

Army reports that defence is concentrated on the coast. Orders to this effect have already been passed on to the 15th Panzer Division.

- 1755: 15th Panzer Division is advised of the necessity to reconnoitre. Orders so far issued remain unchanged.

- 1900: The coast is reached. Enemy forces retiring eastwards are therefore completely cut off. Army instructs that even the smallest units must be prevented by regrouping of forces, from breaking through to the east. According to a report from a reconnaissance unit of the Africa Corps battle echelon there are still some 1,000 vehicles on the Gazala front. However, this report is found to be incorrect on the following day, the vehicles being barrels distorted by heat haze.

21st Panzer Division units which remained behind are released to their division at 1900 hours.

Nothing of importance occurs during the evening. The 15th Panzer Division, with its right wing on the coast, is holding the objectives it has reached.

#### 16 June 1942

15th Panzer Division is ordered to report why it was so late in cutting the Via Balbia.

There were no operations during the night. No enemy forces have been established up to km.120 on the Via Balbia.

At dawn the GOC goes to the 15th Panzer Division, which still has its battle headquarters situated on the hill slope.

- 0715: The C.in C. arrives at Corps battle headquarters. He orders the 15th Panzer Division to attack westwards immediately. The order is passed on to the GOC, who issues the necessary instructions directly to the 15th Panzer Division. The C.in C., arriving at 15th Panzer Division battle headquarters soon afterwards, supplements his order with details. 15th Panzer Division will wheel after linking up with XXI Army Corps, which is advancing from the west, so as to move forward and capture Acroma.

The 15th Panzer Division then attacks towards the west with Motorised Infantry Regiment 115 without meeting enemy resistance. 15th Rifle Brigade has already reached km.120 by 04.00 hours.

- 0930: Reconnaissance patrols establish contact with 15th Rifle Brigade. The GOC also makes contact with the commanding officer of the unit. There is nothing to be seen of the enemy. 15th Panzer Division is thereupon instructed that the new orders - Operation East - come into effect immediately.
- 1120: The Via Balbia can be opened for supply transport, cutting journeys considerably. 15th Panzer Division has brought in 30 guns, 10 armoured reconnaissance cars and some 500 prisoners. The division is now wheeling and moving forward in the direction of Acroma.
- 1230: Acroma is reported clear of the enemy; only one enemy battery is in action. The Africa Corps sends out the Schrötter patrol to reconnoitre on the right wing.
- 1335: 15th Panzer Division has taken Acroma. Units of the 15th Rifle brigade are already on Hill 142 south of km. 150. The Schrötter reconnaissance patrol is in contact with the Trieste Division on the right. The GOC reminds the 15th Panzer Division that a further advance south-east must be made on Gasr or Lecha to establish contact with the 21st Panzer Division which advanced to El Adem yesterday.
- 1440: 15th Panzer Division reports that Motorised Infantry Regiment 115 is pivoting southwards.
- 1500: GHQ issues an order by telephone to the effect that the 15th Panzer Division must be ready to move east of El Adem as from 1700 hours. The GOC orders the division to use the Bir Hacheim road and the Capuzzo road as its route.
- 1720: The main body of 15th Panzer Division has reached Acroma, and then moves off in the direction of El Adem. The Warrelmann battalion remains in Acroma.
- 1730: GHQ moves into the area north-east of Bir Bu Sceraf, in the vicinity of Army battle headquarters.
- The only information available regarding units on the flank is that XX Army Corps is advancing eastwards on both sides of the Capuzzo road. The position of the 21st Panzer Division is not known, but the unit is thought to be in the area east of El Adem.
- 2240: 15th Panzer Division movements are proceeding according to plan. The division is resting and refuelling.
- 2330: The division continues its advance.

17 June 1942

Army plans for the afternoon of 17 June:

The Africa Corps will move off in a south-easterly direction and then turn north, advancing on Gambut and the Via Balbia to the north of the town. The objective of this movement is to encircle enemy forces in and east of Tobruk. The encircling ring will then be tightened to prepare the way for the assault on Tobruk itself. The decision whether the thrust towards Gambut will be launched during the afternoon of 17 June depends on the development of the situation with the 90th Light Division, which is still engaged in operations against an enemy strong-point south-west of El Adem.

/0038:

0038: Preliminary orders are issued to the 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions. The 15th Panzer Division continued its advance during the night, although minefields caused some delay.

0530: Spearheads of the division reach El Adem.

0900: The main body of the division is in the area ordered.

21st Panzer Division, which was repeatedly bombed yesterday, is ordered to disperse its M/T.

Army intends to launch the thrust towards Gambut at 1500 hours. Divisions will be notified accordingly.

The GOC went to the 21st Panzer Division at dawn. The division is under sporadic artillery fire and there are enemy armoured forces to the east and north-east of it. Battalions sent in to attack Sidi Rezegh have been withdrawn into a piquet line by order of Army. The enemy Air Force is very active again today. Two bombing attacks are made on the division while the GOC is there.

The C.in C. has already issued orders to the division for the attack in the afternoon. The GOC goes back to battle headquarters.

1100: Orders are issued by Army; zero hour is at 1500 hours. The divisions receive their orders. With the exception of an M/T concentration in the south-east the enemy situation has not changed.

1500: The divisions attack, the 15th Panzer Division echeloned on the right. The GOC and operations staff are with the 21st Panzer Division. The latter is involved in a tank battle soon after attacking and makes only slight progress. The situation is relieved when the 15th Panzer Division draws level, eliminating the flanking movement on the 21st Panzer Division.

1645: A counter-attack is made against the 15th Panzer Division, but the enemy soon falls back again.

Good progress is now being made. Both divisions have knocked out a large number of enemy tanks. 15th Panzer Division is in contact with the Ariete Division, which is advancing on the right.

1740: The GOC instructs that the day's objectives must be reached before nightfall.

1815: 15th Panzer Division has reached Sidi Maftah and is turning north. 21st Panzer Division turns too late and consequently runs into the flank of the 15th Panzer Division. Both divisions are in full pursuit of the retreating enemy. The operations staff is moving with, and at times in front of the spearhead of the 21st Panzer Division.

2055: Advanced units of the 21st Panzer Division are on the high terrain south of Gambut, where another short artillery battle develops. The division encounters an extensive minefield, through which lanes must be cut. 15th Panzer Division reports that contact with the Ariete Division has broken down.

2130: 15th Panzer Division has reached the area ordered and is taking up defensive positions.

The GOC remains with the 21st Panzer Division at the minefield.

21st Panzer Division is ordered to press on to the Via Balbia (through Gambut) after clearing a lane through the minefield. The C.in C. arrives at battle headquarters and approves this decision. 21st Panzer Division is ordered to block the area up to the coast on 18 June. Tanks will be moved to the assembly areas in the afternoon for the assault on Tobruk.

/2310:

2310: Initially obstinate enemy resistance was quickly overcome by the Africa Corps in the afternoon. The enemy suffered heavy losses in armour and retreated eastwards. 15th Panzer Division, in action on the right, reached the day's objective in hot pursuit of the enemy. GHQ expects that 21st Panzer Division, which is still held up by minefields, will push further northwards during the night and also reach the area ordered.

18 June 1942

After getting through the minefield the 21st Panzer Division continues its advance northwards during the night.

0030: The division reaches the Via Balbia. Attacks from the west are repulsed and 10 self-propelled guns captured.

0415: 21st Panzer Division captures Gambut airfield and sets up divisional battle headquarters there. The division is informed that there is another enemy strongpoint further west near Bu Amut.

The thrust to the Via Balbia seems to have taken the enemy completely by surprise. This was mainly due to the fact that German forces did not turn north before the late afternoon and were not observed by enemy air reconnaissance. The enemy had apparently not expected the Via Balbia to be blocked during the night. Several enemy columns moving along the Via Balbia from the direction of Tobruk are now turning southwards.

