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AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH

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HIGH LEVEL REPORTS AND DIRECTIVES

DEALING WITH THE NORTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGN, 1942

TRANSLATED BY

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30th OCTOBER, 1948

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28th November	Hitler	Mussolini	Supply to Panzer Army Africa via Tripoli

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

5th April, 1942

Daily report, 4th April, 1942

1. Strong enemy reconnaissance forces, including artillery and tanks, have advanced into the areas Tengader el Segnali and to the west of Gazala. The thrust towards Hamarin (south of Mechili) was repulsed and German and Italian air forces made successful attacks. Strong new forces in the area El Adem - Sidi Rezegh, probably 1 division (7th Armoured Division?), confirmed by air and W/T reconnaissance. Intensive transport movements between Tobruk, Gambut and El Adem. 800 - 1,000 trucks on front railway between Capuzzo and Bir Bumscheifa. Increased number of fighters on Gambut and El Arid airfields. The above reports point to the possibility of an enemy attack in the next few days.

2. Enemy air attack on Benghazi during the night of 3rd/4th April.

3. The fuel situation has deteriorated to such an extent in the course of the last few weeks, that at present German units in Africa still have only 3.7 VS of which 1.6 are available in Cyrenaica. As present fuel is available to motorised troops as follows: German Africa Corps - 1.6 VS, Italian XX Army Corps - 10 VS, Fliegerfuehrer Afrika 500 cbm. (1 - 15 days' operations). For this reason mobile defence of Cyrenaica by the Panzer Army Africa can therefore no longer be assured. Speedy and adequate allocation of fuel has once more been requested by the German general at Comando Supremo. There is no longer any possibility for the Panzer Army to improve the fuel situation in Africa.

Panzer Army to

1. C.-in-C. South: requests accelerated allocation of fuel by air to Derna and Martuba.
2. the German general at Comando Supremo: requests regarding last paragraph and transportation to Benghazi and Derna. Radio reply concerning presumable arrival of fuel requested as basis for further decisions.

G.H.Q., Panzer Army Africa

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To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

5th April, 1942

Subject: Daily report of Panzer Army Africa of 4th April.

1. Comando Supremo was continually informed of the unfavourable fuel situation of Panzer Army Africa and was persistently pressed for help. As a result of heavy storms in the Mediterranean (destroyers sunk by heavy seas) and the employment of Italian forces against enemy convoys to Malta, transport movements planned for the month of March could not be carried out by the Italians. The sinking of the fuel ships "Cuma" and "Achaia" (1720 tons in all) in March is a further basic reason for the present fuel situation of the Panzer Army.
2. Six sea transport with 2.2 VS for the Panzer Army arrived in Tripoli on 4th April. Several vessels loaded with fuel have been for some time waiting ready to sail in Italian harbours. Because of lack of escorts (lack of destroyers), the Italian Navy has not, however, allowed them to sail, in spite of persistent German pressure. Immediate sailing of the vessels loaded with fuel in spite of the risk has been demanded of Comando Supremo. Of the large transport submarines only one is still available, the others have been lost. Employment of this remaining submarine to transport fuel to Derna has been requested of Comando Supremo.

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3. The better fuel situation of Italian units is due to the use of Diesel oil which can be transported in large quantities in ships' bunkers. It is not possible to load Otto-fuel in ships' bunkers.

The German general at Comando Supremo

To:- OKW Operations Staff

12th April, 1948

On 11th and 12th April, Field Marshal Kesselring reported to the Duce and General Cavallero the success of air attacks against Malta and his impressions of the situation in Africa, after a flight to the area on 7th and 8th May, April.

(a) Malta: The planned air attacks on Malta between 1st and 9th May have, according to the opinion of C.-in-C. South, eliminated Malta as a naval base. The dockyard and dock installations have been damaged so extensively that Malta can be discounted as a naval base for the present. The last naval forces have left Malta and the British base for submarine operations has been transferred to Alexandria. Airfields and installations have been heavily damaged, but the complete elimination of Malta as an air base cannot be expected. It is probable that underground depots and stores have been destroyed in some places, but the majority of these remain undamaged. Air defence has decreased.

C.in-C. South intends to continue the attack if the weather is suitable until 20th May, rather than make continual nuisance raids to try to prevent damage being repaired by continual harassing attacks.

General Cavallero informed me that the Duce had decided, as a result of this consultation, that the preparations for the attack on Malta should be speeded up, so that the operation could begin at the end of May. As only 2 - 3 Italian parachute battalions can be made ready for action by then, Cavallero requests information as to whether German parachute battalions could be made available. He also requests that a General Staff Officer with experience of combined airborne and seaborne landing operations (Crete) be made available for the Malta planning staff, which will be headed by General Gandin.

(b) Field Marshal Kesselring supports the attack planned by the Panzer Army for sometime in June, which aims at destroying the mobile enemy forces at Tobruk. After conferring with General Rommel, he considers this to be possible if air and sea transport can be greatly increased during the next few weeks, thus exploiting the neutralisation of Malta. Every possibility regarding this matter was examined during detailed discussions at Comando Supremo.

At Comando Supremo on the afternoon of 11th April General Ramke spoke on the attack on Crete and experience gained for the training of paratroops; the Duce and the heads of the Italian Armed Forces took part in this conference and were greatly impressed by this effective lecture. The Duce spoke with unusual confidence regarding the further development of the war in view of the considerably improved situation in the Mediterranean, the defensive successes on the Eastern Front and the favourable developments in East Asia.

The German general at Comando Supremo

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To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

17th April, 1942

General Cavallero informed me on 17th April that the Italian Parachute Division with 2 regiments, 1 battalion of assault engineers and 5 batteries would be ready until the end of May for Operation Hercules. The third regiment of this division cannot be ready by this time. Cavallero requests that a German parachute division be made available for Operation Hercules.

The German general at Comando Supremo

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To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

21st April, 1942

Subject: Operation Hercules and the Panzer Army offensive in Africa.

(a) Hercules:

The Fuehrer has ordered that Operation Hercules be supported by German army and air forces.

Special pioneer forces totalling approximately one battalion will be prepared by the Army. The composition of these forces is being examined at the moment. The pioneer forces (3/Panzer Engineer Battalion 200, Engineer Landing Company 778) at present based in Italy for employment with the Panzer Army in Africa are being considered for employment as part of these pioneer forces, and consequently are not to be transferred to Africa for the time being.

An Army General Staff Officer has already been dispatched to assist in the preparations for this operation. Provision has also been made to bring up some heavily armoured tanks.

The Luftwaffe will provide 2 parachute battalions, with air transport space for 1 battalion, and parachutes for men and equipment; the Navy will provide several barges - the exact number will be made known later.

OKW Operations Staff

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To:- Italian G.H.Q. in North Africa

Army H.Q., 30th April, 1942

I. G.H.Q. of the Panzer Army intends to attack and destroy the British forces in the area of Bir el Gubi - Tobruk - Ain el Gazala - Bir Hacheim during the first days of June, 1942 (favourable moon period), exploiting the present favourable balance of strength. It has moreover been planned to take the fortress of Tobruk as part of the operation. If possible this will be carried out as a surprise attack, otherwise by a short series of attacks.

The Panzer Army is to attack as soon as possible after the capture of Malta. If the operations against Malta should extend beyond 1st June it may be necessary for the Army to attack without waiting for the capture of the island.

The German general in Rome is asked to report the time fixed for the attack against Malta. The appointment of the time for the Panzer Army attack depends on this and on the fulfilment of the conditions listed under II. Should the attack against Malta be postponed for any reason, the Panzer Army G.H.Q. must be informed at once.

II. The conduct of operations has been planned in general as follows:

Extensive attack of the bulk of the motorised formations from the area to the south and north of Segnali on both sides of Bir Hacheim in the direction of Acroma. Units of the motorised formations must push on ahead

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in the direction of Belhamed - El Adem, to prevent the enemy falling back from the Tobruk area, and also to prevent reinforcements being brought up from the Bardia area. The non-motorised formations of the Army will be sent in for a frontal attack in an easterly direction between Segnali-Nord and the coast.

An attempt will be made to destroy the British army in the field in the area of Tobruk by the evening of the second day of the offensive, and also to take the fortress of Tobruk in a surprise attack. If it is not possible to execute this plan, the fortress will be taken in a series of attacks from the south and south-east. A further two days will be necessary for this, so that after regrouping and replenishment of supplies, the bulk of motorised troops will be ready to push on towards the east in the direction of Sollum - Bardia, on about the sixth day of the offensive.

III. The conditions for successful execution of the above operations are:-

(1) German units of the Panzer Army.

- a. Transfer to Africa of the following reinforcements during the month of May.
  - (aa) Priority list of the Panzer Army from 15th April, 1942 up to current number 21, as well as current numbers 26, 30 and 39.
  - (bb) 57 Panzer III and IV according to General Rom, No. 5054/42 gKdos. Chefs. of 22nd April, 1942.
  - (cc) Further reinforcements promised by OKH according to General Rom, No. 1049/42 gKdos. of 28th April, 1942.
- b. Supply in advance of German units with 25 fuel - VS, 5 ammunition consignments and supplies for 30 days. Of these, 15 fuel - VS, 3 ammunition consignments and supplies for 15 days are stored in the battle area.

In addition, the transfer of the bulk of supplies to Benghazi and assistance from Italian motor vehicles promised by Comando Supremo is essential.

(2) Italian units of the Panzer Army.

- a. Replenishment of all Italian units during the course of May according to the strength of personnel, weapons and vehicles claimed by the Comando Supremo.
- b. Subordination to the Panzer Army of at least one of the infantry divisions at present in the Agedabia area to free motorised units for mobile operation. According to the view of the Panzer Army G.H.Q. it is no longer necessary to leave forces at Agedabia, since because of the present course of the front and balance of strength, as well as for weather reasons (midsummer), there can be no question of a threat to this area within a reasonable space of time.
- c. Preliminary supply of the Italian units up to the end of May, amounting to 25 fuel - VS, 5 consignments of ammunition and supplies for 30 days. Of these 15 fuel - VS, 3 consignments of ammunition and supplies for 15 days are stored in the battle area.

Further, the following are essential:

- d. The establishment of a motor transport detachment to convey an infantry division at a given time.

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The Italian High Command is requested to confirm whether the above conditions can be fulfilled by the end of May.

- (3) The closest possible cooperation between the German and Italian Air Forces in order to eliminate the enemy Air Force and to provide direct support for operations on the ground against the British army in the field, in particular by covering the flanks. Requests for support in individual cases will be transmitted in good time.

C.-in-C. South is requested to supply the following information:

- a. to what extent can cooperation be expected from German and Italian fighter, dive-bomber, twin-engined fighter, torpedo, bomber and parachute formations.
- b. The amount of time necessary to transfer and prepare these formations for action in Africa.

