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THE MEDITERRANEAN CAMPAIGN

Reports on Axis problems of supply and  
on German - Italian cooperation,  
May - August, 1941

TRANSLATED BY

AIR MINISTRY, A.H.B. 6.

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## C O N T E N T S

Directive issued from H.Q. of the C.-in-C. Luftwaffe Operations Staff;  
dated May 6, 1941.

Conference with the Italian General Staff, Brenner, June 2, 1941.

Report from General Cavallero to Chef OKW, Field Marshal Keitel;  
dated June 2, 1941.

Agreement reached on the operational activity of the German and Italian  
Air Forces in the Central and Eastern Mediterranean; dated July 18, 1941.

Supplies for Fliegerführer Afrika and the German Afrika Korps;  
dated August 12, 1941.

Conference between Chef OKW and General Cavallero, on August 29, 1941.

Directive issued from H.Q. of the C.-in-C. Luftwaffe  
Operations Staff, and dated May 6, 1941

The following points on war strategy in the Mediterranean have been approved by the Reichsmarschall. It is requested that they be passed on to the Supreme Command of the Italian Air Force. The Italian Liaison Officer on the Reichsmarschall's staff has been informed of the following aims and suggestions.

1. With the exception of those formations operating in Africa, Fliegerkorps X will be sent to Greece. Some of the units will begin their move in the first half of May 1941. The rest of the Fliegerkorps X will be brought over after transportation of the 15th Panzer Division has been completed. From its bases in Greece, Fliegerkorps X will undertake the following missions:

- a) Attacks on British naval forces at sea and in Alexandria.
- b) Attacks on British supplies coming through the Suez Canal and on rail communications from Ismaila.
- c) Protection of sea communications in the Aegean.
- d) At a later period, protection of convoys from Greece to North Africa can also be taken over.

Corresponding with the agreement already made with the Italian Navy, a clear subdivision of operational areas for both Air Forces will have to be made.

2. Suggestion for demarcation line between German and Italian operational areas. Provision can be made for this demarcation line being moved eastwards later, as soon as supplies from Greece can be taken direct to Africa.

3. In the opinion of the Reichsmarschall, the Italians could assume the following tasks within their operational area:

- a) Watch is to be maintained on the Western Mediterranean by concentrations of bomber and fighter formations in Sicily, Southern Italy and Sardinia; by attacks on British naval forces this area is to be protected from sorties made by the Gibraltar Fleet.
- b) Protection of supplies for forces in North Africa in the area east of Tunis as far as 20 deg. longitude and along the African coast. In connection with this, a constant watch must be kept on Malta as a sea and air base; operations must be carried out against the island by strong bomber and fighter forces. Armed reconnaissance of convoys at sea and along the African coast must be made in such a way that the bomber formations (which are to be available soon) can carry out their operations. Intensive and concentrated reconnaissance of those sea areas from which enemy naval forces can operate against our supply convoys must ensure that the enemy is spotted and attacked as early as possible.
- c) German and Italian army units operating in North Africa must be supported by at least 2 bomber Gruppen and 2 fighter Gruppen with modern aircraft types. In order to relieve the Italian Air Force H.Q. at Benghazi, it is suggested that these formations be made subordinate to Fliegerführer Afrika; in army support work, unity of command is absolutely necessary. The subordinate relationship to Fliegerführer Afrika would be fixed in the same way as that which applied to Fliegerkorps X during its operations in Sicily.

/ d)

- d) Ports of discharge which are important for our supplies must be protected by Italian flak and fighters. In this respect, first place should be given to the air defences of Tripoli and Benghazi, and later on of Tobruk.

4. In the German operational area the following cooperation from the Italian Air Force is desired:

- a) Torpedo-carrying bombers operating from Rhodes in attacks on British naval forces,
- b) Italian fighter formations operating to cover Rhodes and the islands in the Aegean,
- c) Preparation of reconnaissance forces ( 2-3 sea reconnaissance Staffeln ) for reconnaissance of the Royal Navy.

5. In order to ensure unity of command, the Italian Air Force formations (mentioned under 4.) operating in combined undertakings in the Eastern Mediterranean should be made subordinate to Fliegerkorps X. So as to facilitate the transmission of orders, it is suggested that an Italian Air Force General be seconded to Fliegerkorps X.