The night passed quietly on the 15th Panzer Division front. 100 prisoners were taken during the occupation of the area. As the enemy strongpoint at Belhamed is in its reconnaissance and mopping-up area, the division is given exact information regarding its boundary. It is discovered later that Belhamed has been in German hands since 0130 hours.

The division is ordered to extend reconnaissance to the Gasr el Arid area, where there are thought to be enemy supply dumps. The Warrelmann battalion (III/Motorised Infantry Regiment 115) will be brought up by the division.

0731: 15th Panzer Division reports that there is a gap between the two divisions. The GOC, who has been with the 21st Panzer Division on the Via Balbia and was later at Gambut airfield, orders the division to close the gap with covering parties. A 15th Panzer Division query as to whether the railway is to be destroyed is answered in the negative.

Corps battle headquarters has been situated south-east of Carmuset er Nbeidat since the morning of 18 June.

0840: Army orders the interception of an enemy column west of Gambut. 200 prisoners and 20 lorries are captured. Another column attempts to break through in the Corps battle headquarters area. 3 guns and 1 lorry are destroyed by the Africa Corps battle echelon.

The GOC goes from the 21st to the 15th Panzer Division.

Details of the assault on Tobruk are discussed with both divisions; preliminary orders for this operation will be issued today.

All is quiet on the 15th Panzer Division sector; enemy reconnaissance units have withdrawn far to the east. Prisoners are continually being taken, usually stragglers cut off from their units. No mined areas have been located apart from a field on the high terrain.

/21st

21st Panzer Division reports the Via Balbia clear of the enemy near Gambut but there are some single enemy armoured reconnaissance cars 25 km. east of Gambut.

1430: An Army order is issued regarding the withdrawal of tanks of both divisions into the area north-west of El Duda. Orders for the transfer as from 1600 hours are issued to the division. Army places Engineer Battalion 900 under Africa Corps command for the assault on Tobruk with immediate effect.

The greater part of the Lowen Group, placed under Africa Corps command for the assault on Tobruk, will go to the 21st Panzer Division as the latter must divert an assault group north-east in the direction of Marsa Umm esc Sciausc and another in the direction of Tobruk itself in accordance with the plan of attack.

The Africa Corps requests that the heavy howitzers of Army artillery be subordinated to it for the assault on Tobruk.

The Africa Corps Quartermaster is sending up bridging equipment required for crossing the anti-tank ditches on the outer defences of Tobruk.

The divisions will carry out reconnaissance operations on 19 June.

The Quartermaster does not have at his disposal sufficient M/T to bring up all the supplies required for the assault on Tobruk. Orders have therefore been issued to concentrate all available vehicles to ensure adequate supply for the attack.

19 June 1942

The night passes quietly; divisional orders remain unchanged. During the day the necessary reconnaissance operations will be carried out and preparations made for the assault, particularly as regards artillery.

It is doubtful whether the 15th Rifle Brigade can be brought up in time, as it was to carry out a feint attack on Ras el M'auar from the Gasr el Chlecha area on 19 June. In reply to an Africa Corps inquiry on this subject Army reported towards midday that the 15th Rifle Brigade will assemble at Et Duda.

1300: The main body of Army artillery is to be placed under the command of the 21st Panzer Division and remaining units under the 15th Panzer Division. The artillery commander is requested to attend a conference at Corps battle headquarters. The 15th Panzer Division request for at least one heavy howitzer is rejected by Army.

Engineer Battalion 900 (under Africa Corps command) did not take part in reconnaissance operations. The unit will be used to set up tank bridges. The commanding officer is also requested to come to Corps battle headquarters. Subordination of units remains unchanged. After the conference with the GOC, the commanding officer of Engineer Battalion 900 discusses details of the operation with divisional commanders.

Army is asked to confirm whether the subordination of the troop-carrying vehicle company of Reconnaissance Unit 33 for the assault on Tobruk will take place as originally arranged. It is learnt that the company will not be subordinated.

As no instructions to the contrary have been received from Army, the order issued verbally to the divisions to move into the assembly area at 1600 hours for the attack remains in force. A report to this effect is sent to Army.

1455: An Army order is received to the effect that rearwards at Gambut and the

/Capuzzo

Capuzzo road will remain behind until relieved. The order continues: "Otherwise move off at 2100 hours". As it is not clear whether only the rearguards or the main body of the divisions are to remain behind until relieved, an inquiry is made at Army. The divisions are ordered not to form up for the time being and to make preparations to leave rearguards.

From midday Corps battle headquarters is situated in the assembly area north of Et Duda with advanced battle headquarters south-east of Bir Bu Asaten.

1530: The C.in C. arrives at Corps battle headquarters. First of all the question of the transfer of divisions is cleared up. The divisions are ordered to form up. Rearguards will be left behind as ordered. The radio message received later is superseded by the personal explanation.

The Africa Corps plan of action remains unchanged; zero hour is still at 0520 hours.

1700: The 21st Panzer Division moves forward. The division reports that a reconnaissance patrol has advanced along the Via Balbia 3.5 km. west of Bardia, where it encountered enemy fire.

1900: 15th Panzer Division reports that it is moving off.

The movements of both divisions proceed according to plan. The fact that the divisions are moving into an assembly area unknown to them in the dark will presumably not prove to be a disadvantage. Previous reconnaissance operations have ensured that artillery and heavy weapons will be brought into position and will open fire at zero hour.

Divisions are instructed to fire to put out of action observers on towers but not to destroy the towers themselves.

Army orders units to send in brief reports on position every hour from now on.

20 June 1942

The attack on Tobruk commences at 0520 hours. There is no artillery preparation. As the attack opens a heavy dive-bomber attack is made on separate defence works and is concentrated on the Africa Corps front.

The GOC goes to the high ground south of the barbed wire entanglements and observes the course of operations.

At first defence is remarkably weak. The enemy recovers very slowly from his surprise, which appears to be complete.

The presence of Indian troops in front of the Africa Corps will be confirmed later. This fact indicates that the British had expected the attack on another sector.

0635: 21st Panzer Division reports that it has crossed the barbed wire entanglements in front of point 69. The 15th Panzer Division is also making good progress.

0745: Point 61 is captured at 0745 hours, and points 63 and 58 soon afterwards. Artillery fire continues to be fairly light, and enemy heavy batteries in the rear were slow to participate in the battle.

The GOC goes forward to the anti-tank ditch. It is essential to get tanks over this obstacle quickly and exploit their striking power.

/0830:

- 0830: The first tanks of 15th Panzer Division go over the anti-tank ditch with the help of prepared bridges. On the 21st Panzer Division sector the motorised infantry regiment is north of the obstacle.
- 0850: The first tanks of 21st Panzer Division cross the anti-tank ditch; the attack is making good progress. Artillery fire increases, especially the heavier calibres. The extensive minefields are very troublesome, and the advance is delayed while lanes are cut through them.
- 0945: 15th Panzer Division reports that its panzer regiment is engaged in a tank battle. However, it succeeds in pushing enemy tanks back slowly towards the north in hard fighting. It appears that the 21st Panzer Division is held up - few reports are received.

XX Army Corps is still held up in front of the first line of defence. The attack was unsuccessful, and only the Africa Corps was able to make a breach in the front. Owing to XX Army Corps' failure to advance, the Africa Corps must eliminate enemy forces on its flank. Enemy artillery fire is concentrated on the Africa Corps, and resistance is therefore considerable at the moment. Defences are very deep and extend virtually to Tobruk.

- 1045: 15th Panzer Division reports that it has knocked out 10 enemy tanks so far.

The GOC impresses on both divisions the importance of exploiting the breach and sending forces through it continually. For this reason the Bergh Group of the Africa Corps battle echelon will take over occupation of Hill 146, hitherto carried out by the 21st Panzer Division.

