

RESTRICTED

AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH

TRANSLATION VII/108

WAR DIARY OF PANZER ARMY AFRICA

28 JULY - 23 OCTOBER 1942

Appendices (I)

28 July - 19 September 1942

TRANSLATED BY

AIR MINISTRY, A.H.B.6.

APRIL, 1952

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Panzer Army Ia

Army Battle HQ, 28/7/42
11.15 hours

To: Army General Staff, Organisation Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

In view of the heavy positional fighting taking place in the Alamein area, Panzer Army requests the speedy provision of a smoke battalion and heavy projectors by air.

Panzer Army Ia

Army Battle HQ, 28/7/42
22.45 hours

To: Army General Staff, Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily report 28/7/42

1) Reconnaissance and artillery activity along the entire front.

2) Advanced units of Paratroop Regiment will not reach Athens until 4/8/42. The Regiment can therefore not be expected to arrive in the battle area until 10/8/42.

Panzer Army
C. in C.Army Battle HQ, 29/7/42
22.50 hours

To: Africa Corps, etc.

I order every man - including those at HQ - to remain at his post and not to retreat. Retreat means destruction. If positions are held the nightly battles can be withstood victoriously and with a minimum of losses. Enemy units which break through must be dealt with by reserves held ready. Thrusts similar to those that have occurred in recent days must be expected in the near future.

Anyone deserting his post is to be charged with cowardice in face of the enemy. Court martial proceedings will be taken in every individual case.

Rommel

Panzer Army Ia

Army Battle HQ, 29/7/42
22.00 hours

To: Army General Staff, Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily report 29/7/42

- 1) Reconnaissance and artillery activity during the day. The enemy has been reinforced in the coastal area by the transfer of armoured units from the central sector and the addition of heavier artillery. Apart from these changes, the 9th Australian Division, the 1st South African Division and the 50th British Division are deployed or assembled in this area.

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- 2) The steamer "Pisani" loaded with German supplies was attacked by 20 torpedo a/c and ran aground off the west coast of Crete. An attempt to save the cargo is being made.
- 3) . In the period from 26 May to 25 July Panzer Army destroyed or captured 2514 tanks, armoured cars, carriers and other armoured vehicles. Of these 1308 fell to Africa Corps and 343 to 135th Flak Regiment.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 30/7/42
10.15 hours

To: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Mersa Matruh is endangered from the sea and the area to the south is constantly threatened by enemy saboteurs from the Qattara Depression. German and Italian airfields are in great danger; 22 a/c were destroyed or damaged in one night on a single airfield.

Italian Supreme Command's proposed transfer of 1 Libyan battalion to Mersa Matruh and the south is in no way sufficient.

Please arrange with Cavallero for Mersa Matruh and the area to the south as far as the Qattara well to remain the operational zone of the Panzer Army. At present the area is being cleared of enemy harassing troops by reconnaissance units of Panzer Army.

It is further proposed to transfer the Pavia Division to the Mersa Matruh area and to the south where it will remain subordinate to Panzer Army HQ irrespective of the training programme, which will be in the hands of the Italian Supreme Command.

Signal from: Department of African Transport.

30/7/42,
15.05 hours

To: Panzer Army H.Q. Section Ia

Advanced units of the Ramcke Regiment have arrived in Piraeus. Transportation by air will begin on 31/7/42.

Some elements of 164th Inf. Div. (viz. 2nd Battalion 433rd Inf. Regt.) will be withheld for the time being.

Please signal:

- 1) if it is urgent that all vehicles of 164th Inf. Div. be shipped out of Crete;
- 2) if all vehicles of the Ramcke Regt. are to be shipped from Piraeus; or
- 3a) if troop equipment and 230 urgently-needed vehicles of 164th Inf. Div. may be shipped at once from Crete in the vessel "Wachtfels";
- b) if troop equipment and 140 urgently-needed vehicles of the Ramcke Regt. may be shipped from Piraeus in the vessel "Menes".

Notes: a) "Wachtfels" is at present in Benghazi. Loading can begin in Crete from 2/8/42.

b) "Menes" is at present in Tobruk. Loading can begin in Piraeus from 12/8/42.