6. Should it be necessary to post bomber formations of Fliegerkorps X temporarily to Sicily, these forces would be subordinate to the Italian Air Force Headquarters in Sicily. This policy is in keeping with the necessity for unity of command within one operational area. It is requested that 2 airfields should be kept ready in case bombers or twin-engined fighters of Fliegerkorps X are sent to Sicily.

7. As it is absolutely necessary that operations from Sicily should not be interrupted it is suggested, in agreement with Fliegerkorps X, that the airfields being vacated be used as soon as possible by the Italian Air Force.

Conference with the Italian General Staff

Place: Brenner

Time: June 2, 1941

<u>Present were:</u>	Field Marshal Keitel	General Cavallero
	Lt.-General von Rintelen	Div. General Marras
	Major Christian	Brig. General Gandin

Points discussed:

I. Situations in the Near East

1. Iraq

Chef OKW gave the German interpretation of the development of the situation in Iraq. The government of Iraq was overthrown too soon, before help was ready. Germany, like Italy, was determined to give effective aid, but this failed because of the speedy collapse of the Iraqis' will to defend themselves and because of the difficulty of transporting troops, arms and supplies. Reference was made to the unbending attitude of the Turks and to the cooperation of the Vichy and Mandate governments. German forces had now been withdrawn because they could no longer prevent the collapse.

2. Syria

Owing to the extensive aid given by our forces to Iraq, the Mandate itself was in danger of being attacked. In order to remove any pretext for attack, German withdrawal from Syria had been ordered. The only people to stay were defence officers, whose presence would be camouflaged by their being in the organisation known as the I.W.St.K.

The High Commissioner was held to be reliable and loyal to the Vichy government. His position was difficult, because of unreliable de Gaullist elements amongst his troops. He thought that he could master them however and was determined to put up unconditional defence. The Axis powers were interested in holding Syria. Thus it would be necessary:

- (a) To permit mobilisation on frontiers where necessary.
- (b) In the event of a British attack, to free for use all materials in stock.
- (c) To approve reinforcements from France.
- (d) To give help with weapons where necessary.

The last item had already been approved by us. I.W.St.K. should be informed of measures (a) - (c).

General Cavallero agreed with the views expressed in 1. and 2.

3. Cyprus

The island was the key to the defence of Syria and to the elimination of British naval bases in the Eastern Mediterranean. Present state of defences rather low, but this would soon be altered. If it were decided to take the island, then speed would be necessary. At present, the Wehrmacht could not undertake the operations. The campaign for Crete was not easy and involved a great deal of bloodshed. Paratroops and airborne troops must be refitted first, and this would take time. Therefore it was suggested that the Italians should carry out operations from the Dodecanese.

/ Germans

Germans considered that it was possible to carry out a surprise troop landing from fast warships (cruisers and destroyers) approaching under cover of darkness. It was important to gain the airfields as soon as possible, to be able to bring over bombers and fighters; then the game would be won. The Reichsmarschall had already promised that the Luftwaffe would support the landing from the air and would ward off any British ships which tried to interfere with operations.

The key to success was rapid but thorough preparation and extreme secrecy.

General Cavallero agreed and would consider the suggestion.

## II. Negotiations with France

Chef OKW said that France was ready to cooperate with Germany; but there was a certain mistrust of Italy because of her claims on French territory. Public opinion in France was not at present favourable to a policy of cooperation with Italy. Germany had pledges which Italy did not possess (occupied zone, prisoners of war). French concessions were made essentially to Germany, and the French could not be forced to make the same concessions to Italy. It was essential that the Italians should agree to French demands which were approved by Germany. It was not desirable that the French should be humbugged by fresh Italian demands or an Italian refusal to agree in the present negotiations.

It was therefore requested that Italians should give up their demands for:

- (a) Availability of the port of Tunis for Italian shipping (question of prestige).
- (b) Negotiations with France to be made jointly by the Axis powers. I.W.St.K. to be informed of this.

German negotiations were effective throughout the common war effort made by the German and Italian nations; they served to open an extra shipping route to Libya, to take the burden from Italian ships by using French ships in French convoys, to obtain French war materials and vehicles for the Libyan theatre of war.