Fuel supplies for 20 days' operations and food supplies for 30 days are considered necessary for the abovementioned air force formations. C.-in-C. South is further requested to place a further mixed flak unit (I/6 if possible) at the disposal of the Panzer Army, for the ground fighting.

- (4) Cooperation between the German and Italian navies employing all available forces:

- a. Motor torpedo boats to operate in the sea and coastal area of Tobruk.
- b. U-boats, to be concentrated off Tobruk and Alexandria.
- c. Torpedo boats and minesweepers for convoy escort, mine clearing and submarine chasing in the sea area Benghazi - Tobruk.
- d. Navy barges for landing German shock troops to the west and east of Tobruk, and also for coastal supply.
- e. Italian heavy naval forces and assault boats to hold down the British fleet based on Alexandria.

The German general in Rome and the Admiral Commanding German naval forces in Italy are requested to make the necessary arrangements with Comando Supremo and to pass on the following information:

- (aa) to what extent participation by German and Italian naval forces can be expected.
- (bb) how much time these naval forces require to take over their bases.

Rommel  
C.-in-C. Panzer Army Africa

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

7th May, 1942

General Cavallero was at the Italian G.H.Q. North Africa and with Panzer Army Africa from 6th to 7th May, accompanied by myself. The following instructions concerning the future operations in Libya were delivered to Italian G.H.Q. North Africa.

"5th May, 1942. In the instructions of Comando Supremo of 23rd March, 1942, the usefulness was indicated of an operation by the Panzer Army before the summer, in order to prevent the enemy from consolidating his present positions further. Comando Supremo has been informed of the Panzer Army's course of

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operations from the plans submitted to the Italian G.H.Q. North Africa. Comando Supremo has issued the following instructions with special consideration for the degree of reinforcement attained by the German Africa Corps and the Italian XX Army Corps, and with regard to the deficiencies (especially as regards the vehicle situation) which still exist in the Italian infantry divisions.

1. The intention is to destroy the mobile enemy forces based west of Tobruk. If this succeeds, Tobruk will be captured in a short series of attacks.

The capture of Tobruk is an essential condition for further advance. Once Tobruk has been taken, an advance will be made to the line Sidi Omar - Halfaya - Sollum, which may not be crossed by the bulk of the Panzer Army. If Tobruk cannot be taken, the positions on the Ain-el-Gazala line, or further to the west, are to be occupied.

2. Units taking part in the operation:

- (a) The Panzer Army with all subordinated units.
- (b) The German and Italian Air Forces based in Cyrenaica (special instructions will follow).
- (c) Some light naval forces (special instructions will follow).  
The employment of heavy naval units is not possible.

3. Beginning of the offensive: in the last days of May, after the arrival of weapons and reinforcements requested. Comando Supremo will use every means at its disposal to ensure that these are brought up as quickly as possible.

4. Time limit for the offensive:

The operation must not continue beyond 20th June, as air and naval reinforcements and also some of the air forces at present based in Cyrenaica will have to be withdrawn at this time for operation elsewhere. It has been decided to resume the offensive in the autumn.

Cavallero"

The execution of the operations was discussed by General Cavallero with G.O.C. Panzer Army; there were no differences of opinion.

General Cavallero released one of the two infantry divisions based in the Agedabia area to reinforce the Panzer Army (the Sabratha Division).

On 7th May a visit was made to the X Army Corps sector at Segnali Nord, followed by a conference in Derna with General Cavallero in the chair, in the presence of C.-in-C. South, Fliegerfuehrer Afrika and the Italian A.O.C.-in-C., General Fougier. Basic questions regarding cooperation between ground troops and air forces in the coming operation were discussed. C.-in-C. South agreed to the transfer of several Gruppen for the duration of the operation, to reinforce German air forces in Africa. In addition General Fougier placed 1 Italian fighter Geschwader (54 aircraft) and 1 mixed Geschwader at the disposal of the 5th Squadra in Africa as reinforcements.

General Cavallero confirmed that the scale of supplies considered necessary by the Panzer Army for the German and Italian troops would be reached due to the increased unloading capacity at Benghazi (at present 2,000 tons daily). Comando Supremo has agreed that 3/5 of the shipping space to be used for the operation will be available for the transfer of German supplies to Benghazi. The request of the Panzer Army for still further allocation of Italian motor transport can be met neither by Comando Supremo nor by the Italian C.-in-C. North Africa.

The German general at Comando Supremo

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

5th June, 1942

On the evening of 4th June General von Rintelen visited General Cavallero, who is suffering from influenza. General Cavallero expressed his extreme regret at the capture of General Cruewell who stands especially high in the estimation of the Duce and himself, both as a man and a soldier.

Afterwards General Cavallero described the situation as follows:

1. North Africa:

The Panzer Army offensive has shown that at present the strengths of the opposing forces in Libya are approximately equal. In the course of our offensive so far, a tactical but not a strategical success has been gained. As the planned encirclement and destruction of British forces (which would have been extremely difficult in such extensive desert terrain) has not been successful, General Rommel acted quite correctly in withdrawing and regrouping his forces. The task of supplying our forces in the rear of the enemy would have been made possible only by a speedy and decisive success. A strategic success against the enemy can no longer be expected, but we expect successful actions at Bir Hacheim and against the Ain el Gazala position.

As the prospects for the continuation of the action can be appreciated only on the battlefield, Comando Supremo has requested General Bastico to report on future plans after consultation with General Rommel. The Italian G.H.Q. in North Africa has been instructed that the operation must not be allowed to develop into a battle of attrition. The Panzer Army must not be too greatly depleted, especially as Operation Hercules will aggravate the supply situation in Libya during the next few months. Cavallero also greatly regrets that, owing to illness, he cannot himself fly to Libya and make decisions on the spot,

2. Operation Hercules:

The present battles in Africa prove once again the necessity of Operation Hercules. If it is not carried out, it must be expected that the British will be able to prepare superior forces in Africa by autumn, and that the situation in the Mediterranean will deteriorate again. This is proved by the noticeably increased use of Malta as an air base since the withdrawal of units of Luftflotte 2 and the temporary transfer of some Luftwaffe units from Sicily to Africa. The first consequence of this was the torpedoing of the loaded vessels "Allegri" and "Giuliana" on 31st May and 4th June respectively.

The preparations for Hercules are proceeding according to plan as regards troops and also the assembly of equipment for crossing. The preparation of 40,000 tons of oil for the Navy and 12,000 tons of fuel for the Italian Air Force to be held in reserve for Operation Hercules, is however causing great difficulties. Lately 56,000 and 58,000 tons of oil were expended monthly. In so far as the monthly allocation from Rumania cannot substantially exceed that of May for example (43,000 tons), the reserve necessary to enable the sailing of the fleet, which must be ready for action at the end of June, cannot be formed. General Cavallero requesting support, expressed the wish that this situation be brought to the attention of OKW, as the execution of Operation Hercules is dependent upon it.

The German general at Comando Supremo

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To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

10th June, 1942

A. On the morning of 10th June, Field Marshal Kesselring discussed the situation in Libya with General Cavallero, who is still confined to his apartment owing to illness, and made the following comments regarding the future plans of the Panzer Army:

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(1) After failing to capture Bir Hacheim on 9th June, the Panzer Army hopes to be able to do so on the 10th.

(2) After Bir Hacheim has been taken, an attack in a northerly direction with German-Italian panzer forces will be made, in order to cut off enemy forces in the Ain el Gazala position from Tobruk and then capture the former position. Meanwhile forces now freed for further action at Bir Hacheim will form a defensive flank against the enemy motorised and armoured forces in position to the south of Tobruk. It is expected that this operation will last approximately five days.

(3) After the Ain el Gazala position has been captured, the German Africa Corps and Italian motorised forces will attack the enemy motorised and armoured units (at present in the El Adem area) south of Tobruk. Meanwhile X Army Corps and XXI Army Corps will be brought up towards the east to prepare themselves on both sides of Acroma for the attack on Tobruk.

(4) Regarding the concentric attack on Tobruk from the south and west, Field Marshal Kesselring has also stated that he considers the capture of Tobruk possible, as General Rommel estimates that comparative strengths of infantry and artillery are favourable, and also that there are sufficient tanks available for an attack on Tobruk. In addition, the Field Marshal also considers the air situation favourable for this operation. Operation Hercules must be postponed from three to four weeks in view of the prolongation of the battle in Libya. This will have a favourable effect in view of the necessary preparations still to be made for this operation. General Cavallero has stated that he is in absolute agreement with the operational plans of the Panzer Army. However, he considers it advisable not to rely too much on the intended attack on Tobruk, in case too much hope is based on it. He is also in agreement with the postponement of Operation Hercules for three weeks. Finally Field Marshal Kesselring was received by the Duce, with whom he likewise discussed the situation and the immediate plans of the Panzer Army, without however going into details regarding the intended attack on Tobruk. The Duce also agreed with these plans. Field Marshal Kesselring took off again for Libya on the afternoon of 10th June.

B. A report on the transport situation will follow on 11th June.

The German general at Comando Supremo

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

17th June, 1942

1. On 16th June Comando Supremo requested the Italian G.H.Q. in North Africa to report on the prospects of a successful attack against Tobruk. It was again emphasised that Comando Supremo will approve an attack of short duration, but that a battle of attrition must be avoided at all costs. The "Littorio" Armoured Division will be placed at the disposal of the Italian G.H.Q. in North Africa to be brought up and sent into action as soon as possible.

2. On the evening of 16th June General Cavallero informed me that he hoped for a quick and successful attack against Tobruk and not a long siege. At the end of June air force reinforcement withdrawals must be begun to prepare for Operation Hercules. He still considers the execution of Operation Hercules absolutely essential. Postponement until the beginning of August is unimportant, as even more thorough preparations can be made.

3. General Cavallero handed me a letter to Chief of OKW concerning the difficult oil situation. This will be dispatched from Rome by courier on the morning of 18th June. General Cavallero has not completely recovered from his illness yet, but hopes to be able in a few days to resume his duties fully again.

The German general at Comando Supremo

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

19th June, 1942

The following is reported on the present situation in the Mediterranean (19th June):

1. A strongly escorted British convoy of 10 merchant vessels has left Alexandria and is sailing in a westerly direction, towards Tobruk or Malta. The Italian Navy presumes that it is possible to deal with Malta solely with aircraft and submarines, since the Navy cannot put to sea owing to lack of oil. At the moment only 2 cruisers and 4 destroyers are supplied with oil. The Italian Air Force has at present only 7 torpedo-carrying aircraft at its disposal.
2. Shipping movements to Libya, which have been interrupted since 13th June, will be resumed on the 19th. To begin with 4 merchant vessels and 1 tanker will proceed on the western route along the Tunisian coast to Tripoli, from whence 3 vessels will continue on to Benghazi.
3. The air base of Malta is very active again. Comando Supremo has asked C.-in-C. South when he will be able to neutralise Malta again.
4. During the last attack on the Italian fleet British or American torpedo-carrying aircraft appeared, which have a very much greater range than hitherto.