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Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 30/7/42
22.25 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily Report 30/7/42

- 1) The day passed quietly with reconnaissance and artillery activity by both sides. Enemy air activity less than on previous days.
- 2) Continual air and submarine attacks on coastal supply shipping recently between Tobruk and Mersa Matruh. Two unsuccessful attacks were made by submarine on 26/7/42 against the steamer "Ostia". Two air attacks on 3 barges on 28/7/42. One barge completely lost. An Italian submarine (Mico) and 1 auxiliary sailing vessel were sunk during an air raid on Tobruk harbour during the night of 28-29/7/42. The steamer "Monviso" (5,300 tons), sailing from Tarento to Tobruk, was damaged in an attack and put back into a Greek port.
- 3) The following elements of 164th Inf. Div. have so far been put into the front:

6 infantry battalions, 1 engineer battalion, 1 artillery Abteilung, 1 anti-aircraft battalion.

Artillery Commander 104
Abteilung Ia

Battle HQ, 31/7/42

Subject: Combatting enemy artillery

The enemy's latest attacks have generally been preceded by heavy artillery fire. In order to interfere with this fire in future, immediate retaliatory action is to be taken in every instance against enemy batteries known to be in the sectors concerned.

The following are responsible for combatting enemy artillery:

- 1) Artillery Commander XX Army Corps from the south as far as grid line 272,
- 2) artillery of the Africa Corps on the adjoining sector as far as grid line 282,
- 3) Fürguth Group on the adjoining sector as far as grid line 298,
- 4) Schade Group on the adjoining sector as far as the sea.

The Becker Group of 164th Division and the Italian batteries in this sector will be available to the Fürguth Group for this purpose, as far as they are not committed otherwise.

The latest data obtained by reconnaissance is tabulated on the attached sheet of coordinates. The Africa Corps is requested to keep in constant touch with 33rd Armoured Survey Troop for details of the latest reconnaissance. The other Groups will be kept constantly informed of the results of reconnaissance by 11th Survey Unit.

Targets reconnoitred by survey units are to be added to the

STATE
at
31 - 7 - 42

| | Officers | Other Ranks | Infantry Companies | Engineer Companies | Light Batteries | Heavy Batteries | Light Machine-guns | Heavy Machine-guns | Trench Mortars | Anti-Tank Rifles | 4.7 cm Anti-Tank Guns | Light Flak | Heavy Flak | 7.5 cm Guns | 7.5 cm Assault Guns | 9 cm Guns | Light Field Howitzers | 10.5 cm Guns | 15 cm Medium Field Howitzers | 15 cm Guns | Light Tanks | Medium Tanks | Armoured Cars |
|----------------------|----------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------|------------|-------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------------------|------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| X Army Corps Est. | 220 | 3806 | - | 4 | | 12 | 40 | 42 | - | 18 | 18 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 36 | - | - | - | 80 | - |
| Corps Personnel Str. | 68 | 1423 | - | 5 | | 3 | 18 | 5 | - | 2 | | - | - | - | - | - | - | (1)3 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Brescia Est. | 352 | 6590 | 24 | 2 | 17 | - | 146 | 92 | 18 | 72 | 72 | 18 | 12 | 24 | - | - | 24 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Str. | 224 | 4706 | 21 | 2 | 4 | - | 20 | 50 | 9 | 19 | 39 | 14 | - | 11 | - | - | (2)6 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Pavia Est. | 352 | 6590 | 24 | 2 | 17 | - | 146 | 92 | 18 | 72 | 72 | 18 | - | 24 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Str. | 114 | 1318 | 6 | 2 | 3 | - | 36 | 27 | 6 | 5 | 13 | 14 | - | 4 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| <u>Total</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| XX Army Corps Est. | | NOT | YET | AVAILABLE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Corps Personnel Str. | 42 | 700 | 1 | 3 | - | 2 | 15 | 4 | - | 4 | - | 4 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 5 | - | - | - |
| Ariete Est. | 362 | 7200 | 6 | 2 | 13 | 3 | 36 | 18 | - | 18 | 42 | 26 | - | 24 | 16 | 12 | - | 12 | - | - | - | 189 | 40 |
| Str. | 282 | 6450 | 7 | 2 | 7 | - | 36 | 25 | - | 13 | 33 | 12 | 7 | 4 | 12 | 3 | - | - | - | - | - | 52 | 9 |
| Littorio Est. | 362 | 7245 | 6 | 2 | 13 | 3 | 36 | 18 | - | 18 | 42 | 26 | - | 24 | 16 | 12 | - | 12 | - | - | 80 | 189 | - |
| Str. | 148 | 3652 | 6 | 1 | 6 | - | 17 | 18 | - | 7 | 30 | 8 | 12 | 3 | - | - | 8 | - | - | - | 13 | 36 | - |
| Trieste Est. | 309 | 5621 | 12 | 2 | 12 | - | 72 | 36 | 18 | 36 | 36 | 18 | 12 | 24 | - | - | 24 | - | - | - | - | 52 | 40 |
| Str. | 250 | 4750 | 8 | 2 | 8 | - | 48 | 23 | 2 | - | 21 | 28 | 4 | 11 | - | - | 14 | - | - | - | - | - | 3 |