The Italians were requested to leave the negotiations with the French to Germany; Italian interests would be looked after.

There was discussion of the main points in the Paris protocol with special mention of the base at Dakar. If Bizerta were used as a port of discharge and Dakar as a base, the British would attack and the French would open fire on them (reference to Darlan's speech on the subject). But the Italians would have to remember that allowances must be made for French mobilisation in North and West Africa; otherwise Weygand might desert our cause.

General Cavallero agreed with Chef OKW and pointed out that the conference was to deal with decisions of a purely military and not of a political nature. He acknowledged the importance of a second shipping route to Africa, but he considered that even this route would be inadequate for the intended concentration in North Africa; Tunis would be required.

Chef OKW said that this was impossible at present, but it might be possible later. In his opinion, it would not be needed for the concentrations in North Africa.

/ III.

### III. North Africa

Chef OKW agreed with the opinion that the offensive against Egypt could not begin before autumn. Operational aims, forces available, time chosen and supply facilities were closely bound up in this question. General Cavallero said that in order to reach a power potential equal to every situation, the Italians must bring over 100,000 men and 14,000 vehicles.

Chef OKW said that it was the German opinion that the offensive should be carried out, not with a mass of troops, but with a small number of well equipped special troops. Strength of the attacking forces: 4 panzer divisions, 2 of them German, and 3 motorised divisions. More could not be provided. The strength of rear and defence troops must also be decreased, according to supply facilities. There could not be any superfluous consumers of food in North Africa, but only as many fighting men as could be supplied. The first task was to re-equip those troops who were now in action.

General Cavallero said that Italian divisions serving under the Africa Korps were worn out; they had lost 40-60% of their personnel and material. The vehicle situation was very bad, and the Pavia Division has only 27 lorries. Chef OKW realised this necessity, but considered the most pressing need to be the provision of flak and coastal artillery to afford better protection than before against enemy attacks on ports of discharge and supply dumps. It was therefore requested that the German flak and coastal artillery detachments in Naples should be brought over as quickly as possible.

After this, it was important that artillery reinforcements for the Africa Korps should be brought over, for one of the first conditions for subsequent operations would be the fall of Tobruk. At present, German and Italian troops could not reach it without heavy artillery. General Rommel thought that the siege of Tobruk could continue, even during the hot summer months.

#### Supply situation

Apart from supplying the fighting troops, it was absolutely necessary to make large scale provision of supplies and to prepare transport columns before the start of the offensive. Supplies for the German Afrika Korps alone amounted to 40-50,000 tons per month; in addition, there were supplies for the Italians. These demands must be met by increasing sea and coastal transport. It could not yet been seen how much weight could be taken off by using shipping via Bizerta, but 1,500 French lorries would take a big load off road transport. The Italians would get all the vehicles not required by the Afrika Korps. German air transports had very little space available.

The Italians alone must protect sea and coastal transports, because German air forces were being withdrawn from Sicily. The Italian Air Force must take over their tasks. Stronger Luftwaffe units were being posted to North Africa to protect the coast and coastal transport; this had been ordered by the Reichsmarschall. There must also be a reinforcement of air defences for important airfields on the coast. The occupation of Crete had considerably lessened the air threat to Italy. U-boats must be used to protect coastal bases. General Cavallero thanked Chef OKW for his statement. Both he and the Duce shared his opinions. Italy's most important task was to hold her present positions. Defence forces in North Africa were too small. These troops taking part in the siege of Tobruk must be relieved for a rest period. The situation at Sollum was one of constant danger. For this reason, it was necessary to bring up 1 panzer division and 2 motorised divisions to constitute mobile reserves.

/General

General Priccolo aimed at reinforcement of the Air Force; this was also a question of transport, because there was an inadequate air force ground organisation in Africa.

Other demands would be examined.

German Supreme Command was requested to furnish Rome with a review of the situation in North Africa, their operational aims, and their plans for supplies. If possible, Rome would also like a report on the capacity and distribution of goods for the Bizerta route.

Chef OKW agreed to this. He pointed out priorities for German transports to Tripoli in the following order:

Flak artillery,  
Coastal artillery,  
Army artillery,  
Replacements for unserviceable weapons in  
the Afrika Korps.