The German general at Comando Supremo

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To:- OKW Operations Staff

22nd June, 1942

1. General Bastico has reported that the Panzer Army will occupy the line Sidi Omar - Halfaya - Sollum in accordance with Comando Supremo instructions of 5th May. Concerning this, Comando Supremo wirelessly addressed the following to General Bastico on the evening of 21st June:

"The Duce agrees that the instructions of 5th May shall remain fully in force, and considers it essential that the Sollum - Halfaya position be occupied as quickly as possible. In addition, the speedy transfer of air forces assigned to other operations must be ensured. Field Marshal Kesselring is to be informed of this in the name of the Duce. The Duce also stresses the importance of occupying Giarabub as soon as possible."

2. 25 enemy bombers and torpedo-carrying aircraft with fighter escort were used in the attack on the German-Italian convoy, during which the "Reichenfels" was sunk. Our air escort consisted of 2 Italian fighters and 3 Ju 88s, two of which were shot down. In view of the fact that enemy aircraft once more command the central Mediterranean to this extent, Comando Supremo considers necessary quick transfer of air forces from Africa to Sicily, in order to increase attacks on Malta again. In addition, all shipping movements west of Malta will be temporarily suspended and the eastern route more extensively used.

The German general at Comando Supremo

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To:- OKW Operations Staff

23rd June, 1942

The following radio message dated 22nd June, from Field Marshal Rommel, was received here at 2112 hours:

"The first objective of the Panzer Army in Africa, to defeat the enemy army in the field and take Tobruk, has been attained. Enemy units are still holding out at Sollum, Halfaya and Sidi Omar. It is intended to destroy this enemy force also and so open the way into Egypt. The condition and morale of the troops, the present supply situation improved by booty, and the momentary weakness of the enemy will permit pursuit into the heart of Egypt."

Request the Duce to effect the suspension of former limitation on freedom of movement, and to put units at present subordinated to me at my disposal, so that the campaign may be continued.

Rommel"

Supplement from the German general at the Italian Armed Forces HQ:

As already reported, the Duce has ordered operations to be continued only as far as the Egyptian border. After consultation with General Cavallero or the Duce, I will report again on the attitude of Comando Supremo.

The German general at Comando Supremo

To: Army General Staff, Operations Division

24th June, 1942

At 2000 hours on 23rd June I delivered the Fuehrer's letter (transmitted by teleprinter) to the Duce.

This morning (23rd) Field Marshal Rommel's application and telegrams from Field Marshal Kesselring and General Bastico had already been submitted, putting forward the proposal that the especially favourable situation which has arisen through the collapse of the 8th Army should be exploited, and that the offensive should be carried forward into Egypt. By order of the Duce, Comando Supremo has been examining the questions of supply and transport in discussions with the German-Italian authorities during the course of the day and has reported to the Duce.

After acknowledging the letter, the Duce instructed me to give the Fuehrer as his interim answer, that he is in complete agreement with the Fuehrer's opinion, and that the historic moment has now come to conquer Egypt and must be exploited. The Duce stated that difficulties after the collapse of the British 8th Army lay less in the battle on the ground than in the transport situation at sea. Owing to Malta's active revival, supply of the Panzer Army in Africa has once more entered a critical stage. In his opinion it is absolutely essential to neutralise Malta, as it is not possible at the moment to commence the attack to conquer the island once and for all. It is necessary to reinforce the flying formations on Sicily for this purpose. Field Marshal Kesselring has ordered the transfer of one bomber and one fighter Gruppe, and the Italian Air Force will transfer further formations from Italy to Sicily. In addition he requested that the two bomber and one fighter Gruppen from the Reich intended as reinforcements for Sicily for Operation Hercules be made available immediately. The neutralisation of Malta is the essential condition for the supply of the Panzer Army, and will ensure pursuit as far as the Nile Delta. He is grateful for the examination of the oil question mentioned in the Fuehrer's letter. The replenishment of the fleet with oil may be necessary for the execution of the attack on Egypt, if occasion should arise for it to go into action. The Duce also instructed me to inform the Fuehrer that he had ordered General Cavallero to inform him of the condition of the troops and the supply situation and also of the amount of booty captured in Tobruk. Finally, the Duce stated that he would answer the Fuehrer's letter in detail in a few days.

As preparations for Operation Hercules are being delayed owing to the continuation of the attack on Egypt, Comando Supremo has postponed this operation until the beginning of September.

Another point regarding the sea transport situation to be stressed in today's discussions is that the western route should be entirely abandoned until Malta can be neutralised again. The situation on the eastern route will be improved by using the harbours of Tobruk and Bardia, even if Tobruk harbour is temporarily unsuitable for unloading large vessels, as only

500-800 tons can be handled there daily, and therefore continued use of Benghazi cannot be avoided.

The German general at Comando Supremo

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

26th June, 1942

A. At 1100 hours on 26th June a discussion took place at Sidi Barrani between General Cavallero and Field Marshal Rommel, in which Field Marshal Kesselring, General Bastico and General Fougier also participated.

Cavallero issued the following instructions from Comando Supremo for the direction of battle in Egypt:

1. The situation of the British 8th Army demands that successes gained so far be exploited as far as possible.

2. In spite of this it must be taken into consideration that the supply problem offers difficulties. The air base of Malta has resumed offensive operations. The Tripoli route must be temporarily abandoned, and the route to harbours in Cyrenaica is also endangered. It is planned to neutralise Malta again, employing formations to be transferred from Germany. This, however, requires time, during which a critical period cannot be avoided. In the meantime everything possible will be done to:-

- (a) send some convoys to Benghazi, and if possible some vessels to Tobruk (special consideration will be given to materials in short supply);
- (b) increase air transport;
- (c) use U-boats for supply, especially for the transportation of fuel.

3. In this situation supplies already in Africa must be mainly relied upon. A swift advance must be made in order to allow the enemy no time to regroup, but close cooperation between air and ground forces must be assured. It must be taken into consideration that the enemy is retreating to his bases and the focal point of his air forces.

4. The Duce has therefore issued the following orders:-

- (a) For the time being the main body of our forces will occupy the pass between Arab Bay and the Quattara Depression; this position must be the jumping-off point for all further operations.
- (b) In order to do this the fortified area Matruh - Bagush must be taken immediately, and the enemy forces holding out in the Mersa Matruh positions destroyed. The advance must not be continued before these fortifications are taken.
- (c) Further operations beyond those mentioned in paragraph (a) are to be synchronised with the situation as a whole.

5. Attention is once again brought to the fact that the enemy can reinforce his Air Force quickly. It is therefore absolutely essential that every effort is made to bring forward the German and Italian Air Forces as speedily as possible.

6. The oases of Giarabub and Siwa are to be occupied as soon as possible.

B. Field Marshal Rommel's plans:

On the afternoon of the 26th an attack was launched against British positions in Mersa Matruh and to the south of it, and an advance made to the

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pass east of El Daba. From there, the offensive will be continued towards Alexandria or to the Suez Canal via Cairo, according to the situation. In order that the German and Italian Air Forces may have motor transport at their disposal, Italian infantry divisions, with the exception of artillery, have been instructed to proceed on foot.

C. According to a statement by the C.-in-C., 50 German panzers are ready for action at present; 200 are undergoing repairs, of which some have already been made serviceable again.

von Rintelen

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

28th June, 1942

A. On 27th June Comando Supremo ordered: "After the defeat of the enemy, who is still holding up the advance, continuation of operations from the jumping-off point Quattara Depression - Arab Bay will be carried out as follows:-

1. Objective: the Suez Canal, advance on Suez and Ismailia, and as quickly as possible from Ismailia on Port Said.

Purpose: to block the Canal and to prevent forces being brought from further east.

2. Condition for this advance is the occupation of Cairo, and the south front (airfield included).

3. To block the roads from Alexandria to protect our forces against attacks from this direction, until it is possible to occupy this town also.

4. To secure the rear of the Army against eventual landings, by occupying important points on the coast, and to hold adequate mobile forces ready to come to the assistance of threatened points.

5. The Duce expects that in the advance to the Canal, Italian and German forces will be represented in equal numbers. Instructions will be transmitted as soon as possible regarding the attitude to be adopted by the military authorities towards the Egyptian authorities and population."

B. Development of the situation until midday 27th June:

Units of X and XXI Army Corps have surrounded two New Zealand divisions and the remnants of the 5th Indian Division in Mersa Matruh. Enemy forces south-east of Mersa Matruh are falling back in face of attacks by panzer and motorised divisions. Defences are being erected in the pass between the Quattara Depression and Arab Bay (east of El Daba).

von Rintelen

To:- OKW Operations Staff

30th June, 1942

A. On 29th June Comando Supremo issued the following order to G.H.Q. North Africa and C.-in-C. South:

1. With reference to relations with the Egyptian state, the Duce has decided the following: our relations with the population must be friendly, and likewise with the Egyptian authorities, if they prove themselves worthy of it.

2. This order must be complied with, especially by the Air Force, which must avoid attacking any non-military target in Egypt.

3. The German and Italian Air Forces have the following tasks:
- (a) Support of troops fighting on the ground by covering them against enemy air attacks and by attacks against strong enemy concentrations and on retreating troops; this will help our advance.
  - (b) Operations against enemy naval forces; minelaying in Alexandria harbour and in the Suez Canal, in so far as forces are available.
  - (c) Interruption of movements to bring up enemy reinforcements from further east, by attacks on communications over the Suez Canal.
  - (d) Reconnaissance of routes from Upper Egypt.

Development of the situation until midday, 29th June:

The enemy succeeded in withdrawing forces from Mersa Matruh before it was taken on the morning of the 29th. The motorised forces which advanced through Fuka are in contact with the enemy at El Daba. The position in the pass between the Quattera Depression and Arab Bay appears to be only weakly consolidated. It cannot be ascertained yet whether the enemy will offer decisive resistance there, but this is considered improbable.