Cont:-

contd:-

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lists of enemy batteries pin-pointed by observation posts.

The allocation of targets must be made in such a manner that counterfire can begin immediately the code word is given, thus supporting our infantry as soon as the enemy's preparatory artillery barrage starts.

Signed KRAUSE

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ 31/7/42
22.53 hours

To: Army General Staff, Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily Report 31/7/42

- 1) Lively enemy reconnaissance activity in the northern sector. Otherwise no special activity during the day. The Luftwaffe confirms that there are strong enemy groups in the central and northern sector.
- 2) During a bombing attack on Tobruk in the night of 29/30 July the steamer "Delos" was hit on the bow and ran aground; the coastal sailing vessel "San Marco", loaded with ammunition, food and W/T equipment was sunk. An attempt to salvage the cargo is being made. With this loss the last of the serviceable coastal sailing vessels has been lost.
- 3) Tank situation:
 - a) Africa Corps:

| | |
|---------|----|
| II | 18 |
| III | 51 |
| III Sp. | 41 |
| IV | 4 |
| IV Sp. | 14 |
| A.C.V.s | 2 |
 - b) XX Army Corps:

| | |
|-------|----|
| Pz. M | 88 |
| Pz. L | 8 |

ESTABLISHMENT AND STRENGTH RETURNS

1/8/42

| | NCO's | | MEN | | SHORTAGES | |
|-----------------------|--------|----------|--------|----------|-----------|--------|
| | Estab. | Strength | Estab. | Strength | NCO's | Men |
| Panzer Army HQ | | 101 | | 549 | | |
| Africa Corps: | | | | | | |
| 15th Pz. Div. | 2,332 | 1,431 | 10,222 | 6,452 | 901 | 3,770 |
| 21st Pz. Div. | 2,297 | 1,763 | 10,682 | 7,969 | 624 | 2,827 |
| 90th Light Div. | 2,086 | 1,110 | 10,899 | 6,463 | 976 | 4,436 |
| Artillery Command 104 | 645 | 538 | 3,648 | 2,789 | 107 | 859 |
| Pz. Army Supply Comm. | 516 | 427 | 3,071 | 2,615 | 89 | 456 |
| C/O Rear Army area | 79 | 114 | 526 | 565 | - | - |
| 612th Flak Battalion | 156 | 146 | 735 | 609 | 10 | 126 |
| | | 5,630 | | 28,011 | 2,707 | 12,474 |