#### IV. Balkans

With the exception of forces belonging to Fliegerführer Afrika, Fliegerkorps X was to be sent to Crete. The island would be built up as a strong German air base. The line from Merambello Bay to Jerapetra would be demarcation line for Italian occupation forces. The island was to have a German governor to whom the Italians would be subordinate in matters of defence.

General Cavallero agreed to this, and requested that an airfield on Crete should be left for Italian use.

Chef OKW said that an airfield was being constructed at Jerapetra for this purpose. Operations carried out by stronger German air forces from Crete were advantageous to our position in North Africa; they promised severe limitations to British naval supremacy in the Eastern Mediterranean. For these operations Fliegerkorps X needed rear bases in Salonika, Athens and the eastern Peloponnese. It also required the fortifications of Kythera, Antikythera, Melos and Lemnos to protect our supply route. But above all, Mytilene and Chios must be in German hands as objects of negotiation with Turkey. Supplies for Crete come mainly on the sea route and must be protected by the Italian Navy. Cooperation so far had been excellent; there was recognition from all sides for the achievements of the Italian Navy.

Reinforcement of Italian naval forces was very much desired; amongst other things, E-boats formerly belonging to Yugoslavia could be used. The importance of the Italian sea route to the Dardanelles was emphasised.

Air warfare in the Eastern Mediterranean should be supported by extending the operations of Italian submarines. Italian submarines might be withdrawn from the French Atlantic coast because Bordeaux was urgently required as a German U-boat base.

General Cavallero requested that Italian occupation troops might remain in Athens. Chef OKW agreed.

General Cavallero said that Italy was short of raw materials; mainly fuel, oil, coal and rubber. Chef OKW replied that these were all transport problems. Italy must fetch fuel oil from Konstanza and French tankers would be used from now on. In payment, France would receive part of the fuel oil carried, and Italy would be given the rest. As soon as the transport situation permitted, coal and rubber deliveries would be increased. In conclusion he requested that the Duce be given a report of the day's proceedings. General Cavallero thanked Chef OKW and stated his full agreement with the opinions expressed on both sides.

Note: "I.W.St.K." is as far as we can ascertain: "Staff Headquarters of the Italian Armed Forces".



Report from General Cavallero to Chef OKW,  
Field Marshal Keitel

Rome, June 12, 1941

"The Führer's comments and suggestions on war strategy in North Africa, which were passed on to us with the written notice of June 10, 1941 have been very welcome. We can state that they are in full accordance with the directives issued by the Duce, and that the measures taken by the High Command also accord with the Führer's opinions.

The following points are answered in closer detail:

1. Protection of convoys

The fighter formations stationed there will be reinforced as soon as is warranted by the air force supply position (which is now being built up) and the air force ground organisation.

At present, 13 flak batteries are being sent there. These are of various calibres. In addition, 11 2cm. flak batteries are being posted. We are preparing to send a further 12 flak batteries of various calibres and 11 2cm. flak batteries to augment the defences of airfields and ports.

In addition, 5 Italian coastal batteries, apart from the two German 15cm. coastal artillery detachments, are being sent there to strengthen the defences of the ports in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica against attacks from the sea.

2. and 3. The attack on Tobruk

So as to strengthen further the heavy artillery outside Tobruk, which has already been reinforced with heavy German artillery (10cm. artillery detachment and 21cm. howitzer detachment), it is intended to supply more artillery units [10.5cm., 14.9cm. (28 cal. length), 14.9cm. (40 cal. length) and 15.2cm. (37 cal. length).] In anticipation of all these artillery reinforcements being in position outside Tobruk, we note that the bombing operations of Fliegerkorps X from Crete will be very useful, and request that the Fliegerkorps X be given as its main target the ships supplying Tobruk and the defence positions in the fortress. The Duce has welcomed the plan to send modern siege equipment to reduce the fortress of Tobruk.

4. Ports of discharge

As you know, Benghazi is at present blocked by sunken ships; therefore it cannot take in convoys of more than 2 ships of low tonnage. Every conceivable effort is being made to make the port serviceable again, to complete the task of laying torpedo nets and to perfect flak defences.

The suggestion to establish direct shipping traffic with Benghazi by using fast ships in small convoys has been examined; but this solution has had to be rejected because of the lack of suitable ships. Of the 5 fast ships available which were sent to Benghazi, 4 have been lost.