The attack continues to make progress. The number of prisoners and amount of material captured is constantly increasing. The Brescia Division, which is in action behind the Africa Corps, must be brought forward to clear up areas taken by the Corps. The Luftwaffe will continue to support the attack. Owing to difficulty in differentiating between the two fronts attacks have been made on Axis lines.

The GOC is still with the operations staff at 15th Panzer Division headquarters. Conferences with Colonel Crasemann are in progress.

- 1200: 21st Panzer Division has reached the Via Balbia and caught up with the 15th Panzer Division. GHQ draws attention to the fact that units will have to be diverted to Giada, and that Tobruk harbour must come under observed fire as soon as possible. The 21st Panzer Division takes the strongpoint where the three tracks meet and is continuing its advance towards Tobruk. 15th Panzer Division must eliminate enemy flanking movements on the 21st Panzer Division.

However, the 15th Panzer Division is still engaged in a tank battle and its extended left flank is threatened by tanks advancing southwards. The division's advance is further delayed by minefields.

Owing to XX Army Corps' failure to advance, the 15th Panzer Division is ordered to advance its left flank to the high ground to prevent the enemy outflanking the Africa Corps.

- 1410: 15th Panzer Division has also reached the Via Balbia. It may soon be possible to report that Tobruk harbour is under German artillery fire.

The Africa Corps receives instructions to mop up the area east of the road triangle. 21st Panzer Division will be allotted this task.

XX Army Corps is still held up.

- 1445: 21st Panzer Division reports the capture of the downward slope of the high ground. 15th Panzer Division is continuing its successful operations

/against

against the enemy on the flank of the 21st Panzer Division. 30 enemy tanks have been destroyed so far. 15th Panzer Division must eliminate Fort Solaro to enable the 21st Panzer Division to push forward to Tobruk.

XX Army Corps has still not relieved the pressure on the Africa Corps. Army has therefore ordered the corps to be brought up behind the Africa Corps and to attack along the bunker line from east to west.

- 1630: The GOC decides to use the Africa Corps battle echelon to mop up the road sector in the east in order to relieve pressure on the 21st Panzer Division. There are still considerable enemy forces in strongpoints in this area.
- 1700: 21st Panzer Division reports that it is attacking Tobruk. 15th Panzer Division is also continuing its successful operations. It may now be said that the attack on Tobruk has been successful, and that Tobruk itself will probably be taken today. The GOC is still with the 15th Panzer Division.
- 1830: 15th Panzer Division has taken Gabr Gazem. The division is again warned to protect its left flank which is of particular importance for the attack now in progress against Fort Solaro.
- 1900: The town and harbour of Tobruk have been taken by the 21st Panzer Division. 15th Panzer Division is also continuing its advance. Enemy resistance is weakening in places and Pilastrino has surrendered. On the other hand stubborn resistance is being offered at some places, e.g. Gabr el Abd. 15th Panzer Division will attack Aircnte to maintain contact between its own forces and those of the 21st Panzer Division. The division is engaged in heavy fighting at Gabr el Abd.

The following orders have been issued for the further conduct of operations:

- 21st Panzer Division: Continue the attack and prevent enemy attempts to break through.
- 15th Panzer Division: Protect the left flank of the 21st Panzer Division with front facing west. The attack will be resumed on the morning of 21 June. Both divisions will keep a mobile assault group in readiness. 15th Panzer Division is again instructed to protect its left flank.

Army orders received later cover those already issued by the GOC.

In the evening the GOC observed the advance on Tobruk and the bombardment of the harbour from the high ground south of the town. 21st Panzer Division has taken a large number of prisoners in Tobruk. There are still enemy troops north of Tobruk, and 21st Panzer Division will attack in this direction during the night if necessary.

- 2315: 21st Panzer Division has taken Auda. The division again receives orders that the road to the east must be opened at Si Inud in the morning.

The Africa Corps can look back on this day with particular pride. It has gained exceptional victories. Very great successes have resulted from the operations of both divisions.

/21 June 1942

21 June 1942

No fighting took place during the night. Continual explosions can be heard as the British blow up fuel and ammunition dumps. A glow and a thick cloud of smoke hang over Tobruk.

0530: Both divisions attack towards the east. Enemy resistance seems to be broken and only flares up in places. 21st Panzer Division has taken over 6,000 prisoners so far. The number of prisoners taken increases during the morning, especially on the 15th Panzer Division front. Altogether the Army has taken 25,000 prisoners up till now.

By order of Army the Lindemann group in action on the eastern defence perimeter will be relieved by the Bersaglieri regiment of XI Army Corps. The GOC will instruct the commanding officer personally. The Lindemann group is still engaged in fighting.

After informing the commanding officer of the Bersaglieri regiment the GOC and the operations staff go forward to the high ground south-west of Tobruk.

0900: 15th Panzer Division reports the capture of Fort Giaida. Shortly afterwards the 21st Panzer Division reaches the western defence perimeter, opening the road to the west. In the east the Lindemann group takes the enemy strongpoint on the Via Balbia and opens the road in this sector also. The battle echelon is resuming its attacks on strongpoints in the north.

1105: Army receives a report that the bunkers south of the Via Balbia have also been taken.

The GOC discusses further operations to be carried out by the 15th Panzer Division at battle headquarters, and is then ordered to an Army conference at Tobruk.

The journey over the battlefield makes a deep impression. There are abandoned guns, burning vehicles and armoured reconnaissance cars etc. everywhere. Incalculable masses of prisoners are pouring along the Via Balbia towards Tobruk.

1145: The following order is issued from Army battle headquarters at Tobruk:

The Africa Corps will be moved into a new area south-east of Gambut (20 km. south-west of Sollum). The 21st Panzer Division will move today and the 15th Panzer Division tomorrow, both units using the Via Balbia. Divisions will rest 1 - 2 days in this area and wait for Luftwaffe units to be brought forward. After a further move to the south the Africa Corps will then push forward in an easterly direction through the barbed wire entanglements to cut off Sollum.

The order is passed on verbally to the Operations Officer of the 21st Panzer Division at Army battle headquarters, and the division will form up at 1600 hours. The 15th Panzer Division is notified accordingly.

Engineer Battalion 900 will be used to guard the town and harbour of Tobruk, and its subordination to the Africa Corps terminated.

Battle group Lindemann, which has fulfilled its task, is ordered to rest off the Via Balbia. It will form up again tomorrow when GHQ moves into the new area.

15th Panzer Division is ordered to eliminate the enemy strongpoint at El Adem and upon the Tobruk road.

/1600:

1600: 21st Panzer Division moves forward and is proceeding according to plan. The division reports the situation at Si Daud as in order. 15th Panzer Division is again informed of the order to march east on 22 June. The order to move forward will be transmitted by radio.

GHQ will move off at 0700 hours on 22 June.

The battle for the fortress of Tobruk has come to an end. The German Africa Corps can look back on the 20th and 21st days of June with great pride. The Corps had to bear the main brunt of the battle and the great victory was gained only through the weight of its attack and the fighting spirit of every man.

Captain Laubinger of the Africa Corps is nominated commandant of Tobruk.

22 June 1942

No operations take place during the night. The Dedekind group is still at the enemy strongpoint on the road to El Adem. Arrangements have been made for the strongpoint to be handed over at 0500 hours. 15th Panzer Division will bring up the Dedekind group after the completion of mopping-up operations. The group has carried out its orders and the road to El Adem is clear. More than 400 prisoners have been taken.

0730: 15th Panzer Division forms up. This takes place too late, as according to orders the division should be in the area south-east of Gambut at 0900 hours. 15th Panzer Division movements are also delayed by heavy traffic on the Via Balbia.

0930: 21st Panzer Division has arrived in the area ordered, sends out scouts towards the south and contacts reconnaissance units. The division has not encountered the enemy as yet.

1300: Advanced units of the 15th Panzer Division reach Gasr el Arid in the area ordered.