RESTRICTEDESTABLISHMENT AND STRENGTH RETURNS (Contd.)1/8/42

| | <u>NCO's</u> | | <u>MEN</u> | | <u>SHORTAGES</u> | |
|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|------------|
| | <u>Estab.</u> | <u>Strength</u> | <u>Estab.</u> | <u>Strength</u> | <u>NCO's</u> | <u>Men</u> |
| <u>Infantry:</u> | | | | | | |
| 115th Pz. Gren. Regt. | 605 | 233 | 3,251 | 1,417 | 372 | 1,834 |
| 104th Pz. Gren. Regt. | 579 | 443 | 3,086 | 1,967 | 136 | 1,119 |
| 155th Pz. Gren. Regt. | 341 | 168 | 1,789 | 981 | 173 | 808 |
| 200th Pz. Gren. Regt. | 365 | 156 | 1,903 | 909 | 209 | 994 |
| 361st Pz. Gren. Regt. | 377 | 173 | 1,930 | 868 | 204 | 1,062 |
| 288th Special Unit | 279 | 147 | 1,472 | 845 | 132 | 627 |
| | | | | | 1,226 | 6,444 |
| <u>Artillery:</u> | | | | | | |
| 33rd Pz. Art. Regt. | 323 | 233 | 1,583 | 851 | 90 | 732 |
| 155th Pz. Art. Regt. | 332 | 271 | 1,615 | 1,294 | 61 | 321 |
| 190th Pz. Art. Regt. | 88 | 52 | 469 | 370 | 36 | 99 |
| 104 Artillery Command. | 645 | 538 | 3,648 | 2,789 | 107 | 859 |
| | | | | | 294 | 2,011 |
| <u>Armour:</u> | | | | | | |
| 8th Pz. Regt. | 682 | 456 | 1,647 | 1,482 | 226 | 165 |
| 5th Pz. Regt. | 686 | 361 | 1,613 | 1,418 | 325 | 195 |
| | | | | | 551 | 360 |
| <u>Panzer-Jaeger:</u> | | | | | | |
| 33rd Pz. Jaeger. | 73 | 73 | 350 | 276 | - | 74 |
| 39th Pz. Jaeger | 87 | 84 | 339 | 239 | 3 | 100 |
| 605th Pz. Jaeger | 110 | 76 | 407 | 346 | 34 | 61 |
| 190th Pz. Jaeger | | 33 | | 186 | | |
| | | | | | 37 | 235 |
| <u>Total shortages:</u> | | | | | | |
| | <u>NCO's</u> | <u>Men</u> | | | | |
| Infantry | 1,226 | 6,444 | | | | |
| Artillery | 294 | 2,011 | | | | |
| Armour | 551 | 360 | | | | |
| Panzer-Jaeger | 37 | 235 | | | | |
| | <u>2,108</u> | <u>9,050</u> | | | | |

Panzer Army Ia

Army Battle HQ, 1/8/42

To: OKW Operational Staff.

Supplies at the present time are sufficient to cover only the day-to-day requirements of the troops. Stock-piling for large-scale actions or even offensives is impossible. Reasons:

- 1) Prevention of coastal shipping from Tobruk to the east by enemy air force and navy. The last German auxiliary sailing vessel has been sunk and several barges have been put out of action. Remedy: Continuous, organised defence of the coast by Luftwaffe.

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- 2) Inadequate shipping space for coastal traffic (still only one steamer) and as a result it is impossible to collect supplies that have been left behind.
Remedy: Provision of barges from Italian sources plus at least 3 Italian coastal steamers.
- 3) Limited facilities for unloading in Tobruk (only 600 tons daily) and the danger of air attacks. Ships lying in the harbour are subjected to continual heavy air attacks.
Remedy: Increased construction of harbour facilities, building of landing stages in nearby bays by Italian labour, an increased amount of Italian unloading gear to be made available and the necessary directives issued to Italian naval departments. Stronger air cover over Tobruk.
- 4) The establishment of regulated railway traffic using Italian rolling stock is not yet in sight. Locomotives supplied so far are not equal to their tasks.
Remedy: Getting the railway to the frontline areas in operation quickly, and the immediate delivery of German locomotives and wagons and a railway operating company.
- 5) Lack of transport vehicles. Strain on existing facilities resulting from 164th Infantry Division's and the Paratroops' lack of supply vehicles.
Remedy: Increased allocation of vehicles, making use of Benghazi and Tripoli.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 1/8/42
23.25 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Army, Rome

Daily Report 1/8/42

- 1) Enemy situation largely unchanged. According to credible statements of Indian deserters the 10th Indian Division is being rested and re-equipped near Cairo. The remaining elements of the 4th Indian Division in Egypt are being used to complete the 10th Division. Enemy fighter-bombers made a number of raids on German positions.
- 2) There was reconnaissance and artillery activity during the day by both sides along the entire front. The Luftwaffe successfully attacked enemy artillery positions.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 2/8/42
13.38 hours

To: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Ref: Your Ia No. 4239 Secret of 31 July

Battle strengths of German formations, including elements of 164 Infantry Division brought over up to the present time.
State as at 1 August, 1942 (Establishment figures in brackets)