The Duce arrived at Derna airfield at 2000 hours on the 29th.

von Rintelen

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To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

2nd July, 1942

- 1. After successfully breaking through the positions east of El Daba, the Panzer Army intends to advance on Alexandria, which will be isolated by XXI Army Corps, and in accordance with Comando Supremo instructions, reach Cairo and the Suez Canal via Wadi el Natrun.
- 2. In spite of violent resistance, the position east of El Daba has been quickly broken through.
- 3. Field Marshal Kesselring has provided the Duce with a description of the participation of the Air Force in the capture of Bir Hacheim and Tobruk, and has reported on the measures taken for the neutralisation of Malta and the protection of convoys.
- 4. C.-in-C. South has promised to move Panzer Army and Air Force reinforcements to Africa by air before 18th July.
- 5. Cavallero has been promoted Field Marshal today.

von Rintelen

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To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

4th July, 1942

On the morning of 4th July Field Marshal Rommel reported that he must temporarily suspend further attacks and go over to the defensive. Regarding this Comando Supremo informed Italian G.H.Q. in North Africa, "The Duce shares the opinion of the Panzer Army that a temporary suspension of operations is necessary to regroup units and to bring up reinforcements and equipment. Special importance must be attached to these reinforcements being brought up. Comando Supremo will for its part attend to the matter in Italy. The duration of this lull is left to the discretion of the German-Italian Panzer Army, which must report to G.H.Q. North Africa."

The Panzer Army has reported that it must go over to the defensive for approximately 2 weeks, in order to bring up men and supplies and to regroup units.

von Rintelen

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

6th July, 1942

Today (5th July), in the Panzer Army district, I conferred with General Gause and the commanding officers of the German and Italian Air Forces.

1. The situation of the Panzer Army is as follows:

The enemy on the eastern front of the Panzer Army is relatively inactive, but he is attempting to attack the Panzer Army from the south. The 2nd New Zealand Division, which has not shown much spirit as yet, has been reinforced by movement of forces from the east front. It appears that the plan is to take the Panzer Army in flank and rear. Field Marshal Rommel has therefore decided to relieve the German divisions on the east front by X Army Corps, and to prepare the German Africa Corps and the 90th Light Infantry Division behind his right flank for defence against this attempt at encirclement. As soon as the condition of the troops permits, he will go over to the counter-attack, on the southern wing. The German and Italian Air Forces have weakened the enemy group in the south by several dive-bomber attacks.

2. Condition of the troops:

Six weeks of fighting and marching in desert terrain and great heat has lowered the fighting strength of the troops, who are exhausted and strained to the limit. General Gause gives the fighting strength of the German divisions as approximately 1,200 men, and that of the Italian divisions is at present even lower. The number of German tanks amounts to about 40; the Italians have about 60. Even if the German - Italian Air Force is superior to the British as regards combat performance, the latter possesses great numerical superiority, especially in fighters, and is causing uneasiness and losses among the troops by frequent day and night strafing and bombing attacks.

3. As soon as the troops pause in their victorious advance it is necessary to send up reinforcements as quickly as possible to enable them to repulse enemy attacks and resume the offensive. The following measures, among others, have been taken regarding this:

- (a) The German effort: Up to 5th July 2,250 men have already been flown over to Tobruk. On 6th July transport of the reinforced infantry regiment from Crete to Mersa Matruh will begin, at the approximate rate of 1,000 men daily. Ammunition and equipment are being brought up.
- (b) The Italian effort: 7 battalions, 4 artillery detachments, tanks, armoured reconnaissance cars and guns on self-propelled mounting are being brought for the Ariete, Trento, Pavia and Brescia Divisions. Reinforcements are being brought from Italy, troops by air, and tanks in motor barges.
- (c) The German and Italian Air Forces are making every effort to assist ground troops in their defensive operations, but are hindered by lack of vehicles to bring up sufficient supplies. By detailing vehicles from the Panzer Army and with the assistance of the Italian G.H.Q., every effort will be made to relieve this deficiency.

4. Marshal Cavallero and I will fly back to Rome on 6th July to speed up supplies and transport from Italy to Africa. Before taking off on the morning of the 6th I was ordered to confer with the Duce. Apparently the Duce has no immediate intention of returning to Italy.

von Rintelen

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To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

7th July, 1942

I. On the morning of 6th July, before the flight to Rome, a conference took place in the Duce's quarters. Those present were: Marshal Cavallero, General Bastico, General Fougier, General Barbassetti and myself. The Duce approved the measures taken to reinforce the Panzer Army quickly, and also ordered the Italian Air Force to be reinforced and moved forward, to be in a position to oppose the R.A.F., whose strength is continually increasing.

The Duce then expressed the following opinions regarding the resumption of the offensive: if the offensive is resumed after 10 - 14 days, the situation will have altered to such an extent that the element of surprise will be lost. A quick advance with weak forces to the Suez Canal via Cairo will no longer be possible, as the British will have time to organise the defence of the Canal. He therefore considered it more practical to alter the plan of operation and take Alexandria as an important base and supply port for further operations through the Delta to the Suez Canal. Even if this objective is not reached, we will have gained a very important position in Alexandria, which will make an impression on the rest of the world. The Duce ordered General Bastico to examine this theory and discuss it with Field Marshal Rommel.

II. After the conference Marshal Cavallero told me that he had already suggested his different theory to the Duce. Owing to the absence of surprise the Suez Canal operation had naturally become more difficult. It would have to be carried out though, as the Nile Delta would otherwise be very difficult to defend. The Canal and the area south of Cairo would have to be occupied. Alexandria alone would be of little use, as it could hardly be exploited as a harbour if the airfields as far as the Canal zone were not occupied. An advance through the Nile Delta to the Canal would be too difficult. The Nile crossing would have to be made in the area of Cairo. Naturally he wished Alexandria to be occupied as quickly as possible, but did not want the mobile units of the Panzer Army to be established there. Marshal Cavallero asked for my opinion. In general, I agreed with his statements and stressed that the most important point was to defeat, and if possible destroy, the British forces west of the Nile, as it would not be possible for the bulk of the Army to advance to Cairo as long as units capable of resistance were still in the area of Alexandria. Cavallero agreed and stated that this was self-evident. I request instructions in case I have to put forward another strategic theory on this question.

III. Regarding the Duce's order to reinforce and move the Italian Air Force up to Egypt, Marshal Cavallero and General Fougier informed me that this had miscarried owing to the Italian Air Force's lack of fuel, and that owing to other tasks such as convoy escort, the fight against submarines and reconnaissance over the Mediterranean, transport flights had been abandoned. Fougier demanded that the monthly allocation be increased by 4,500 tons. Marshal Cavallero instructed me to request a single extra allocation of 10,000 tons from OKW to enable the battle in Egypt to be continued.

IV. Marshal Cavallero and I arrived in Rome again on the afternoon of 6th July, and will probably fly back to Africa on 11th July.

The German general at Comando Supremo

To: OKW Operations Staff

Army Battle H.Q., 21st July, 1942

Estimate of the situation and of the condition  
of Panzer Army Africa on 21st July, 1942

1. Since 16th July, 1942 Panzer Army Africa has been forced to go over to the defensive, exploiting positions won at Alamein. The enemy has been increasingly reinforced, while our forces could not be strengthened appreciably. The continually increasing reinforcements of the enemy, the serious setbacks

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suffered by Italian forces since 10th July, in which units amounting to approximately 4 divisions were lost, and the heavy losses in personnel and equipment (incurred in the continuous 8 week campaign) of the 3 German divisions - the sole mainstay of the successful battles against the best troops of the British Empire - have forced this decision. The course of the defensive position from the Quattara Depression to the coast being only 60 km. long, is particularly favourable, as encirclement from the south by stronger enemy forces is not possible owing to the impassable nature of the terrain in that area. Positions situated further to the rear, south of Mersa Matruh, the Sollum position, and the Tobruk - Gubi position do not offer these advantages.

The tense situation has been momentarily eased by mixing German and Italian units, and so decreasing the danger of a breakthrough on a broad front in sectors held by the Italians. The crisis still exists, and will continue until sufficient forces can be brought up to:

- (a) enable stronger occupation of the front;
- (b) allow fast-moving units to be withdrawn and prepared for mobile defence;
- (c) permit completion of defences at the front.

In view of the sparse occupation of the defensive front, withdrawal of strong units for mobile action will be possible only after the arrival of the 164th Division, further personnel and equipment replacements, as well as Italian reinforcements.

## 2. State of the troops as on 21st July, 1942

### (a) German troops:

Strengths:		
	Men	30%
	Tanks	15%
	Artillery	70%
	Anti-tank artillery	40%
	Heavy flak	50%

Battle strength has been seriously influenced by the relaxing of tension as a result of continuous action, by heavy losses in experienced personnel as well as by lack of weapons, especially panzers and anti-tank weapons. Newly arrived replacements have not been fully trained. Mobility of the divisions has been reduced owing to vehicle losses and increased employment of vehicles for supply purposes.

It can be expected that the reinforcement of troops will have been extensively attained in approximately 4 - 5 weeks, provided that no further actions occasion more losses and that the sea transport is carried out punctually as planned.

### (b) Italian troops:

Strengths:		
	Men	30%
	Tanks	15%
	Artillery	25%
	Heavy and light flak	20%

Apart from the artillery no fighting strength can be accounted for at the moment, after the experience of the last few weeks.

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3. The enemy situation:

Of the British units on the front opposite the Panzer Army, the 1st and 7th Armoured Divisions and the 5th Indian Division have been heavily hit in the recent battles. Their fighting strength has increased considerably lately however, owing to reinforcements of men and tanks. The New Zealand and 9th Australian Divisions are especially strong, as they have been training and resting in Palestine and Syria for some time. They therefore count as the best British infantry divisions at present.

The number of enemy tanks is continually increasing, owing to the proximity of the repair shops in the Delta. The armoured brigades still consist mainly of the medium American tank M3 "Pilot". The total number of tanks at the front at the moment may amount to 160 - 180.

As regards artillery the enemy has the advantage owing to extensive equipment with the quick firing light divisional artillery, and above all, owing to the proximity of his great ammunition dumps, from which he can draw unlimited quantities of supplies. Increasing reinforcement with medium and heavy calibre guns is making itself apparent.

The enemy Air Force is numerically far superior to our own. It has, by continual day and night operations, caused considerable losses amongst our troops, lowered the morale of Italian troops, delayed and at times cut off supply.

The enemy's supply situation is very favourable owing to the proximity of ports and railway communication.

It must be expected that the reinforcement of the enemy divisions will progress rapidly, and in addition, new units will be brought up. The 50th British, 1st South African, and 5th Indian Divisions can be fully operational again by the middle of August. Until this time the arrival of 1 panzer and 1 infantry division from the homeland can be expected, increasing battle strength to 3 - 4 divisions, including 1 panzer division.

With the forces at present in the area of the front, the enemy will hardly undertake a large scale offensive with far reaching objectives. He will, however, attempt to continue his recent tactics of attacking with limited objectives to break up isolated frontal sectors, especially those held by the Italians. This method of action will be increasingly continued as the reinforcement of enemy divisions progresses. As soon as the British Command has sufficient forces at its disposal a counter-attack can be expected, to eliminate the danger to Egypt and the Middle East, which has arisen through the advance of the Panzer Army.