Africa Corps battle headquarters has been transferred and was 10 km. east of Gambut at midday.

In spite of the original plans, Army orders the Africa Corps to be ready to move at 1700 hours. The GOC is ordered to advanced Army battle headquarters at Cantoniere Gambut, and receives the following orders:

The enemy is in full retreat eastwards and must be left no time to reorganise. Units will therefore continue their advance eastwards, and days set aside for rest are cancelled. The Africa Corps will move forward at 1930 hours and reach the area north of Garet el Dom. From there the Africa Corps will continue its advance southwards on 23 June and then attack on both sides of the desert track through the barbed wire entanglements towards the east.

After the GOC returns orders to this effect are issued verbally to divisional Operations Officer. 15th Panzer Division will advance on the right, the 21st Panzer Division on the left. The attack must begin at 1930 hours irrespective of whether all units have been brought up or supply measures fully carried out. Units may expect a rest period in the Garet el Doma area until 23 June.

1930: Both divisions advance southwards, making easy progress and without encountering enemy forces. However, the enemy is occasionally illuminating the area with parachute flares, and seems to be expecting an outflanking thrust from the south.

/24.00:

2400: Both divisions are still advancing. GHQ is moving between the two divisions to the new Corps battle headquarters at Bir Bu Meliha.

Divisional commanders are ordered to Corps battle headquarters at 1000 hours to receive orders for the attack.

First line reinforcement battalions are brought forward to Tobruk to reinforce the garrison.

The Chief of General Staff resumed his duties at GHQ today.

23 June 1942

0020: 21st Panzer Division, operating on the left, has reached the area north-east of Garet et Doma as ordered. Africa Corps battle headquarters is situated at Bir Bu Meliha. The 15th Panzer Division is still moving forward.

0250: 15th Panzer Division reports that it will stop north of the area arranged during the night and move off again at dawn.

0550: 15th Panzer Division is also in the area north-west of Garet et Doma as ordered. There are no enemy forces in front of the division, and 21st Panzer Division only reports an enemy reconnaissance patrol.

0740: The Army order to attack at 1400 hours is received. The order is not clear as it contains a misprint, and the Africa Corps can therefore take no further action for the time being.

0945: Clearly-stated Army orders are received. The attack will be launched at 1400 hours in an easterly direction along a line roughly 8 km. west of the barbed wire barrier. Divisions are notified accordingly. It is unlikely that the attack will be delayed by the late arrival of orders. The commander of the 21st Panzer Division receives express orders for the attack personally; the 15th Panzer Division receives the order by radio, as its commander lost his way en route to battle headquarters.

There is now weak artillery fire in the southern part of the Africa Corps area. 21st Panzer Division brings some prisoners in and reports armoured reconnaissance cars east of the barbed wire barriers. The enemy Air Force is very active today, but there is no sign of the Luftwaffe.

GHQ shares the divisions' doubts as to whether the plans arranged can be carried out considering the present supply situation, particularly as regards fuel, but does not wish to remonstrate with Army on this account as a thrust southwards may improve the entire situation.

1300: 21st Panzer Division moves up at 1300 hours and 15th Panzer Division at 1345 hours. GHQ advances between the two divisions. Divisions are instructed to keep to the central line of advance and to reconnoitre the enemy eastern and southern wing. 15th Panzer Division begins to lag behind. It would be better for the division on the right to advance more quickly as it has the greatest distance to cover owing to the turn to the right.

1530: 21st Panzer Division turns eastwards. The division is under weak artillery fire from the east and there are some armoured reconnaissance cars in front of it. There is no contact with the 15th Panzer Division, which is consequently instructed to move more quickly.

1700: 15th Panzer Division reports that it has arrived in the area ordered. The division is not in contact with the enemy. A report is sent to Army that the 21st Panzer Division was ready to attack at 1645 hours. Army urges units to attack as soon as possible.

/1800:

- 1800: Zero hour. The 21st Panzer Division attacks at the time ordered. GHQ continues to move forward along the central line of advance (the desert track running from west to east).
- 1840: The 15th Panzer Division also attacks and similarly comes under weak artillery fire. Enemy forces in front of the Africa Corps, consisting of isolated vehicle concentrations east of the barbed wire barrier, soon fall back. 15th Panzer Division slowly gains contact with the 21st Panzer Division.
- 1930: Army reports that the 90th Light Division, advancing to the north of the Africa Corps, has broken through the frontier positions. The 21st Panzer Division reaches the barbed wire barrier at the same time, and the 15th Panzer Division is approaching within sight of it. GHQ itself is also quite near the barrier. 15th Panzer Division is instructed to organise the crossing. This order seems to be necessary as the division is piling up.
- 2030: The 15th Panzer Division has also reached the wire. The 21st Panzer Division is continuing its advance eastwards and reaches its first objective some 5 km. east of the wire just before nightfall.
- The Africa Corps intends to press on during the night. This plan coincides with an Army order received later.
- In accordance with orders the divisions resume their advance eastwards.

24 June 1942

- 0100: Advanced units of the Africa Corps are moving south-eastwards from Alam el Arba. At the moment there is no contact with the 21st Panzer Division.
- 0200: GHQ rests 5 km. north-west of Alam el Arba until 1445 hours. Divisions are ordered to report when they resume their advance, as it is presumed that they will also rest.
- 0545: 21st Panzer Division reports that it has reached Alam el Arba (the point where units turn north-eastwards).
- There are no enemy forces in front of the Africa Corps. The C. in C. also radios that the enemy is apparently in retreat. The Africa Corps will push forward as quickly as possible. GHQ which has been advancing along the east-west desert track since 0445 hours, has the impression that both divisions have moved too far away from this line.
- 0650: GHQ is situated at Alam el Mota. Enemy forces in front of GHQ fall back after an attack by the Africa Corps battle echelon. There is nothing to be seen of the two divisions.
- Just as Army had received a report that everything was proceeding smoothly, the 15th Panzer Division reports that it is unable to continue its advance owing to lack of fuel. Its advanced units are still south-west of Alam el Mota and are not in contact with enemy forces. GHQ orders the division to pool its petrol and form pursuit groups, which will resume the advance immediately. However, the division has no fuel at all. Later the division is ordered to investigate the reasons for this situation and submit a report. It appears that the division is not to blame; the fuel shortage was caused by supply columns not arriving on time. A report must be sent to Army that the advance cannot be resumed until units have refuelled.

/0800:

21st Panzer Division reports that the defence works of the British 5th Brigade have been cleared. It is assumed that as the enemy has evacuated this important cornerstone of the Sollum front, he will also abandon Sollum itself. It is now more important than ever for the Africa Corps to push quickly eastwards and block the retreat of at least some enemy units. This will hardly be possible, however, owing to the shortage of fuel. The 21st Panzer Division also reports that its fuel is low and that its spearheads are halting at Bir Diquash.

Army reports that the enemy is retreating eastwards as had been expected. The Africa Corps will advance south and the 90th Light Division north of the railway line. Objective for the day is 50 km. south-east of Sidi Barrani.

After a preliminary order 21st Panzer Division is instructed to form a pursuit group. The new Africa Corps centre line of advance is Bir Diquash - Bir Thalatha - Qabr Abu Mahata. The area north-west of Qabr Abu Mahata is the objective for the day. The 15th Panzer Division is notified accordingly. The area 5 km. south-west of Qabr Abu Mahata is its objective.

The 21st Panzer Division battle group moves off eastwards. The situation on the 15th Panzer Division front remains unchanged. The 90th Light Division is still in hot pursuit of the enemy.

No new reports have been received from the 21st Panzer Division. 15th Panzer Division will not be able to move forward before 1600 hours. Both divisions receive orders to form auxiliary columns. The Quartermaster is instructed to send fuel forward as quickly as possible. 15th Panzer Division is again instructed to send a pursuit group forward to the objective for the day as soon as fuel arrives.