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| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------|----------|
| <u>15 Panzer Division</u> | Officers | 225 | (310) |
| | NCOs and men | 6,182 | (10,216) |
| | Anti-tank guns | 47 | (127) |
| | Field guns | 36 | (46) |
| | Tanks | 65 | (203) |
| | Armoured cars | 16 | (20) |
| | Cars | 334 | (700) |
| | Trucks | 1,371 | (1,870) |
| | Semi-tracked tractors | 100 | (300) |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------|----------|
| <u>21 Panzer Division</u> | Officers | 290 | (371) |
| | NCOs and men | 8,706 | (12,827) |
| | Anti-tank guns | 53 | (129) |
| | Field guns | 42 | (46) |
| | Tanks | 68 | (216) |
| | Armoured cars | 16 | (20) |
| | Cars | 365 | (700) |
| | Trucks | 1,119 | (1,868) |
| | Semi-tracked tractors | 120 | (300) |

| | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------|----------|
| <u>90 Light Division</u> | Officers | 133 | (263) |
| | NCOs and men | 4,679 | (9,257) |
| | Anti-tank guns | 98 | (177) |
| | Field guns | 19 | (30) |
| | Armoured cars | 5 | (20) |
| | Cars | 400 | (1,064) |
| | Trucks | 937 | (1,085) |
| | Semi-tracked tractors | 104 | (258) |

Elements of 164 Infantry
Division brought over up
to present time

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|----------|
| Officers | 195 | (391) |
| NCOs and men | 6,708 | (11,277) |
| Anti-tank guns | 45 | (45) |
| Field guns | 10 | (26) |
| Vehicles not yet brought over | | |

ARMY TROOPS

Artillery Commander 104
and Flak Regiment 135

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------|--------|
| Officers | 236 | |
| NCOs and men | 6,912 | |
| Field guns | 51 | (68) |
| Light AA guns | 85 | (188) |
| Heavy AA guns | 29 | (42) |
| Cars | 306 | (399) |
| Trucks | 690 | (780) |
| Semi-tracked tractors | 112 | (155) |

Disbanded battalions and units - none

One battalion of Africa Corps and one of 90 Light Division have been taken out of the front for a rest.

Vehicle Situation

25% - 30% of vehicles in for repair at all times
 85% of vehicles captured from the enemy. Their condition is therefore very poor owing to the lack of spare parts.

Number of Tanks Destroyed:

| | | | |
|--------------------|------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 15 Panzer Division | 149 tanks, | 9 armoured cars, | 2 command vehicles |
| 21 Panzer Division | 95 tanks, | 8 armoured cars, | 1 command vehicle |

2/8/42, 20.40 hours

To: Panzer Army HQ. Ia

SIGNAL

By order of OKW, it has been suggested to Comando Supremo that the Sabratha Division should not be relieved, in spite of the insignificance of its remaining fighting value. In view of the experience gained in Russia, in order to fool the enemy intelligence service, even the most depleted division is not to be relieved. The Russians have made use of this system against us with considerable success on past occasions. Comando Supremo has agreed to OKW's proposal and promised to retain the Sabratha Division.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 2/8/42
24.00 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily Report 2/8/42

- 1) The enemy carried out more extensive reconnaissance and artillery operations along the entire front. Entrenchments were observed in the central sector of the front. It was again confirmed that field positions are being constructed at Alam-el-Halfa (20 km S.E. of Alamein). Air reconnaissance reported stronger concentrations of trucks in the central sector. A new formation is reported in the southern sector by reliable sources.
- 2) Operational tanks:
 - a) German: Pz.II 22
 III 67
 III Sp 49
 IV 6
 IV Sp 15
Armoured Command Cars 2
 - b) Italian: Pz.M 88
 L 8
- 3) The Italian divisions suffered the following losses in the course of the operations of Panzer Army (as on 1 July):
 - 10 infantry battalions and
 - 10 artillery Abteilungen (including 2 heavy
artillery Abteilungen).