4. The activity of the powerful enemy Air Force will extend not only to attacking the supply installations of the Army, shipping vital for supply, and the ground organisation of our Air Force, but in addition troops at the front will be attacked in undiminishing strength by night and day. The enemy benefits by having well built airfields, which are situated directly behind the front. The bulk of all enemy air forces in Egypt have been united. It is therefore necessary to reinforce our Air Force extensively, to protect the troops and their supplies, and above all to enable us to make effective attacks on large enemy convoys in the Suez Canal as well as on railway traffic to the front.

5. The supply situation:

The supply situation is tense owing to continual, and partially successful attacks by enemy air and naval forces on German supply at Tobruk and Matruh. Quick relief is hardly possible owing to distance from supply bases (Benghazi and Tripoli).

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Formation of supply bases in the area of operations has not yet met with success owing to shipping losses (Brock and Sturla). Relief depends on the continuous arrival and unloading of coastal and Italian vessels, on the employment of more barges, on the arrival of locomotives, and on using the railway.

Ammunition: The troops have sufficient. Total amounts in Cyrenaica, including that being unloaded from ships, sufficient for further operations, for the present number of weapons.

Weapons: 50 - 60% replaced by fresh allocation and use of captured weapons.

Tanks: 45 with the troops at present. In 4 weeks another 100 can be made ready for action.

Fuel: Total amounts in Cyrenaica sufficient at present during the lull in operations. Insufficient to ensure extensive operations.

Vehicles: 50% of vehicle losses were replaced by captured material. Owing to lack of spare parts for these, and continual enemy air attacks (daily losses average 30 vehicles), increasing shortage of captured vehicles must be expected.

Supply situation: generally assured for the time being. Sufficient supplies owing to discovery of large amounts of booty in the area of operations.

Water supply: continuous supply ensured after employment of German engineers, in spite of extensive destruction of watering places. Further improvements may be expected.

General estimate: continuous supply of troops in the Alamein position has been ensured. Supply in advance for an offensive, however, depends on seaborne supply to Tobruk and on increased coastal supply to Matruh.

## 6. Demands:

- (a) Improvement in the allocation of shipping space compared with the Italian Armed Forces, in order to bring the necessary supplies to Africa quickly. This demand can be made in view of the fact that the brunt of the fighting is borne by German units.
- (b) Allocation of tanks (with longbarrelled guns) to such an extent that the panzer regiments will not only be equipped but also that a reserve of 100 tanks may be available.
- (c) Allocation of armoured reconnaissance cars so that the 3 Reconnaissance Units may be fully equipped, and also that a reserve of 30 cars may be available.
- (d) Allocation of 36 8.8 cm. field guns and 20 10 cm. cannon, including means of propulsion, so that action may be taken against the American medium tank M 3 (Pilot). Also 100 5 cm. anti-tank cannon.
- (e) Allocation of salvage equipment (tank transporters and 18 ton semi-tracked vehicles) at the rate of 10 for each panzer regiment. Without this amount of salvage equipment a large number of tanks cannot be brought to safety from areas held by the enemy.
- (f) Above all, allocation of 1,000 vehicles to fill up existing gaps and for continuous replacement of daily losses.
- (g) Allocation of better personnel replacements than hitherto. Some of the men had received training only with the rifle.

7. Operational plans; in view of the strength of units, the situation regarding Italian formations, the enemy's situation, and the supply situation, the following have been planned.

- (a) Defence of the Alamein - Quattara position until the equipment of units has been completed and sufficient forces have been brought up to continue operations in the direction of Alexandria or Cairo.

During this time local attacks in the form of mobile defence or to improve positions may be considered. If the political situation necessitates the withdrawal of British forces from Egypt, the offensive will be launched earlier.

- (b) If this contingency does not arise, the British Army in the field must be destroyed, by a series of attacks if occasion arises, before the breakthrough to Alexandria and Cairo.

Rommel  
C-in-C. Panzer Army Africa

To:- OKW Operations Staff

Army Battle H.Q., 15th August, 1942

Estimate of the situation and of the state  
of Panzer Army Africa on 15th August, 1942

1. The situation of Panzer Army Africa, which was considered critical even in the first days of August, has eased, because positions could be manned more strongly owing to units brought up by air and as a result of the equipment of Italian divisions, and also units from fast-moving formations could be prepared for mobile action behind the front.

The front has been further reinforced by the almost completed construction of strong field fortifications with extensive minefields.

2. State of troops:

<u>German:</u>	<u>21st July, 1942</u>	<u>15th August, 1942</u>
Men	30%	75%
Tanks	15%	50%
Artillery	70%	85%
Anti-tank artillery	40%	60%
Heavy flak	50%	70%

Italian:

Men	30%	70%
Tanks	15%	50%
Artillery	25%	50%
Anti-tank artillery	30%	65%
Heavy flak	30%	40%

Comparison of the individual strengths on 21st July and on 15th August shows that the state of the troops in personnel and material has considerably improved. The tank and artillery situations are especially favourable. Italian units have reached approximately the same strength as at the beginning of the offensive on 26th May, 1942 and so has the German artillery. At the end of August, 250 German tanks should be available (there are 200 at the front at present). The scanty anti-tank cannon equipment of the 164th Division is still a weak point. Only improvement must be by further continuous air transport of anti-tank cannon.

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In summing up, it can be confirmed that the state of troops has improved considerably as regards personnel and material. As a result of the relative lull at the front, the morale of the troops has likewise improved.

### 3. Enemy situation.

At present 2 armoured divisions and 5 - 6 infantry divisions are situated in the area of the front opposite the Panzer Army. The fighting strength of these units has been increased during the last few weeks by allocation of personnel and material replacements. The 50th British, 1st South African, and 5th Indian Divisions, which were heavily hit during the May - June offensive, can be described as ready for action again. It is expected that they will be completely ready for operations at the beginning of September.

The consolidation of enemy positions is making swift progress both in the front line and to the rear. Laying of minefields in the central and northern sectors has been commenced recently. In the area 30 - 50 km. south of Alamein the enemy has as yet constructed no strong fortifications or large minefields. The 7th Armoured Division is covering this area. At present fortifications to the rear of the front are still not continuous. It can be expected, however, that the construction of fortifications will be accelerated, so that in a few weeks a firm line of defence will exist as far as the Quattara Depression. This will be especially protected against tanks by means of a broad belt of mines.

The number of tanks can be presumed to be continually rising as a result of continuous increases of serviced and replacement tanks, and because the panzer units have not been in action since 27th July. Apart from the tanks arriving by transport, it can be expected that from the end of August tanks which were damaged during the offensive, and which have now been repaired, will arrive at the front in increasing numbers again. The sum total of enemy tanks now in the area of the front should amount to about 300.

As regards artillery, an increase in medium and heavy guns has been confirmed. As the former lack of medium and heavy artillery in relation to ours has been recognised by the enemy command, continued allocation of these calibres must be expected with the next transports.

Enemy forces will be considerably reinforced by the arrival of troops in Suez on 12th August. Their strength should amount to 1 armoured and 1 infantry division.

According to experience, newly arrived units reach the front about 14 days after disembarkation. A further period will elapse to allow them to become acclimatised, so that complete readiness for action may be expected at the end of August. The arrival of another large convoy is expected in the period 1st - 5th September.

With the forces at present in the area of the front - 2 armoured and 5 - 6 infantry divisions - the British could undertake another offensive, hinged on the Alamein fortifications. It is more likely however that they will wait for the arrival of the troops brought by convoy, and then - about the middle of September - go over to the counter-attack with 3 armoured and 6 - 7 infantry divisions. Certain signs of preparations for an offensive have been confirmed.

### 4. Air situation:

During the last few weeks the activity of the powerful, numerically superior enemy Air Force was concentrated mainly on the supply installations of the Army, vital supply shipping and the ground organisation of our Air Force. Continual reinforcement of the R.A.F. via the Red Sea ports and the air route through central Africa can be expected during the month of September - especially in view of increasing American deliveries. According to the

/opinion

opinion of Fliegerfuehrer Afrika the air situation can be maintained in the event of early attack, provided there is sufficient fuel available in Africa.

### 5. Supply situation of German troops

General: the equipment of troops with weapons and supply for a new offensive depends mainly on the transport of goods already loaded up in Italy. Considerable improvement can no longer be expected then.

- (a) Ammunition: from 25th August units in the area east of Matruh had at least 3 ammunition consignments at their disposal. They are therefore supplied for actions so far planned.
- (b) Food: supply requirements have been completely satisfied.
- (c) Fuel: after the transport of consignments already loaded on board ship in Italy units will possess 7 - 8 VS, i.e. an amount of fuel to enable them to conduct operations for about 10 days.

#### Demands:

- (a) Immediate transport of supply goods loaded on board ship in Italy to Tobruk or Benghazi.
- (b) Guarantee of further continual seaborne supply of ammunition and fuel to ports in Cyrenaica, especially before and during the operation.

The supply situation of Italian troops has been covered everywhere and is sufficient for the offensive planned.

### 6. Conclusion

A comparison of forces between the German-Italian and British units shows a certain superiority in German-Italian tanks (on 25th August about 450 - 500 German and Italian tanks as opposed to approximately 400 British) as well as a 50% superiority in heavy artillery, while other arms are of equal strength. Up to this moment the possibility of a quick breakthrough exists on the south flank, where only relatively weak enemy forces are disposed and extensive mining and fortifications have not been confirmed.

This unquestionably favourable situation will alter considerably to the advantage of the British 8th Army in September as a result of the continual arrival of fresh units and personnel and material reinforcements transported by convoys. In addition, British units, which have so far limited strong consolidation of their defensive positions (and also mining) mainly to the northern sector of the front, will probably soon fortify the southern sector strongly.

Strong enemy air superiority compels the Army to regroup before the offensive and the first phase of the attack to be carried out during moonlight nights. Full moon 26th August.

C.-in-C. South, whose readiness for action depends on the arrival of aviation fuel, which is still lacking in Africa, is likewise of the opinion that the most favourable moment to attack would be about 28th August, and adds that he will be ready for action at that time, provided the fuel arrives in time.

In carrying out the operation planned for the last days of August, the supply for Italian troops is assured. In the case of German units the deficiency of some types of ammunition should be eliminated before this

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time, while the relief of the present strained fuel situation is dependent on a convoy from Italy.

In conclusion, 26th August is worth considering as a favourable time to attack. Taking into account the general situation, only an offensive carried out at this time appears to show prospects and promise of success, whereas postponement (for not less than 4 weeks owing to the necessity of the full moon) would seriously prejudice the prospects of a successful attack.