The Italian Navy has no ships with a speed of over 10-12 knots which are of a size suitable for Benghazi harbour. On inquiry, the German Naval Liaison Staff informs us that, at present, it has no ships of that type in the Mediterranean.

5. Use of torpedo boats as transports

The possibility of using destroyers and torpedo boats as transports has already been examined. Their load capacity is very small, and considering the small numbers available after the losses we have suffered, no

/useful

useful purpose can be served by using these ships. This would only decrease the already small number of torpedo carriers available for convoys. Again, we would have to reduce the number of convoys.

#### 6. Shipping routes

At present, we are running an experimental service of single ships with a speed of some 10 knots from Bari or Brindisi to Benghazi.

Fliegerkorps X in Crete will have to cover these ships in a south-easterly direction, towards the coast of Africa. Should this experiment yield good results, the service could be extended. After the resumption of rail traffic in Greece, the Piraeus could be used as a base. The route would have to be to the west, along the coast of Crete to Benghazi; this would have advantages for the protection of sea traffic.

To sum up, a point raised by the Führer must be repeated; namely that the most pressing problem for the successful conduct of the war in North Africa is the solution of the transport question so that all the materials necessary can be brought there as soon as possible. Since it is impossible to bring all the supplies needed through the Libyan ports in time, even if the measures discussed above are taken, it seems necessary to use the harbour of Bizerta as well. After the agreement made with Field Marshal Keitel, the Duce is looking forward to receiving information on the German plans for using this port; he is also anxious to know when, and to what extent, it is intended to include Italian transports in this plan.

#### General von Rintelen's comments on General Cavallero's report

1. An almost exclusive claim was made on the transports available to bring the two German panzer divisions to Libya; for this reason, the Italians had to postpone until the middle of May their own requirements of supplying their colony, refitting their troops and improving their air and coastal defences. This explains why reinforcements are only coming in now.

But experience has shown that Italian flak and fighter forces, as indeed all other Italian formations, do not achieve as much as the same number of German formations. Their performance is much better when they are working in close cooperation with German troops.

Therefore it seems necessary that, whenever they are available, one German flak detachment and one searchlight battery should be detached for the permanent defence of Benghazi and Tripoli.

In the same way, as we have previously reported, sea transports can only be adequately protected by using two Staffeln of Messerschmidt 110.

2. The capacity of Benghazi harbour is limited, and according to the Italians, can take at present only 2 large ships at the same time; this is because of the depth of water in the harbour. For this reason, convoys with 6 ships must be taken to Tripoli. But because those ships available after provision for the Aegean are in insufficient numbers for two convoy routes, supplies for the German and Italian forces in Cyrenaica cannot be built up on Benghazi harbour alone.

Derna harbour cannot be used by larger ships, and is used at present by U-boats carrying ammunition.

3. With the harbour and transport facilities available at present, no adequate reinforcements of our forces can be made for an offensive by autumn. All our shipping is being used almost exclusively to supply the forces in Libya at the moment.

Agreement reached on the operational activity of the  
Italian and German Air Forces in the Central and  
Eastern Mediterranean and bordering areas

Signed in Rome by the Liaison Officers of  
the two Air Forces, and dated July 18, 1941

Preliminary remarks

The following basic principles are necessary for cooperation:

- (a) In operations in which formations of both Air Forces are taking part the common aim must be reached by uniformity of action.
- (b) In order to achieve the highest degree of efficiency within the scope of the forces available, a limitation of the tasks allotted to both Air Forces is called for, according to the strength of operational formations and the special characteristics of the aircraft used.
- (c) For operational reasons and from the viewpoint of supplies and reinforcements, the creation of mixed German-Italian formations seems unsuitable.

1. Cooperation in operations over the sea

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

2. Cooperation in the Aegean Sea

- (a) Daily information is passed between Fliegerkorps X and Luftwaffe Command (Aegean) on operational aims against land targets in the Eastern Mediterranean (Cyprus, Palestine, Transjordan, Egypt). Previous intimation is sufficient for reconnaissance of Alexandria. (If possible, on the preceding evening.).
- (b) Luftwaffe Command (Aegean) receives further instructions from Superaereo and will, where possible, meet the demands made by G.H.Q. Fliegerkorps X.
- (c) Generally bomber operations with fighter protection will be carried out by Fliegerkorps X and Luftwaffe Command (Aegean) with their own formations.