The following had been brought up by 2/8/42:

6 Infantry battalions and
8 artillery Abteilungen

The total strength of the Italian Corps at present is:

| | |
|----------------|--|
| X Army Corps | 8 infantry battalions + 1 battalion without weapons |
| | 5 artillery Abteilungen |
| XX Army Corps | 9 infantry battalions and 1 anti-tank battalion |
| | 9 artillery Abteilungen |
| XXI Army Corps | 8 infantry battalions |
| | 12 artillery Abteilungen |

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Paratroop
Division 2 Jaeger (infantry) battalions
 2 anti-tank battalions

- 4) Two barges and two lifeboats were sunk in Bardia harbour during the night of 1-2/8/42 in the course of the continued day and night attacks by the enemy air force on the Panzer Army's vital supply line, the coastal shipping traffic.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 2/8/42
24.02 hours

To: O.K.W. Operational Staff

Through: German General at HQ, Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Continued enemy air and naval attacks by day and night on coastwise shipping between Benghazi and Mersa Matruh - the vital supply line of the Panzer Army - are causing considerable losses, and it is doubtful if coastal shipping can be carried on much longer. As air cover by Italian aircraft is not guaranteed and Fliegerführer Africa can provide protection only for Mersa Matruh, owing to its front-line tasks, it is requested that additional Luftwaffe and A.A. units be provided to protect coastal shipping.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 3/8/42
23.04 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily report 3/8/42

- 1) The enemy forces in the Alamein position are subordinate to XIII Corps in the southern and central sectors, and to X Corps in the northern sector.

The following are subordinate to XIII Corps:

7th Armoured Division less 4th Armoured Brigade, employed on the southern flank and also partly in the central sector on reconnaissance and covering operations.

1st Armoured Division in the central sector with its armour positioned behind the front.

The New Zealand Division has been withdrawn from the front, probably owing to heavy losses. Whereabouts of 5th Indian Division not known at present.

The following are subordinate to X Corps:

9th Australian Division in the Alamein fortress,
50th (Northumbrian) Division south of the fortress,
1st South African Division, apparently as Corps
reserve, on the coastal plain east of el Alamein.

- 2) There was reconnaissance and artillery activity by both sides along the front.
- 3) So far 90,000 mines have been laid in the German-Italian

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positions west and south-west of el Alamein.
During the actions from 20 to 30 July, 57 tanks and armoured trucks and 52 lorries were damaged or rendered unserviceable by German mines.

- 4) The steamer "Monteviso" carrying German supplies was sunk by a torpedo off Benghazi on 3 August
- 5) One battalion of German paratroops has arrived in the front-line area.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 4/8/42
22.45 hours

To: Army General Staff Organisation Department

Copies to: O.K.W. Operational Staff
C-in-C South
German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

So far none of the 196 anti-tank guns (100 of them were to have been delivered by the end of July) promised to 164th Division in signal No. 3528, dated 25/7/42, originated by Army General Staff Organisation Department has arrived at Panzer Army HQ.

164th Division is fighting in the front line and has at present only three 5 cm anti-tank guns. In view of the enemy's superiority in armoured formations it is inevitable that the Division will suffer losses while the present lack of anti-tank guns continues.

It is therefore requested that the promised 196 anti-tank guns be brought across to Fuka as soon as possible by freight-carrying gliders.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 4/8/42
22.46 hours

To: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

- 1) The Pistoia Division, which according to joint (Italo-German) orders was not due to arrive until the middle of August, has reached North Africa in force with over 300 vehicles. On the other hand, barely 60 vehicles of 164th Infantry Division have been delivered so far. Supplying the divisions, therefore, proves to be very difficult as all their units are at the front. Transportation of the 800 - 1,000 spare vehicles in Italy belonging to the Panzer Army, now urgently needed, has not yet begun.
- 2) For weeks the German forces have had to bear the brunt of the fighting in the North African theatre almost alone. Nor will this position be changed in future operations. It is therefore insupportable that Italian formations should be replenished to a disproportionately greater extent than the German forces, and that a new Italian Division should be transported, while not one of the urgently needed German spare vehicles has yet arrived in Africa.

It is urgently requested that the allocation of shipping space be reviewed.