It is therefore planned to attack and destroy the British army in the field in the area of Alamein and to the south, in an offensive to be launched along the whole front in cooperation with C.-in-C. South on 26th August. While the enemy in the northern sector will be held down by a frontal attack with limited objectives, mobile forces have the task of breaking through the southern sector of the enemy front, and by thrusting forwards up to the coast, of encircling and destroying enemy forces situated between Alamein and Ruweisat. Operations will then be continued towards the east.

Rommel  
C.-in-C. Panzer Army Africa

To: - Army General Staff, Operations Division

23rd August, 1942

I have informed Marshal Cavallero on the state of health of C.-in-C. Panzer Army Africa. Cavallero received this news with great regret, especially as Cruewell is no longer available as deputy. He expressed the hope that the Fuehrer would make available another of his tried generals. In any case, change of command would cause the offensive to be postponed, probably until the next full moon period.

The German general at Comando Supremo

To:-The German general at Comando Supremo

3rd September, 1942

I. 1. The absence of the requested consignments of fuel - a condition for the successful execution of the limited local operation - is preventing the continuation of the attack. The fuel situation of the Panzer Army is at present as follows:

(a) In Africa, there are still 3 VS between unloading ports and the front. The supply of units at a permissible maximum rate of consumption of only 1 VS daily is ensured only until 5th September.

(b) In the last few days the following supply goods have arrived:

2,610 tons fuel = 4.2 VS

443 tons ammunition

Sunk:

2,352 tons fuel = 5.5 VS

350 tons ammunition

Of the 5,000 tons of fuel reported from Comando Supremo from 3rd August to 3rd September, 2,600 tons have already been sunk. There are prospects of a further 1,500 tons from Italy, but the date of arrival is not known.

/(c)

- (c) Provided that the Bianchi and Sportivo arrive in Tobruk on 3rd September, supply of units with 1 VS is guaranteed on 7th September for 3 further days. Unloading and transport to units takes 3 days.
- (d) The fuel situation of Italian units regarding Otto-fuel is still more unfavourable. The Picco Fascio was sunk on the morning of 2nd September with 1,100 tons of fuel.
2. Apart from the inadequate supply situation for the operation there are also the following reasons which compel the suspension of the attack:
- (a) The operational plan provided that during the moonlit night of 31st August, advanced units of Motorised Group 30 should take the area about 40 - 50 km. east of the jumping-off position, advancing from the line El Taga - Qaret el Abed through an area which, according to reconnaissance results, is only weakly held and partially mined, and then form up at dawn on 31st August for a thrust in a northerly direction. Owing to numerous hitherto unknown minefields and defences which extended for several kilometres in places, the advance was delayed to such an extent that the first objectives could be taken only with small forces on the evening of 31st August. The element of surprise - an essential provision for the success of the operation - was therefore lost.
- (b) As already stated in the daily report of 1st September, the continual heavy enemy air attacks by day and night before the commencement of the operation caused considerable material and personnel losses to units. These attacks have also had effect on the morale of the German and Italian troops. In particular, owing to the lack of night fighters, troops could not be covered during the 7 - 8 hour night attacks. Supply is being further interrupted by systematic harassing attacks by the enemy Air Force on supply columns, railways and coastal shipping.

These conditions are forcing the Panzer Army to halt the offensive. The Army will therefore gradually fall back under enemy pressure to their jumping-off positions unless the supply and air situations undergo a fundamental change.

II. In the night from 1st to 2nd September and on the 2nd September further numerous heavy enemy air attacks, with bombing and strafing, took place. Seven attacks, each with 20 - 30 aircraft, have already been made during the morning.

Harassing attacks by enemy tanks and reconnaissance cars in the flank and rear of the motorised group were repulsed.

G. H. Q. Panzer Army Africa

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To: - OKW Operations Staff

3rd September, 1942

Comando Supremo sent the following radio message to C.-in-C. Panzer Army on 3rd September.

"The Duce has taken note of your decision to halt the offensive and informs you that every effort will be made to accelerate supply, to enable the Army to beat back a possible enemy attack and make a successful counter-attack.

/The

The Duce once more refers to a possible enemy advance in the direction of Siwa.

"Cavallero"

The German general at Comando Supremo

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To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

5th September, 1942

On 4th September Marshal Cavallero described the situation to me as follows:

According to the opinion of Comando Supremo, the decision of the Panzer Army to discontinue the attack is mainly due to tactical reasons, and especially due to enemy air superiority and big enemy minefields, which prevented the initial objectives being reached in the time planned. The supply situation was not nearly so unfavourable at the time when the attack was discontinued, since numerous vessels with fuel were on the way, the majority of which were not sunk until later.

Since the offensive has been broken off, the hope of pushing enemy air bases further east and thus at least decreasing the air threat to our shipping from the east has not been fulfilled. In addition to tactical necessities, the sea transport situation demands that the Alamein position be held at all costs, as in the event of an advance by the R.A.F. to the west, transport into the harbours of Cyrenaica, and especially Tobruk, would be absolutely impractical. In order to improve the sea transport situation so that supplies may be brought across and the Panzer Army maintained at battle strength, Malta must be neutralised again, since the elimination of the enemy Air Force in Egypt can no longer be expected. It must be possible with some degree of safety to use courses which are not exposed to attacks from Egypt. The Malta problem is so urgent today that the Duce has requested that Field Marshal Kesselring come to a conference in Rome to discuss stronger action against Malta and reinforced air cover for shipping movements.

The German general at Comando Supremo

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To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

7th September, 1942

On 7th September Field Marshal Kesselring conferred with the Duce. From this discussion, and from interviews with Marshal Cavallero, the following has resulted:

1. Right at the beginning of the Panzer Army offensive it was clear that the first objective could not be reached owing to big British minefields and the deep sandy terrain. Fuel consumption was trebled owing to this. The attack was halted at 0700 hours on 31st August and then continued, but an advance to the coast could no longer be made. Enemy air attacks by day and night lowered morale, caused considerable losses, and ceased only after a concentrated attack by our aircraft on the 10th Indian and New Zealand Divisions.

2. The Italian Parachute Division Folgore has done particularly well, but the Italian medium tanks were not equal to the battle in desert terrain owing to their inadequate armour and insufficiently powerful engines. Field Marshal Rommel intends increased mixing of units, including battalions, so as to give large units equal battle strength. The Duce agrees with this.

3. The Alamein position must be held at all costs, as it is the most favourable defensive position in the eastern part of north Africa. The intention that the offensive will be resumed as soon as the supply and strength situation permits must be adhered to. The front in Egypt increases in importance for the entire conduct of the war in connection with pressure on the Middle East from the Caucasus. The British and Americans will reinforce further in the Middle East and set up their second front here. A large scale British offensive does not appear to be imminent at present. Owing to strong defence, enemy air bases in the Nile Delta can be eliminated only by occupation of this area, but air attacks against airfields in Syria and Palestine seem to be promising.

4. Next to Alamein, Malta is the second British centre of strength in the Mediterranean. An attack aimed at the occupation of Malta is not possible before next summer owing to weather conditions. The neutralisation of Malta is therefore the only means to maintain adequate transport movements to Africa. C.-in-C. South declared that besides strong Italian cooperation, considerable reinforcement of his fighter forces was necessary in order to eliminate enemy fighter operations and enable further attacks on enemy airfields. Malta must be continually held down, so that shipping losses could be reduced to an endurable degree.

5. The Duce declared that the battle in the Mediterranean area consisted of two parts - the battle at sea and the battle on land. The battle at sea had been lost, so that the subsequent battle on Egyptian soil could not be carried through. The Duce stated that he was in complete agreement with the measures taken by Field Marshal Rommel, and paid special tribute to the performance of the German and Italian Air Force.

6. In further discussions between C.-in-C. South and Comando Supremo, measures will be examined which, by making use of previous experience, may lead to more effective cooperation between Navy and Air Force in escorting convoys, apart from the absolutely necessary fighter reinforcements to hold down Malta.

7. Field Marshal Kesselring intends to fly to Headquarters on 8th September to discuss the situation and requirements with C.-in-C. Luftwaffe and the Fuehrer.

The German general at Comando Supremo

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To: Naval Liaison Officer on Army General Staff, Operations Division  
7th September, 1942

Deputy Chief of German Naval Command in Italy wires to Chief of Naval Staff, Operations Division:

1. There is no doubt that, towards the end, continuation of the offensive in North Africa collapsed because of inadequate supply services. The fear that this would happen has unfortunately been realised.

2. After the offensive has been broken off, it depends on the supply question whether the Panzer Army will be capable of holding their own, even on the defensive, in face of the ever increasing enemy.

3. The supply problem must therefore be solved at all costs. The first condition for this is that the available amount of tonnage should at least be maintained, i.e. that

- (a) losses caused by the enemy should be brought within bounds;
- (b) unavoidable losses should be replaced.

/4.

4. With reference to 3(a), I am of the opinion that a decisive success cannot be expected if the old methods are used to ward off or reduce the effect of enemy influence by defensive measures. Even if we can increase defences against submarines we have no means at our disposal at present to meet the far superior abilities of the R.A.F. in night operations at sea. This last danger has grown to such an extent that it must lead to a catastrophe if no relief is found. I see today more clearly than ever only one possibility, and that is by strategic offensive. The R.A.F. in the Mediterranean, i.e. in Malta, must be eliminated. Fresh operations must be launched immediately in this area.

Regarding 3(b), no suggestions can be made, except another attempt to obtain neutral or French tonnage in spite of all the difficulties which must be faced. The decreasing number of vessels is so threatening that no possibility must be left untried.

The prospects for effective strengthening of anti-submarine defences are only slight.

With reference to 3(b), there are prospects of an improvement in the situation, if there is a successful conclusion of the Kauffmann - Laval negotiations.

To:-OKW Operations Staff (General Jodl) Army Battle H.Q., 11th September, 1942

The report on the situation of the Army:

1. The attack which was broken off because of the failure of supplies of fuel and ammunition promised by Comando Supremo, has lead to the capture of ground threatening the British southern flank, and valuable as a jumping-off base for future attacks. The extensive British minefields in this area will be made immediately serviceable for our own defence.

2. In the recent battles German troops have once more proved their superiority. The enemy lost 170 tanks and armoured reconnaissance cars, while our tank losses were small. The considerable German losses in men and vehicles are due to the superiority of the British artillery and Air Force. Regarding British air superiority, I report the following: German fighters are too weak numerically to be able to attack British fighter escorts, let alone the heavily armed bomber formations. The enemy can therefore drop his bombs unhindered. According to British reports, about 1,300 tons of bombs were dropped on troops of the Army in the period from 31st August - 6th September.