/(d)

- (d) In important operations carried out simultaneously against the same target, Fliegerkorps X fixes operational times and areas. Luftwaffe Command (Aegean) arranges operations according to those carried out by Fliegerkorps X.
- (e) All communications of an operational nature between Luftwaffe Command (Aegean) and Fliegerkorps X are forwarded via the German liaison officer (Aegean) by German code method.
- (f) As a result of limited supply facilities in the Italian Dodecanese, there is to be no permanent posting of German formations to any one of the Dodecanese Islands after the occupation of Crete. There is no objection to German formations making temporary use of the Dodecanese Islands for special tasks, but these operations must be limited to the minimum possible.

3. Cooperation in North Africa

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

4. Cooperation in Sicily

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

5. Air and flak defences in Greece

- (a) Superaereo is putting a fighter squadron of Me 200 at the disposal of Fliegerkorps X for escort duties on reconnaissance and bomber operations within their own range.

/(b)

- (b) Superaereo is posting a fighter squadron to the area Athens-Piraeus-Salamis and another squadron to the Peloponnese Islands to protect those convoys which Supermarina considers important. Both these squadrons remain subordinate to Italian Command.
- (c) Superaereo is demanding from the Italian High Command that the flak defences of discharge ports inside the area of Greece occupied by Italy be taken over by Italian flak batteries.

6. Cooperation between Superaereo and Fliegerkorps X

- (a) Fliegerkorps X forwards operational reports to Superaereo via the Italuft liaison staff; it also forwards operational aims which are to be carried out in cooperation with Luftwaffe Sicily or Luftwaffe Libya.
- (b) Superaereo, via Italuft liaison staff, keeps Fliegerkorps X acquainted with the situation in the Western and Central Mediterranean, and informs Supermarina of the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean as shown in the reports submitted by Fliegerkorps X.

7. Signals exchange between Superaereo-Fliegerkorps X - Luftwaffe Command (Aegean)

- (a) Communications on operational aims and operations carried out go as formerly, by teleprinter channels (via Berlin or Vienna), and in especially urgent cases by radio to Italuft liaison staff for passing on to Superaereo. Information on operations planned and carried out by formations of Superaereo (with the exception of Luftwaffe Aegean) reach Fliegerkorps X by reverse procedure along the same channel.
- (b) Other information, aims and urgent demands from Fliegerkorps X or from Superaereo are sent to Italuft liaison staff, to be passed on as soon as possible to Superaereo or to Fliegerkorps X respectively.
- (c) Operational aims and results from Fliegerführer Afrika are received by Italuft liaison staff's radio station in Rome (or if there is radio interference, by stations at Naples or Catania). Italuft liaison staff passes on this information to Superaereo.
- (d) A liaison H.Q. of the Italian Air Force will be set up with Fliegerkorps X for liaison between Fliegerkorps X and Luftwaffe Command (Aegean). This liaison H.Q. will have an Italian Air Force radio station.
- (e) It is essential that reports on German visual reconnaissance should be passed on quickly and safely to Luftwaffe Command (Aegean). In order to ensure this safety and speed, the Italian liaison officer's radio station with Fliegerkorps X will transmit German reconnaissance reports to Luftwaffe Command (Aegean) on wave "M".
- (f) The Italian liaison H.Q. with Fliegerkorps X transmits the operational aims and results of the Fliegerkorps through its radio station to Luftwaffe Command (Rhodes) to Italian Air Fleet 5, to Luftflottenkommando Sicily and to Superaereo. These signals communications between Fliegerkorps X and the Italian Air Force stations are only a reserve, as direct communication already exists between the stations mentioned and Fliegerkorps X; namely German liaison officer with Luftwaffe Command (Aegean), Fliegerführer Afrika, the German

/radio

radio station at Catania, and the Italuft liaison staff with Superaereo. Signals traffic can only proceed with the approval of Fliegerkorps X, so as to afford the enemy monitoring service no unnecessary guides.