21st Panzer Division and GHQ move forward again. Divisional reconnaissance report the high ground at Sofafi clear of the enemy. Supply dumps found by the division have mostly been destroyed.

The 15th Panzer Division pursuit group also moves forward. The Africa Corps extends the divisional centre line of advance to point 160 (24 km. south of Mersa Angeila). The ultimate defence areas are fixed as follows:-

21st Panzer Division - Bir el Arag - point 195

15th Panzer Division - point 195 - Qabr Abu Raydan

GHQ is continuing its advance along the centre line and is about 10 km. north-east of Alam Dinash at the moment. 21st Panzer Division reports that it wishes to rest from dusk onwards. Owing to increased fuel expenditure it is doubtful whether the objective could be reached if the advance were continued during the night. At the moment the division is making good progress, and its advanced units are about 12 km. north-east of Alam Dinash. There is no contact with the Graf pursuit group as its radio transmitter has broken down. The division receives orders that its advanced units must reach the new defence area and the main body of the division the Qabr Abu Raydan area.

21st Panzer Division again reports that it wishes to halt at 1945 hours. Orders are issued to continue the advance. The division is making good progress; the Graf unit is only a short way in front, as the result of an encounter with enemy forces.

The 15th Panzer Division pursuit group is lagging far behind.

The 21st Panzer Division advance slows down later. Army is informed accordingly.

21st Panzer Division has reached the Alam el Iqab area. The 15th Panzer Division has moved forward again in the meantime and is still in the area

/north-

north-east of Alam el Nota and is therefore about 50 km. behind. The divisional pursuit group is 5 km. south-west of Bir el Thalatha and is about the same distance behind the main body of the 21st Panzer Division. There is no contact with enemy forces.

2400: The divisions continue the advance north-eastwards. GHQ is situated 5 km. north-east of Alam el Iqab during the night.

In spite of a deep thrust the Africa Corps did not succeed in reaching the objective of the day. This was due solely to supply difficulties (fuel) and not to lack of fighting spirit or inadequate effort on the part of commanders and troops. It is expected that fuel difficulties will be overcome on 25 June by supplies from the Quartermaster, and that the delay caused today will be made good then. The enemy air force was very active today and several attacks were carried out. No Luftwaffe operations were observed.

25 June 1942

21st Panzer Division takes up defensive positions around Qabr Abu Raydan during the night. 15th Panzer Division continues to move forward and catches up. The division still has no contact with the Warrelmann pursuit group. There are considerable terrain difficulties to be overcome in places. The panzer regiment is still held up. GHQ moved off at dawn; Hill 195 has been chosen as Corps battle headquarters.

0600: 15th Panzer Division is 15 km. south-west of Bir el Thalatha.

As regards units on the flank, it is known that XX Army Corps operating on the right, is lagging behind, but that on its left the 90th Light Division has advanced further to the east. There are only weak enemy forces in front of the Africa Corps. The Graf pursuit group is involved in an artillery engagement east of Hill 195.

0630: 15th Panzer Division and GHQ continue to move forward. The panzer regiment is now about 30 km. behind.

21st Panzer Division can presumably move forward again at 1300 hours. The division has taken some fuel from captured enemy dumps, but this method of acquisition is proving difficult as enemy dumps are situated far apart, are well camouflaged, and have sometimes been destroyed. Divisional search parties are continually active. The enemy has apparently fallen back to Mersa Matruh. Divisions are ordered to push at least some units forward in spite of the fuel shortage, to keep on the enemy's heels. 15th Panzer Division can presumably advance into the operational area ordered, but Panzer Regiment 8 will have to remain where it is until the fuel columns arrive.

0920: GHQ rests at Hatiyet Kabbash. A report is received at last from the 15th Panzer Division pursuit group, which was involved in a successful engagement during the morning. The 15th Panzer Division itself is still catching up. The situation of the 21st Panzer Division remains unchanged. After a short engagement the divisional pursuit group continues its advance eastwards. There are still only enemy reconnaissance patrols in strength in front of the Africa Corps.

1200: 15th Panzer Division arrives in its operational area. GHQ is still situated in the same place. It is planned to move forward on Hill 195 at 1500 hours.

1300: 21st Panzer Division resumes the advance into its operational area. The divisions are instructed to link up on the flanks. In addition, 15th Panzer Division is ordered to bring its tanks up for tomorrow.

/Army

Army orders an attack to be launched tomorrow in a south-easterly direction from an area about 30 km. east of that held hitherto. XX Army Corps will attack on the right and the 90th Light Division on the left. Divisions are ordered to advance accordingly beyond their defence areas today. Army also reports that reconnaissance units have been sent out to the south-east and that the whole length of the coastal road is open for supply traffic.

- 1550: 21st Panzer Division has reached its operational area. It will rest until 1700 hours and then move forward again. Both divisions are ordered to be ready for action at 1430 hours tomorrow. In so far as the fuel situation permits, divisions will move up to the area today.
- 1800: 15th Panzer Division reports that only parts of the division will be able to continue the advance, and that the panzer regiment, part of which is on the move, can proceed only about 40 km. The 21st Panzer Division is moving forward.
- 15th Panzer Division inquires whether the pursuit group is to move forward today and is answered in the negative.

- 1900: 21st Panzer Division is still moving forward into the assembly area. The Graf pursuit group continues to advance in front of the division.

The fuel situation continues to be serious. Allocations brought up by supply columns are not adequate, and it is doubtful whether the attack can begin tomorrow, especially as no fuel has been captured. GHQ considers that at least 1,240 tons of fuel are required for the attack.

- 2220: 15th Panzer Division reports that it will probably be able to collect 1,240 tons of fuel for motorised units. In the meantime the C. in C. visits the division and alters the Africa Corps sector of attack. He also orders reconnaissance operations in strength to be carried out in the Mersa Matruh area. Africa Corps thereupon orders a new centre line of advance (Hill 195 to point 210). GHQ agrees with the 15th Panzer Division plan to reconnoitre Mersa Matruh in strength.

The division wishes to attack at 0430 hours tomorrow morning.

21st Panzer Division has moved too far north owing to a miscalculation. The division is taking up defensive positions at Ghot el Duda during the night.

GHQ set up battle headquarters on Hill 195 during the afternoon.

The enemy Air Force was particularly active again today. Almost continuous bombing attacks were carried out. The enemy also carried out bombing operations at night. In the late evening attacks of long duration were made on GHQ with the help of flares. Only the battle echelon suffered losses, however.

The fuel problem which has existed during the past few days cannot be considered solved. The tank situation has also deteriorated owing to the strain of the recent march. Each division still has about 30 serviceable tanks.

26 June 1942

- 0540: 15th Panzer Division reconnaissance operations in strength are in progress at Mersa Matruh. The division itself has not yet attacked owing to lack of fuel. Columns were dispersed by continuous night bombing attacks, and raids were also made on stocks of captured fuel. On inquiry the division reported that it will probably be able to attack at 0900 hours. The panzer regiment is closing up.

/0730:

- 0730: GHQ moves forward in the direction of 206.
- 0900: 15th Panzer Division moves forward. The division has about 930 tons of fuel. 21st Panzer Division, which has not yet changed position, has about the same amount of fuel available. There is no contact with enemy forces. Continuous bombing attacks have been in progress again since dawn.

The Chief of General Staff visits Army, and radios that the centre line of advance will remain as originally ordered. The 15th Panzer Division report based on yesterday's discussion with the C. in C. was therefore incorrect. The order is issued in written form to the 21st Panzer Division and the 15th Panzer Division is informed verbally by the Chief of General Staff.

With the exception of some reconnaissance patrols in the north-east there are no enemy forces in front of the Africa Corps.