Reinforcement of the Luftwaffe, which is faced with great superiority at present, is therefore absolutely essential. This reinforcement must comprise mainly of fighters, but must also include bombers, so that heavy reprisal attacks may be carried out. I therefore wholeheartedly support similar proposals by Field Marshal Kesselring.

3. The Italian troops have failed once more - exactly as during the last offensive. The reasons for this are as follows:

The Command is not equal to the mobile direction of battle in desert warfare, which demands at times that fresh decisions be made and put into effect at a moment's notice. The training of Italian units does not correspond to the demands of a modern war. For example, units brought up to replace lost battalions of a division fired for the first time near the front. Officers who had not served since the end of World War I were detailed as battalion commanders. The arms of Italian units do not permit the Italian

/soldier

soldier to withstand British attacks, without German assistance. Apart from the well known faults of Italian tanks - short range and feeble engines - the artillery, with its lack of mobility and inadequate range (6 km. - maximum 8 km.), is absolutely inferior to the British artillery, which is known to be good. Also, weak equipment with anti-tank weapons gives the Italian soldier a feeling of inferiority. Supply of the Italian troops is not adequate. Troops have no field kitchens, and quantities of food are small. For this reason the Italian soldiers, who are usually extremely contented and unassuming, often come to their German comrades to beg something to eat and drink. The great difference in food allocation to officers and men has an adverse effect on the morale of the troops. The Italian soldier is not equal to the bayonet attacks of British infantry. He has not got the nerve to hold on when enemy tanks have broken through. Continual bombing attacks and artillery fire quickly wear down his will to resist.

The Italian soldier therefore can maintain defence only with German support, and then only if the German soldier bears the brunt of the fighting.

4. According to latest reports, the British 8th Army has 5 infantry divisions and 1 armoured division in action at the front, and another 2 infantry divisions and 2 armoured divisions in reserve in the battle area. An increase of 1 infantry and 1 armoured division has occurred at the front. Two more infantry divisions and one armoured division, which can be used in the field, are situated in the Nile Delta, and the enemy has thus considerable superiority. A large scale enemy offensive must be expected soon, probably in October. It will not be possible to hold an attack of these proportions with the German troops available and the weak spirited Italian forces.

It is therefore absolutely essential that the 22nd (Airborne) Division should be promptly sent over during the month of September. It is planned to send this division into the southern sector of the front so that the fast moving troops there can be withdrawn for mobile employment, and so enable the defensive power of Italian troops to be reinforced. Despatch of further Italian troops would only burden supply routes, and must therefore be rejected.

5. The supply situation of the Army is extremely critical, as the requirements of the German troops of the Panzer Army are continually being held up in favour of the Italian forces and the Luftwaffe. This crisis is not only having an effect on the fuel and ammunition situation, but also on the food supply situation. Bread rations had to be cut by half and the transport of additional food supplies forgone. The consequences are under-nourishment of the troops and a high sickness rate. The supply question is an especially serious problem and must be solved by using all available shipping and air transport space if the Panzer Army is to hold its own for any length of time in the African theatre. The relevant proposals have been made repeatedly.

Briefly, they are the following:

- (a) Despatch of 30,000 tons of supply goods in September and (after the arrival of the 22nd (Airborne) Division) of 35,000 tons of supply goods from October.

The supply in advance of 8 ammunition consignments, 30 fuel VS and 30 days' food supplies which I consider necessary are included in this.

- (b) Bringing over of reinforcements numbering about 5,200 men, 2,000 vehicles and 70 field guns, which have already been waiting in Italy for some time, as well as reinforcements numbering about 6,000 men and 1,200 vehicles (including 120 tanks), which are still in Germany.

(c)

- (c) Filling of about 17,000 vacancies and despatch of about 17,000 men to carry out the exchange, ordered by OKH, of men with more than twelve months' service in Africa.

6. I sum up the measures which I consider necessary for the further successful conduct of operations in Africa as follows:-

- (a) Reinforcement of the Luftwaffe with fighter pilots and bomber units.
- (b) Bringing over of the 22nd (Airborne) Division during September.
- (c) Safeguarding of the supply and personnel situation of German troops as suggested in paragraph 5.

It is clear to me that in face of the strategic air and sea situation in the Mediterranean, intensive efforts will have to be made to guarantee continuous German supply in Africa. On the other hand, only the fulfilment of these conditions can enable the German troops, who are bearing the brunt of the battle in Africa, to hold their own in this theatre for any length of time against the best troops of the British Empire.

Rommel  
C-in-C. Panzer Army Africa

To:- Chief of OKW Operations Staff

14th September, 1942

Subject: Panzer Army Africa supply.

I. The following measures were taken as a result of the Panzer Army report of 8th September regarding inadequate supplies for the German Panzer Army Africa in August:

1. Panzer Army Africa was informed that OKW had requested Comando Supremo to make supplies equal; however, the strength of the Italian units (140,000 men according to Comando Supremo) and the transport of harbour and road construction material had to be taken into consideration.
2. The German general in Rome was ordered to ensure that supplies for German troops were assured in the shortest possible time. Furthermore, the German general was ordered to clarify the evasive estimates concerning the strengths of the Italian units.

II. Field Marshal Rommel reports once more on 11th September.

The serious supply crisis of the Panzer Army still exists. The Army has already been compelled to reduce the bread ration by half owing to the absence of flour allocations from Italy. Additional food supplies cannot be issued. The number of sick cases is exceptionally high, most of them being due to undernourishment. For example, there are over 1,000 men in an infantry regiment of the 164th Light Africa Division. The fuel situation will permit only current supplies to be transported, for a limited period, but will not allow large scale movements by motorised units.

The ammunition situation is also very strained. The German troops of the Panzer Army who are bearing the brunt of the fighting in Africa against the best troops of the British Empire, must be continuously sent supplies necessary to live and fight, by using all available shipping and air transport space, as otherwise it will not be possible to continue holding this theatre of operations successfully, and the troops run the danger of suffering the fate of the Halfaya garrison, in an eventual British offensive.

/On

On the request of the deputy Chief of OKW Operations Staff, the German general in Rome expressed the following opinion on this subject on 12th September.

1. Cause of the Panzer Army supply crisis:

- (a) Shortage of shipping space and difficulties in providing convoy escorts, resumption of Malta's activities, British air superiority in the Mediterranean, increased British submarine operations. This has caused a sharp rise in the number of ships sunk.

From 1st August to 12th September the following supply goods for the Panzer Army were lost by vessels being sunk or torpedoed:

6,126 cbm. of fuel,  
1,141 tons of food supplies,  
1,246 tons of ammunition,  
651 tons of miscellaneous supplies,

Against these figures the following supplies were transported:

9,403 cbm. of fuel,  
1,338 tons of food supplies,  
1,246 tons of ammunition,  
1,492 tons of miscellaneous supplies.

Vessels already loaded are waiting in ports owing to the lack of escorts.

- (b) Blocking of the harbours of Tobruk and Benghazi in Cyrenaica in July - August by troop transport (164th Division, Ramcke Brigade, the Italian "Pistoia" Division), so that large supply ships from Italy could not be unloaded according to plan. As early as 19th July, the Panzer Army was informed orally by the Chief Q.M. in Rome of the consequent supply crisis to be expected for September, and also by radio messages from the Chief Q.M. on 2nd and 12th August, and by the Department for Africa Transport on 3rd and 16th August.

2. Present supply situation of the Panzer Army:

- (a) The following arrived in harbours in Cyrenaica from 1st September:

From Italy: 2,677 cbm. fuel,  
1,318 tons ammunition,  
815 tons food,  
456 tons miscellaneous supplies.

From Greece: 1,012 cbm. fuel,

From Tripoli: 1,960 tons ammunition,  
1,200 tons food,  
234 tons miscellaneous supplies.

- (b) Probable duration of supplies, according to present calculations:

Fuel: Until 19th September,

Food: According to the Panzer Army report of 21st September, this will last only until 27th September, because of the lack of flour.

/With

With a fresh allocation (including flour) it will last until the beginning of October.

Ammunition      3 consignments in addition to replacement of ammunition in short supply.

Apart from these supplies there are the following in Tripoli: 30 days' food supplies - including 1,000 tons of flour - and 4,300 tons of ammunition. The Panzer Army can make use of these supplies in Tripoli by using coastal shipping, which is available in adequate numbers.

3. Future supplies:

(a) Supplies already loaded and en route:

7,138 cbm. fuel,  
1,421 tons food,  
2,290 tons ammunition,  
1,109 tons miscellaneous supplies,

(b) Being loaded:

2,080 cbm. fuel,  
2,410 tons ammunition,  
2,910 tons food,  
300 tons miscellaneous supplies.

(c) Further planning depends on the duration of ships' sailing and on losses, and also on consignment allocation in the case of fuel and ammunition.

4. Estimate:

If losses are not heavy and the shipping circulation is not seriously held up by enemy fleet movements, and if no priority troop movements are ordered, the Panzer Army ammunition and food supplies can be maintained or slightly improved; in the case of fuel the rate can be maintained. An improvement of the present monthly consumption will be possible only by obtaining corresponding consignments from Germany (already applied for).

A decisive improvement in the supply situation is possible only by eliminating British air superiority and by neutralising Malta.

Attitude and orders of OKW Operations Staff:

1. No fresh troops will be transported until the supply situation has been assured.

2. Continual clarification of the strengths of German and Italian units (the German general in Rome has been instructed again).

3. The elimination of British air superiority has once more become a vital question for the Panzer Army. (Order draft has been submitted to OKW Operations Staff).

4. Acceleration of increased protection for ports of discharge.

5. Regarding the question of fuel consignments, Chief of OKW decided on 11th September that the retrospective increase in August of about 1,000 cbm. monthly represents the limit of our capabilities. A temporarily increased consignment will not be possible before October at the earliest, and at

/present

present the Economics Office is investigating the possibility of a 1,000 ton increase.

Today's Panzer Army report describes the supply situation as slightly improved.

Warlimont

To:- Chief of OKW Operations Staff

Field H.Q., 23rd September, 1942

Report on the supply situation of Panzer Army Africa.

1. The total amount of supplies at the rate of 30,000 tons monthly requested by Field Marshal Rommel has for months been regarded as a guiding figure by the German general in Rome. Only the situation in the Mediterranean has prevented this total from being reached every month.

Neither this department nor the Army Quartermaster General has been able to ascertain the basis upon which the requisite figure of 30,000 tons of supply goods has been calculated by the Panzer Army, as hitherto no clear picture of the actual supply situation could be gained from Panzer Army reports.