- (g) The results of Italian reconnaissance are received by Marisudest radio station in Athens. After de-coding and German translation, Marisudest H.Q. passes these on to the German Admiral in Athens. (Marisudest and the German Admiral have the same unit.). The German Admiral passes these on to Fliegerkorps X with his own radio communications.
- (h) The results of German reconnaissance are passed on by Fliegerkorps X to the German Admiral in Athens, who hands them on to Marisudest H.Q. The latter, after translation into Italian and coding sends them out from its radio station.  
Thus, their reception is made possible to all fixed and mobile radio stations of the Italian Navy and the Air Force units concerned, who are receiving on the naval reconnaissance wavelength.

Supplies for Fliegerführer Afrika and the German Afrika  
Korps

A report from the C.-in-C. Luftwaffe Operations Staff to the Chief  
of the Operations Staff of OKW, dated August 12, 1941

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

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

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

1. At present, the main transport route is the sea route from Naples to Tripoli. The main concentration of supplies will have to remain on this route. But it also appears necessary to use the sea route Tarento/Brindisi - Benghazi/Derna/Bardia as far as possible as an alternative route for the supplies to Africa; up to the present, it has only been used occasionally. This would cause the enemy considerable difficulty in his attacks against our sea transports, because (a) he would have to split his forces; (b) when this eastern route is used, the distance from Malta is so great that effective air attacks are seldom to be expected and (c) Fliegerkorps X can be brought in to cover the eastern route.

2. So far, full use has not been made of the harbour capacity at Benghazi.

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

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

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

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

3. Present supplies for Africa all pass through Italy. In addition, the present supplies for Fliegerkorps X in Southern Greece and Crete also pass through Italy, because the railway line to Athens is still out at Lamia. According to reports from the Fliegerkorps X, repair work has not yet begun. Valuable shipping space is wasted by this; moreover, after restoration of the railway line to Athens, supplies for Africa could be brought more safely from Athens than they are at present brought from Italy. Thus, restoration of this railway line would considerably alleviate the supply position in Africa.

4. It must be made clear how far the shipping space available in the Aegean Sea to meet the requirements of Fliegerkorps can be utilized for

/supplies

supplies for Fliegerführer Afrika. C.-in-C. Luftwaffe Operations Staff considers it necessary to utilize this shipping space in order to improve the supply position in Africa. Of course this must not endanger Crete's supply position, because the use of the island as an air base immediately affects the situation at sea and the supply position in the Eastern Mediterranean.

5. The continual requests from different units to post formations of Fliegerkorps X back to Sicily to make constant attacks on Malta and to protect the sea route from Sicily to Tripoli cannot be met.

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

C.-in-C. Luftwaffe Operations Staff is of the opinion that we must make full use of every opportunity of improving the supply position in Africa. Reinforcement of the Luftwaffe in the Mediterranean area so that German air forces can afford protection to sea transports from bases in Greece, Crete and Sicily, is impossible until after the cessation of operations in the east. We therefore request that representations be made (by the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht) to the Italians, that the Italian Air Force be reinforced in Sicily, Southern Italy and in the Tripoli-Benghazi area in order to carry out continual attacks on Malta and to undertake the protection of transports at sea.



Conference held in the presence of the Duce  
between Chef OKW and General Cavallero August 29, 1941

I. Italian Forces on the Eastern Front

1. Rear communications for the corps  
in action:

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

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

Figures for comparison:

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

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

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

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

- a) There are sufficient motor vehicles both for the troops and for units in the rear, and if the question of tyres can be solved without German help.

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

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

/ b)

- b) The corps remains at our disposal for security and occupation duties,
- c) The forces operating in the main Italian theatre of war are not weakened by drafts for the eastern front.

It cannot be expected that these conditions can be fulfilled.

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

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

## II. The Continuation of the War in North Africa

### 1. Strategy:

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

General Cavallero agrees with the statements made by Chef OKW.

However, the enemy is assembling considerable forces in the Nile Delta (at present there are 5 divisions, 1 occupation division and the bulk of the armoured division, units of which are operating at Sollum. These divisions are refitting). If these forces are brought forward to the Sollum front, and if Tobruk is not taken before the expected British attack, a difficult situation may arise. The British for example by attacking on the Sollum front can draw the mobile German-Italian reserves there, and can then when the Tobruk front is stripped of reserves, make an attempt to break out. On the German side, mining of the Tobruk area is being begun in places where our own later attacks will not be made.