- 1022: 15th Panzer Division continues to move into the assembly area; its advanced units are at Gabr Abu Mahata.
- 1120: The division is in the Alam Abdallah area. Only reconnaissance patrols of the 21st Panzer Division are in contact with the enemy. The main body of the enemy forces seems to be on the coast. 15th Panzer Division is ordered to renew contact with the motorised corps.
- 1220: 15th Panzer Division reaches the approximate area of Bir el Mamin. Corps battle headquarters is situated here at present. The GOC has the impression that the Werneyer group, which can be observed from Corps battle headquarters, is advancing too slowly. 15th Panzer Division is therefore ordered to push the group forward.
- 1345: For the first time the enemy makes his presence known in the south. Battle group Werneyer is bombarded by artillery from this direction.
- In the meantime the 21st Panzer Division receives fuel supplies, and reports that it will be ready to attack at 1600 hours.
- Corps battle headquarters is being brought forward to Ghot Daihum.
- Enemy air activity continues to increase. Bombing attacks are being made every hour, causing considerable losses. There is nothing to be seen of the Luftwaffe.
- 1445: Panzer Regiment 8 has closed up to the 15th Panzer Division. 21st Panzer Division moves up. As no further orders from Army are received, instructions are issued on the data brought up by the Chief of General Staff; these instructions are to attack in a south-easterly direction at 1600 hours. Corps battle headquarters is situated at Bir Raqabet Mastura.
- 1600: 21st Panzer Division is ready to attack, and is in contact with the 90th Light Division on its left flank. The strong 15th Panzer Division reconnaissance forces are also in contact with the 90th Light Division. The GOC personally informs the commanding officer of the 15th Panzer Division of plans and the conduct of operations, and accompanies the divisional attacking force.
- 1645: 21st Panzer Division launches its attack. 15th Panzer Division is held up at first, but then succeeds in catching up.

According to enemy reports from the area there are strong concentrations around Mersa Matruh.

/The

The Africa Corps attack is making good progress. Enemy air attacks continue, and a considerable number of casualties are caused in an attack on GHQ.

1815: 21st Panzer Division has reached the partly mined Matruh - Siwa desert track. Enemy forces are weak, but heavy concentrations of vehicles can be observed further east of the track. The 15th Panzer Division attack is being carried forward very slowly. Enemy artillery fire is gradually becoming heavier, and Corps battle headquarters is under fire at times. Enemy forces east of the track are retiring eastwards.

1940: 15th Panzer Division encounters enemy tanks. 21st Panzer Division is now feeling the effects of the 15th Panzer Division's failure to advance, and its flank is under fire from the south.

Units reconnoitring Mersa Matruh report further enemy forces in this area, which are being attacked by the 90th Light Division.

2130: 21st Panzer Division halts its advance in front of an extensive minefield. The division intends to move forward again on the morning of 27 June after cutting lanes through the field. 15th Panzer Division is not encountering much opposition now and is making good progress towards its objective.

2230: GHQ orders both divisions to resume the attack on the morning of 27 June. An Army order received later contains the same order for the German Africa Corps.

Corps battle headquarters was transferred to Bir Sidi Ali at dusk.

Enemy bombing attacks continue during the night.

27 June 1942

0100: 15th Panzer Division has reached its objective. Enemy forces fell back hurriedly. Most of the division is on Hill 224, whilst some units are covering Hill 227. Units of the 21st Panzer Division cut lanes through the minefield during the night.

0635: As no further Army orders are received, the order to resume the attack is issued. 15th Panzer Division will take Bir Abu Shayit by way of Raqabath el Ratam, and 21st Panzer Division Bir Shincina by way of Abar Zahy. GHQ intends to encircle and destroy the enemy forces encountered yesterday evening, which are thought to be still south of the minefield.

GHQ moves south at dawn. The GOC goes forward to the 15th Panzer Division, which is under heavy artillery fire from all sides and has enemy tanks on its right flank. The enemy even attacks with tanks from the north-east. Advanced units of the 21st Panzer Division have passed through the minefield. There are no enemy forces in front of the division, but patrols locate a strongpoint further away in the path of its advance.

0755: When daylight came it appeared that the 15th Panzer Division was still east of point 224. The division has gone over to the defensive, as it is being attacked from several directions by tanks. 21st Panzer Division, advancing south-east, has reached Bir el Gibb. Orders to attack were therefore issued again. Divisional reconnaissance is still observing the Mersa Matruh area, which has apparently been abandoned. There is no contact with XX Army Corps attacking on the right. In view of enemy air activity and to prevent transport concentrating, Africa Corps orders XX Army Corps not to run into the 15th Panzer Division.

0225: The enemy armoured attack on the 15th Panzer Division has been repulsed. 13 enemy tanks were destroyed. It appears that the enemy still has a

/strongpoint

strongpoint on the northern flank of the division. Heavy transport concentrations are reported in front of both divisions. The attack on the 21st Panzer Division sector is making good progress.

The C.in C. is with the 21st Panzer Division, which he orders to block the hill slope south-west of Bir Shineina.

GHQ advances into the area north of Bir el Salihat. Artillery fire from the south causes losses amongst the battle echelon. The GOC is still with the 15th Panzer Division.

1030: Army orders the 21st Panzer Division attack to be supported by Army artillery, but as the positions of the latter are not known Africa Corps cannot make contact. A report dropped by an aircraft at Africa Corps, according to which there are 1,000 enemy vehicles in the El Buheib area, is passed on to Army.

In the meantime the 15th Panzer Division has destroyed 9 more navigator tanks. The division has the impression that it has advanced deep into the enemy positions in the dark. The enemy is apparently moving his armour to the right wing, having observed the 21st Panzer Division advance. The latter is ordered to cut off enemy forces opposite the 15th Panzer Division. The 21st Panzer Division wishes to block the desert track west of Bir Shineina as well. In the opinion of the division there is about 1 enemy division in the pocket being formed.

1208: 21st Panzer Division is ordered to use its artillery against this enemy force. In addition, GHQ requests dive-bomber attacks. 15th Panzer Division is continuing its defensive operations. 21st Panzer Division again reports its intention to block the desert track. It appears that enemy forces are now occupying bunkers at Mersa Matruh.

1245: 21st Panzer Division also blocks the Ghebel slope between the track and Bir Shineina (front facing south-west). There is nothing to be seen of XX Army Corps on the right. The Ariete Division is resting further to the rear. The encircling movement planned by the GOC can be carried out only if the Ariete Division at least participates in closing the pocket.

1340: The C.in C. thereupon places XX Army Corps under the command of Africa Corps. The Operations Officer is sent out to the divisions of XX Army Corps with verbal orders. The Ariete Division is found in the Bir el Qiseir area and the Trieste Division south-west of it. Both divisions have no orders from their Corps; XX Army Corps H.Q. is still some 50 km. further west. The divisional commanders are prepared to carry out the direct orders of the Africa Corps and to attack in the direction of Raqabet el Ratam at 1730 hours. The Trieste Division will advance on the right, the Ariete Division on the left. Direction of attack etc. will be marked on the map. The Operations Officer of the Africa Corps will remain with the Ariete Division to ensure constant contact between the Africa Corps and the left wing of the (motorised) Corps.

1400: 21st Panzer Division attacks towards the south. Agents report that the enemy is apparently prepared to withdraw eastwards. The importance of taking Hill 222 is impressed on the division again. The division need not worry about its left flank and rear, as the Littorio Division is moving into the area north of Bir Shineina. The C.in C. also points out that it is more practicable for the 21st Panzer Division to attack to the south-west than to the west.

1500: 21st Panzer Division reaches the high ground south of Bir Shineina and is turning west, cutting off large enemy vehicle concentrations.

1700: 15th Panzer Division attacks again.

/1730:

1730: The Ariete Division also attacks, but makes only slow and hesitant progress.