According to the impressions gained by the Army Quartermaster General's personal communication with the Panzer Army at the beginning of August, and as confirmed by the Quartermaster General in Rome, the total monthly amount of supplies necessary, including supplies in advance, amounts to a maximum of only 20,000 tons. The following supplies as requested by the Panzer Army are contained in this figure:-

8 consignments of ammunition,  
30 consignments of fuel,  
30 days' food supplies.

Of these, 9,541 tons of supplies have arrived in African ports between 1st and 20th September.

Henceforth OKW Operations Staff will establish clear reasons for this and will submit a survey every 10 days.

2. The following details should be noted:

(a) Ammunition:

There is no clear picture of Panzer Army ammunition stocks. Data provided by the Army Quartermaster General regarding the most recent state thereof will be submitted after completion.

The Army Quartermaster General is sending 5 complete consignments to the Panzer Army and will store 2 in Italy, so that a total of 7 consignments will be available for supply.

The 8 consignments requested cannot be given in all types of supplies, and there is a special shortage of ammunition (5 cbm. anti-tank, 7.5cm.)

According to the latest 10-day report (situation as on 10th September), the following amounts of the supply programme were ready:

/In

In Italy 9,632 tons

In Greece 500 tons

at this time the following amount was loaded: 2,014 tons

Total: 12,146 tons - about 3 consignments  
(1 consignment =  
4,200 tons).

At the same time the following were in Africa:

In Tripoli 4,300 tons

from Benghazi to the front 18,500 tons

Total 22,800 tons - about 5 consignments.

Apart from captured ammunition, the Panzer Army has 9 - 12 consignments of ammunition of different types, so that the Quartermaster General is of the opinion that the average of 8 consignments will be reached in any case with the allocation of ammunition which has been prepared. Details will be reported later.

If the supply programme is not interrupted by heavy sea transport losses, the supply of 8 consignments can be maintained continuously.

According to the daily report of 20th September the ammunition situation has improved slightly, through the allocation of anti-tank ammunition.

(b) Fuel:

The Panzer Army request for the fulfilment of current requirements reaches the monthly amount of 12,000 cbm.

The monthly consignment fixed by OKW amounts to 11,800 cbm.

Of this amount the first half is in Italy or already in Africa. The second half will be shipped continuously from 15th September.

The Panzer Army requests a reserve supply of 30 VS. (1 VS. = 600 cbm.) in addition to current requirements. The total reserve supply amounts to about 20,000 cbm., and was to be sent after current requirements had been fulfilled. This demand cannot be fulfilled at present.

The possibility of increased supply for November and December cannot be assessed before the end of October.

(c) Food supplies:

The preparation of the 30 days' reserve supplies requested will not present any difficulties. The conveyance is purely a transport question.

Apart from this there are 30 days' supplies stored in Tripoli at present.

3. In conclusion, the supply situation of the Panzer Army can be estimated as follows:

With the exception of the fuel reserves requested, the demands of the Panzer Army can be fulfilled, on the condition that adequate shipping and convoy escorts can be prepared.

/The

The supply situation will improve as soon as the shipping placed at our disposal by France is ready to operate on the African supply routes.

Warlimont

To:-German-Italian Panzer Army (through German general in Rome)

Field H.Q., 23rd September, 1942.

I. Reinforcements:

1. Army:

The reinforced 47th Infantry Regiment (Infantry Regiment 47 with 3 battalions in Africa formation, 1 artillery unit with 2 light field howitzer batteries, 110 cm. battery) left over after the reorganisation of the 22nd Division, will be sent to the Panzer Army as soon as possible.

2. Luftwaffe:

C.-in-C. Luftwaffe will send C.-in-C. South a fighter Gruppe, after its operations have been completed and it has been re-equipped for tropical service. This will take 2 - 3 weeks. Consideration has been given to the despatch of a bomber Gruppe and a flak unit. Provision of the latest anti-aircraft weapon (Flak 41/88 cm.) has been begun.

3. Replacements:

Apart from the reinforcements made up of 5,200 men in Italy and about 6,000 men in Germany, there will be 7,000 convalescent men of the Field Army fit for tropical service available to relieve 17,000 men and to fill 17,000 vacancies at each of the following dates; 1st October, 1st November and 1st December, 1942, together with 21,000 as reserves. Provision has been made for further allocations from Tropical Replacement Units according to age.

II. Supply:

All demands will be met, with the exception of the request for increased fuel supplies, which will present difficulties because of the general fuel situation. The possibility of increasing the consignment in November and December cannot be assessed before October.

III. Transport situation and urgency:

An improvement in the transport and supply situation can be expected when the shipping from France is in use. However the total available shipping and transport space will even then remain inadequate. In accordance with a priority scale drawn up here, every effort will be made to supply the Panzer Army adequately and to despatch replacements prepared for it. The reinforced 47th Infantry Regiment will be sent over as soon as these conditions have been fulfilled.

OKW Operations Staff

To:-Army General Staff, Operations Division

5th October, 1942

The enemy has recognised sea supply communications as the weak point of our North Africa operation and is carrying out constant heavy attacks with aircraft from Malta and Egypt, as well as with submarines, causing us daily losses.

/As

As regards range, he is commanding the entire sea area, which is even controlled at night by excellent radar. Our defence against submarines is barely sufficient and against air attacks is inadequate.

Continuing shipping losses cannot be replaced. Supply loss cannot be retrieved by strengthening defences later. The danger therefore exists of continued weakening of our forces in North Africa and the ultimate loss of the entire North African position with dire military and political consequences. Measures to hold down Malta are therefore, in the opinion of Naval Staff, Operations Division, of the greatest urgency.

Naval Staff, Operations Division

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division

12th October, 1942

During recent Comando Supremo discussions, the Italians have repeatedly brought up the question of the counter-measures to be taken if the enemy makes a landing in North West Africa. It was reported that owing to increasing signs of enemy intentions in this direction, training and equipment priority during the coming months would not - as originally arranged - extend only to divisions based on the west Alpine border, but also in the same degree to the divisions ready for action in Tunisia. The Italians repeatedly stressed the far reaching influence on the further course of the war which would be brought about by a change in the present situation in North West Africa, and emphasised that every means must be employed in preparation against any possible development in this situation. The German general at Comando Supremo requests instructions regarding attitude to the measures of Comando Supremo, as the measures proposed by the Italians may have far reaching effects on the entire direction of operations in the Mediterranean area. Only after the arrival of OKW instructions to this effect will it be possible to form an opinion of the intended gradual transfer of three Italian divisions to Tripolitania. The Panzer Army wishes this transfer to be entirely abandoned in favour of a shipping space increase for Panzer Army transport and supply. Comando Supremo appeals against this transfer to Tripolitania, which the Fuehrer suggested during the conference at Obersalzburg at the beginning of May, and for which the Duce has just issued orders.

The German general at Comando Supremo

To:- OKW Operations Staff

Field H.Q., 13th October, 1942

1. To ensure unified direction of operations in the Mediterranean, C.-in-C. South will take over preparation and execution of the defence of all coasts occupied by German troops (with the exception of the German-Italian Panzer Army) in the Mediterranean and Aegean, including the fortress of Crete.

In accordance with Directive 40, C.-in-C. South is hereby directly subordinated to me, without prejudice to his former subordination to the Duce and to C.-in-C. Luftwaffe in matters concerning the Luftwaffe.

2. C.-in-C. South East and the units and establishments subordinated to him will be under the orders of C.-in-C. South for this operation. It is left to the discretion of C.-in-C. South which coastal sectors he relinquishes to the independent command of C.-in-C. South East. This change of command will unite C.-in-C. South with C.-in-C. South East and when this is effected, it will be reported to me and details of adjustments given.

/3.

3. C.-in-C. South-East will retain administration of Greece, including Crete, in so far as this does not come under Italian authority.
4. Official troop subordinations will undergo no change.
5. Any orders necessary for the execution of this directive will be issued by Chief of OKW as soon as information concerning the new command adjustments have been submitted. Requests and information will be reported to me through OKW before 15th November, 1942.

Adolf Hitler

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Division 17th October, 1942

Subject: Enemy plans for a landing in Africa.

1. OKW, in agreement with Comando Supremo, considers it probable that the enemy powers are preparing to attempt a landing in Dakar. Landings in Morocco, especially on the Atlantic coast, are considered possible. Plans to land in Algeria, and especially Tunis, are less probable in our opinion.
2. OKW considers the defence of the French colonies in West and North Africa a French problem, and is of the opinion that the French will defend their colonial empire in their own interests. Effective resistance by the French can only be expected if there are prospects of military success. In order to guarantee this, French demands for personnel and material support of their armed forces in threatened West Africa have, as far as possible, already been met half way by Germany.
3. Within the framework of the situation as a whole, OKW considers the following tasks as urgent:
  - (a) Adequate supply and support of the German-Italian Panzer Army must be carried out at all times. Only when this has been assured will it be possible to carry out a further operation in the Mediterranean requiring a large amount of tonnage for troop transport and supply.
  - (b) In order to safeguard completely the defence of the coast of Europe, execution of Operation Anton must be assured. The requisite support for this operation, promised by Comando Supremo, will also remain necessary.
4. As far as Italian forces are available beyond this, OKW considers it practicable to hold them ready in western Libya. OKW fears however, that the immediate aggressive advance into Tunisia planned by Comando Supremo, while it is not yet clear whether the French will resist or request support from Axis powers, will drive the French into the arms of the British and Americans. This must be avoided.
5. In consideration of the situation in the other theatres of war, considerable reinforcement of German land, sea and air forces in the Mediterranean cannot be expected. Similarly, supply of the Italian Navy and Air Force is not possible at present owing to the raw material situation in Italy.

OKW Operations Staff

/To:

To:- The German general at Comando Supremo,  
General von Rintelen, Rome.

28th November, 1942

The following telegram from the Fuehrer will be transmitted immediately to the Duce through Comando Supremo.

"Duce!

It has just been reported to me that the harbour of Tripoli has been blocked for 14 days by numerous vessels. It is also reported that no vessels for the Panzer Army will arrive in Tripoli before December 4th. The Italian Navy maintains that it has no escort craft to provide protection for the voyages to Tunis and Tripoli. Tripolitania cannot be held under these conditions. Rommel's Army needs a continuous flow of material and supply goods to Tripoli, and from thence to the Gulf of Sirte by coastal vessels. Adequate material is available in Southern Italy and needs only to be transported; in particular, vessels which have for some time now been loaded and ready for the voyage to Tripoli should sail. At present the supply route to Tripoli via Tunis cannot be used.

I therefore urgently request, Duce, that you make every effort to overcome the difficulties existing in Tripoli harbour and also in convoy escort organisation. Reichsmarschall Goering and Field Marshal Rommel are coming to Rome to convey my opinions to you.

With best wishes in comradely union,

Yours,

Adolf Hitler"

General Jodl,  
Chief of OKW Operations Staff

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