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

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

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

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

/ c)

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

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

General Cavallero agrees.

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

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

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

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

General Cavallero agrees.

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

General Cavallero agrees

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

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

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

Lorries for Italy, see Appendix 1.

## 2. Transports for Africa

### a) Protection of transport routes:

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

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

- (2) Air cover will only fulfil its purpose when Malta is constantly pinned down by strong forces.
- (3) Improved air defence for Italian and Tripolitanian ports. Equipping with direction finders. (Still being examined by G.-in-C. of the Luftwaffe.).
- (4) The sea route to Cyrenaica (ports of Bardia, Derna and Benghazi) must be used more.

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

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

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

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

General Cavallero:

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

Chef OKW:

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

General Cavallero:

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

General Cavallero agrees.

General Cavallero agrees.

Direction finder equipment will be gratefully received.

General Cavallero:

Orders have already been given to this effect.

General Cavallero:

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

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

Cooperation of Admiral Weicholt in the Supreme Command of Italian Navy has already started.

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

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

### III. Relationship with France

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

In detail:

1. Resumption of military conferences with the aim of commencing sea traffic with Bizerta as soon as possible. After our experiences in Syria, and in view of the strained relations between Britain/America and France, reinforcements for the defence of the French collaborating army in North Africa must be considered. The German Armistice Commission is ordered to proceed in this matter in the closest cooperation with the Italian Armistice Commission. The Chief of the Wehrmacht General Staff will make his decisions only on this basis. We cannot yet see when sea traffic with Bizerta can be started. Convoy duties at sea and in the air will fall to the Italians. (Question of the Italians lengthening the coastal railway as far as the Tunisian border.)

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

### IV. Occupation of Crete

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

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

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

Appendix 1 : Motor lorries for Italy.

Appendix 2 : The shipping space situation in the Mediterranean.

Appendix 3 : Italian armaments economy.

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

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

Purchase of motor lorries for Italy

Appendix 1

Italy is receiving:

- a) 500 lorries from French stocks. The German negotiations have effected this deal. They are being handed over on German soil at present.
- b) 600 lorries (Opel) from Germany. There are only tyres for 200. Delivery of these 200 lorries is beginning this week, direct from the factory.

Total                      1,100 lorries

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

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

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

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

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

The Shipping space situation  
in the Mediterranean

Appendix 2

- 1. Losses up to July 31, 1941 - 74%.
- 2. Total shipping space available by the middle of September, including shipping space ordered from the French and chartered from Spain:

29 vessels, totalling 65,700 tons. These are German, Spanish and French. (13 ships, totalling 30,000 tons, are German). 13 of these vessels, totalling 11,600 tons, are used for coastal traffic.

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

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

/ Reserves

Appendix 2 (continued)

Reserves are weak:

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

3. Demands:

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

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

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

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

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

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

/ Appendix 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Appendix 3 (continued)

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

1. The German General at H. Q. Italian Armed Forces was instructed by Supreme Command/Office for Armaments Industry, to ascertain from the Italian Services or the Italian Supreme Command:

- a) the armaments concentrations in existence to serve the Army, Air Force and Navy,
- b) the planning figures for individual armaments concentrations and their monthly production figures.

2. Supreme Command of Wehrmacht/Office for Armaments Industry considers it necessary to make the following demands on Italy:

- a) Stopping of all building etc., which is unimportant for the war effort. (See examples under II.).
- b) Concession of a German control on use and location of all raw materials delivered by Germany to Italy; at the same time, direct German influence on direction of the Italian armaments industry into certain concentrations.

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

The same applies to munitions: 300,000 rounds were promised for 4.7 Belgian artillery, but none were delivered; 6,000,000 2 cm. flak promised, 3,700,000 delivered; 75,000 7.5 cm. flak promised, 5,000 delivered; 200,000 rounds of 7.5 promised, 120,000 delivered.

There was no delivery of the signals equipment which was promised.

Chef OKW agrees to an enquiry.

General Cavallero thanks Chef OKW for his statements and for the cooperation of the German Wehrmacht.

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