The enemy is offering resistance everywhere, which is very stubborn in places, particularly in the 21st Panzer Division sector. As his escape route to the east is blocked he will probably attempt to break out to the south by way of Bir Khalda. He is actually withdrawing south-east in the 15th Panzer Division sector. XX Army Corps must now press forward quickly and deny him the possibility of retiring south-eastwards. The Corps is therefore urged to hurry and the northern wing is sent forward in the direction of Mabus Karima. Because of faulty radio communications, these orders do not reach the Operations Officer of the Africa Corps who is with XX Army Corps, and in any case it would not have been possible to increase the speed of the advance. The enemy tanks opposite the left wing of the 15th Panzer Division are retiring northwards. Their position later cannot be located in the dark.

GHQ continued to move forward behind the 15th Panzer Division. Battle headquarters will be situated on Hill 225.

1930: The C. in C.'s radio message which was sent off at 1722 hours arrives. According to this the 21st Panzer Division will move forward in the direction of Fuka in the evening.

GHQ gives the 21st Panzer Division a preliminary description of the situation. It is clear, however, that this operation will not be possible today owing to the enemy situation. A 21st Panzer Division attack in the direction of Fuka would mean sacrificing the success which has been achieved. Even though large enemy formations have broken out to the south owing to the Ariete and Trieste Divisions' failure to advance, it is possible that the enemy units still in the pocket will be destroyed. The 15th Panzer Division is now making good progress, and advanced units of XX Army Corps have reached Mabus Karima. GHQ is still following up the 15th Panzer Division. On the other hand, retreating enemy units in the 21st Panzer Division sector are increasing pressure considerably, and the division is obliged to go over to the defensive. There is no contact with the 15th Panzer Division west of Abu Shayit. In the evening units of the 21st Panzer Division fight hard defensive battles to repulse enemy attempts to break through. III/Motorised Infantry Regiment 104, which is being attacked by New Zealanders, suffers particularly heavy losses. Breaches of international law, such as the murder of wounded, occur during these actions.

2345: Army orders for tomorrow are received. After mopping up the area, the Africa Corps will remain ready to attack in the direction of Fuka.

The Africa Corps has succeeded, although not until the afternoon, in breaking down stubborn enemy resistance, destroying large enemy forces, and in thrusting deep into the fortified Mersa Matruh position. This advance has paved the way for further Africa Corps pursuit operations towards the east.

The enemy appears to be resuming the retreat along the whole front. Enemy air activity was slight today, indicating a further withdrawal of flying formations.

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2450: The north wing of the 15th Panzer Division will advance along the high ground to the track and destroy enemy forces. The 21st Panzer Division will also resume its attack in a south-westerly direction, as planned by the division. The north wing of XX Army Corps will pursue the enemy by way of Mabus Karima and cut off his escape route to the south. After this has been done the 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions and XX Army Corps will remain ready to carry out pursuit operations in an easterly direction.

/0140:

- 0140: The night is very disturbed on the 21st Panzer Division sector. A tank battle develops on the right wing. The enemy is attempting to move off south in the direction of Chalda.
- 0203: The division reports that most of the attacks have been repulsed. The enemy succeeded in breaking through in places, and the main enemy force is moving off towards the south. German forces, therefore, did not succeed in closing the pocket.
- Attacks against the 21st Panzer Division are increasing in violence. There is still no contact between the 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions. The 15th Panzer Division is still engaged in mopping-up operations.
- 0330: 15th Panzer Division has reached the high ground west of Abu Shayit and is taking up defensive positions.
- 0520: Contact has at last been established between the two divisions. A 15th Panzer Division query, as to whether it should continue in an easterly direction, is settled. The division will mop up the area up to and including the track. There is no contact with enemy forces, all of which appear to have escaped towards the south. The right wing of the 21st Panzer Division is in the Bir Abu Batta area and the left wing at Qaret el Tihdeira. The main enemy attacks towards the east to relieve pressure were made against the northern wing of the division.
- 0730: The Operations Officer returns from the Ariete Division. It is now confirmed that all the orders issued for today's advance did not reach the Ariete Division. Similar orders are therefore issued again by radio.
- The divisions continue to mop up the battle area, reorganise their units which became confused during the night, and carry out supply operations. No fighting is in progress. The 15th Panzer Division is in the area around Bir Raqabet el Ratam, where Corps battle headquarters is situated. A battle group set off in an easterly direction at 2300 hours yesterday.
- 0945: Several Army messages are received in quick succession. Some of these messages have a 2-hour transmission period and also arrive in the wrong order. The Africa Corps will continue the pursuit in the direction of Fuka immediately. Three battle groups will be sent out from Fuka, one in a south-easterly direction and the other two along the coastal road. Army plans to reach the area south of El Daba and cut off enemy motorised units there. The 90th Light Division is at Mersa Matruh and the Littorio Division still in the area north of Bir Shineina. The Ariete and Trieste Divisions are behind the Africa Corps in the Deir Abu Khalifa area.
- 1010: The 15th Panzer Division is notified accordingly and will attack at 1130 hours as it is some distance behind the 21st Panzer Division. Bir Abu Shayit - Bir Abu el Fakarin has been fixed as the centre line of advance.
- 1108: 21st Panzer Division receives orders to attack at 1230 hours. 15th Panzer Division will reach the area south and south-west of Hagfet Abdalla and 21st Panzer Division the area north and north-west of this place. Army urges divisions to attack quickly. The delay is due solely to orders arriving too late.

The GOC and Chief of Staff went to the 21st Panzer Division to speed up the attack. Advanced battle headquarters is situated at Bir Abu Shayit. The Ariete and Trieste Divisions are informed that the Africa Corps will attack eastwards, and are again instructed to reach the areas as ordered.

/1130:

- 1130: GHQ forms up to advance behind the 15th Panzer Division. As the division is distributed in depth, GHQ moves forward later and will advance along the centre line of advance between the two divisions.
- 1215: 15th Panzer Division attacks 45 minutes late and is in contact with the Ariete Division. Reconnaissance has located no enemy units in the south.
- 1330: The Motorised Corps is no longer under Africa Corps command for pursuit operations. In the 15th Panzer Division sector pursuit groups are only a short distance in front of the main body of the division. Both divisions are in contact with each other. Army continues to urge the divisions to move forward more quickly.
- 1500: Both divisions are advancing quickly eastwards and are not in contact with enemy forces. They are informed that the Littorio Division is still in the Bir Himir - Bir el Gerari area. The 15th Panzer Division is advancing some distance away from the centre line of advance and both divisions are therefore ordered to move nearer to it. The 15th Panzer Division is also instructed to carry out reconnaissance operations on its right flank. GHQ assumes that the enemy units encountered yesterday are still in the south, but Army reports that they have withdrawn some distance eastwards.
- 1650: The 21st Panzer Division encounters the enemy for the first time, coming under artillery fire in the Bir el Wisheika area. The Littorio Division, which is holding back, is in sight on the left, but there is no contact with XX Army Corps on the right. The Corps is lagging far behind and has probably reached the track by now.
- From the areas reached it should be possible to make effective use of artillery against enemy units retreating along the approximate course of the coastal road. Divisions are therefore ordered to get artillery into position as quickly as possible.
- 1800: The divisions continue to advance quickly. The 15th Panzer Division is still not keeping to the centre line of advance and has only visual contact with the 21st Panzer Division. Army reports that the situation is unchanged.
- 1845: 21st Panzer Division reports that it has reached the high ground shortly after a query about this had been sent off. There are large transport concentrations in Fuka, and the division intends to push its main force forward in this direction. The 15th Panzer Division is lagging behind, and reports enemy tanks in front of its right flank and isolated enemy patrols in the south. The division is still some 15 km. away from the high ground.
- GHQ is still moving forward; Corps battle headquarters was set up at El Deikhiyat after nightfall.
- 2025: 21st Panzer Division is involved in an action at Fuka. Radio transmission is very bad this evening, causing considerable delay to reports and orders. For example, Corps did not receive the report on the action at Fuka until 2200 hours. 15th Panzer Division is ordered to cover the right flank of the 21st Panzer Division from the high ground. The enemy must be prevented from advancing on the 21st Panzer Division from the south and encircling it and other units in Fuka.
- 210: 21st Panzer Division reports that Fuka airfield has been cut off and the road and railway blocked. Army orders for 29 June have therefore been carried out already. The Africa Corps has completely made up for lost time by its quick advance.
- The supply situation continues serious as lines of communication increase in length.
- The tank situation is becoming worse every day. Today there are altogether 41 tanks still serviceable.

/29 June 1942

29 June 1942

- 0035: 15th Panzer Division reports that the Werneyer pursuit group has pushed forward south-east into the area of point 136.
- 0115: The following orders are issued for 29 June:
- 15th Panzer Division: hold areas reached, command immediate front with artillery, reconnoitre to the south. The division will also continue to cover the flank of the 21st Panzer Division.
- 21st Panzer Division: hold areas reached, block coastal road and railway, command immediate front with artillery.
- A report is sent to Army that the road and railway are already blocked.
- 0310: Units of the 10th Indian Brigade which broke out of Mersa Matruh are attempting to break through to the south-east. Every attempt is repulsed in spite of thick fog, but the situation becomes very confused at times.
- 0730: The situation can be estimated clearly again. Lorries and weapons have been brought in as well as a large number of prisoners. The total number of prisoners taken in the Fuka area amounts to more than 1,800 men. According to prisoners' statements, Mersa Matruh is to be evacuated. There are only isolated enemy vehicles far away to the south-east of the Africa Corps.
- 0800: Corps passes on an Army order, according to which the Africa Corps is to attack towards the area about 40 km. south of El Daba.
- 0845: According to the Corps order issued in written form, the attack will begin at 1600 hours with the 21st Panzer Division advancing on the left and the 15th Panzer Division on the right. Only the 21st Panzer Division will be given a centre line of advance. Advanced detachments will be sent on ahead. To prevent the 15th Panzer Division's advance being slowed down by the panzer regiment, this unit will be used in the centre. This measure proves particularly fortunate later on.
- Army is informed and in turn issues instructions regarding operations by units on the flank. The Army order received later does not cause any change to be made in instructions already issued by the Africa Corps.
- 1055: 15th Panzer Division reports that tanks have now appeared in front of the Werneyer group. The Africa Corps must therefore expect to encounter enemy forces on the right flank.
- 1200: The situation and further Africa Corps plans are discussed in detail with divisional Operations Officer. Particular attention is paid to units at Fuka being brought up at the right time and the transfer of the 15th Panzer Division to the south before the attack. This measure is necessary as only the high ground to the north of the 15th Panzer Division is possible for vehicles and the 21st Panzer Division can only move up on to the height itself in this direction.
- It is quiet everywhere; there is no contact with enemy forces at any point along the front.
- 1500: 15th Panzer Division reports that units of the 90th Light Division are already in Sidi Haneish. Army had ordered reconnaissance units to be sent forward to this place.

/1600:

- 1600: The Africa Corps attacks south-eastwards on time. Advanced units of the 15th Panzer Division soon come under enemy artillery fire. The 21st Panzer Division is held up through the fault of the 15th Panzer Division. As the latter is being held up by artillery fire it is ordered to take cover
- 1715: The spearhead of the 15th Panzer Division has attacked again. GHQ is moving forward along the centre line of advance between the two divisions. A request to Army for information regarding units on the flank coincides with a report on this subject, according to which Reconnaissance Unit 3 and the Littorio Division have been sent in on the left of the Africa Corps.
- Good progress is being made; short delays are caused by a minefield.
- 1820: Panzer Regiment 8 is under heavy artillery fire from the south. 25 tanks have moved into the rear of the 15th Panzer Division, and the division halts Panzer Regiment 8 to protect the extended flank of the division. Tanks are also reported in front of the division. On the other hand there are only isolated tanks in front of the 21st Panzer Division and these fall back eastwards.
- 1930: 15th Panzer Division is still engaged in fighting. In reply to an Africa Corps request for participation by XX Army Corps which is advancing on the Africa Corps' right, Army reports that XX Army Corps is following the Africa Corps.
- 1940: 21st Panzer Division rests its tanks and intends to continue the advance when the moon rises. The GOC, who is with the 21st Panzer Division at the time, approves this decision.
- 2010: 15th Panzer Division, which is lagging behind somewhat, also rests. There are still enemy tanks on the division's right flank.
- 2200: 15th Panzer Division resumes the advance, and the 21st Panzer Division moves forward again shortly afterwards. Divisions make good progress without encountering enemy forces; only the terrain creates difficulties in places. At midnight both divisions are still moving into the area ordered.
- Enemy air activity today was less than of late, and no bombing attacks were made.

30 June 1942

The advance is continuing smoothly and without enemy opposition. The 15th Panzer Division is lagging behind somewhat.

- 0240: 21st Panzer Division has reached the Hiseiyat el Qiseir area as ordered. 15th Panzer Division is moving up. Corps battle headquarters is situated 2 km. southwest of Hiseiyat el Qiseir.
- 0520: 15th Panzer Division has also arrived in the area ordered. Units are no longer in contact with the enemy.
- 0820: The noise of battle can be heard in the north-east. Single enemy vehicles are sighted in the south-east, but there are no enemy forces in front. An Army order (transmission period almost 7 hours) does not cause any change to be made to orders already issued.
- 0900: A fresh Army order is received, according to which an attack will be made in the north on 1 July. The assembly area will be reached during the night so as to give the enemy the impression that the Africa Corps is still in the same area. Divisions are ordered to be ready to resume the advance at 1200 hours, but this is later changed to 1745 hours. There is just about

/enough

enough fuel to enable the divisions to reach the area ordered. There are no fresh reports on the enemy. The terrain in the south is very unfavourable. The advanced detachment of the 15th Panzer Division is at Qaret el Rikab Minqar. Army orders contact to be made with XX Army Corps advancing on the right.

The move northwards is discussed with senior divisional General Staff officers by telephone. Owing to extremely difficult terrain the 15th Panzer Division is obliged to use the same hill descents as the 21st Panzer Division.

1200: According to an Army report the enemy forces north of the Africa Corps are retiring eastwards. The Africa Corps is ordered to destroy these forces. The 21st Panzer Division is sent in too late, however, and the enemy succeeds in breaking through to the east.

Nothing of importance occurs during the early afternoon. A sandstorm is raging and the heat is intense. A Corps order, similar to instructions already given verbally, is issued for the move into the assembly area.

1600: Enemy tanks and infantry attack from the west while preparations are being made to move off. 21st Panzer Division is ordered to destroy this enemy force. The Africa Corps and GHQ itself are under heavy artillery fire. The Africa Corps battle echelon must also be used to prevent a breakthrough. The attack is repulsed and German forces lose contact with the enemy in the sandstorm. Units in action are gradually released for the transfer.

1800: The Army order for the attack on 1 July is received, having a transmission period of over 3 hours. Both divisions are notified accordingly by radio.

In the meantime the divisions have moved forward. The main body of the 21st Panzer Division has overcome the hill slope and is resting from dusk until moonrise. The 15th Panzer Division is being delayed by the difficult terrain which it must cover in the dark. The Werner group arrives back at the division in the meantime. The group should remain in its area as long as possible to deceive the enemy. Army orders the march to be resumed in the moonlight. The 15th Panzer Division is informed by radio that the orders must be carried out at the right time at all costs.

2200: 21st Panzer Division has moved forward again. The terrain is good north of the hill slope and good progress is being made at the moment.

2310: 21st Panzer Division also encounters difficult terrain. The Africa Corps cannot be expected to be in position at zero hour.

Enemy air activity increased again today and several bombing attacks were carried out.

The tank situation has improved slightly. The Africa Corps has a total of 55 serviceable.

#### A. H. B. 6 Distribution

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