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Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 4/8/42
22.55 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily Report 4/8/42

- 1) According to air reconnaissance and agents' reports, enemy forces have been strengthened in the central and northern sectors by 2 - 3 brigades. During the day there was increased enemy reconnaissance activity on the ground and in the air.
- 2) For the first time after a few days' quiet apart from fighter-bomber attacks, strong bomber formations again attacked troops.
- 3) The Pistoia Division, which according to joint agreement was to be transferred from the middle of August, has already reached North Africa in force with over 300 vehicles. So far scarcely 60 vehicles of 164th Infantry Division have arrived in Africa. The shipment of the 800 - 1,000 urgently needed spare vehicles from Italy for German troops has not yet begun.
- 4) The defensive preparedness of 164th Division is being jeopardized because not one of the 196 anti-tank guns promised to be delivered to it by air since the end of July has so far arrived.

Commander-in-Chief
Panzer Army Africa

Army Battle HQ, 4/8/42

Dear Field Marshal Keitel,

In view of the present extraordinarily difficult situation of Panzer Army as regards supplies, which may prove detrimental to the future operations of the Army, I feel obliged to bring the following points to your attention.

In recent weeks the sea transport situation in the Mediterranean has developed in a way that is very prejudicial to Panzer Army. The reasons for this may be familiar to you to some extent from my reports. They are as follows:

- 1) There is no department for directing and carrying out the co-ordinated protection of shipping in the Mediterranean and of the coast of North Africa. Similarly, not even the protection of coastal shipping in North Africa is at present under one command. As a result of this lack of a command for co-ordinating all German-Italian air and naval forces for the protection of shipping, the intensified attacks of British air and light naval forces have taken a heavy toll of Axis shipping in recent weeks.
- 2) The only say Panzer Army has in the matter of shipping is the "Priority List", which means it cannot do more than determine the order in which supplies are brought over. It has no control over shipping schedules nor over the ports to which ships are sent; above all it has no say in the matter of German-Italian shipping space, which is supposed to be shared equally but which, in reality, is

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divided very much to the disadvantage of German troops. For example, in recent weeks alone eight ships carrying exclusively Italian cargoes have arrived at North African ports. According to the intended schedule, the Pistoia Division was not to be sent to North Africa until the middle of August, but two-thirds with over 300 vehicles have already arrived, whereas scarcely 60 vehicles of 164th Division have been brought across so far. Moreover, Italian formations that were heavily hit in earlier engagements have been able to replace personnel and equipment in a very short time; in contrast, there are still great gaps in the equipment needed by German troops because shipping space necessary to transport supplies from Italy has not been made available. Thus, so far, not one of the 800 - 1,000 replacement vehicles for German formations has been shipped to North Africa from Italy. This state of affairs has given rise to a strong impression that the present German departments in Italy responsible for sea transport do not have the necessary influence on Comando Supremo, nor possess a proper understanding of the critical situation to enable them to secure an equitable division of shipping space.

- 3) Complete control of sea transport from Europe to Africa is at present vested in General von Rintelen. This control covers the movement of personnel as well as of materials. The following are subordinate to him to assist in the fulfilment of his tasks:

- a) The Department for Transportation to Africa
- b) Q.M.G. Rome (Army)

The Luftwaffe (only in questions of air protection) and especially the C-in-C German Naval forces on matters relating to shipping movements (convoy escorts &c.) are not incorporated in this scheme. General von Rintelen is responsible for these functions exclusively as also for submitting the appropriate requests for escort forces to Italian GHQ. For the reasons just stated and because of the great difficulties that have to be overcome at present in dealing with the Italian departments in Rome, e.g. lack of shipping space and escort vessels, the oil shortage, ignorance regarding the capacities of the North African ports, &c., it is essential that there should be someone in Rome who

- a) knows what is required in North Africa and who is personally interested in seeing that these requirements are met,
- b) who is capable of carrying out his tasks and who is esteemed by the Italians.

Such a personality is not at present in charge in Rome.

General von Rintelen, who has been Attache in Rome for many years may as a result have connections which tend to impede him in carrying out his secondary mission - the military control of all the above-mentioned tasks.

In contrast, Field Marshal Kesselring would obviously be preferable in Rome both for the Italian as well as all German Departments. Unhampered by diplomatic connections and considerations, Field Marshal Kesselring is the man to get the vital requirements of Panzer Army accepted.

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I therefore recommend that Field Marshal Kesselring take over with full military authority the direction of all transportation to Africa and especially of the protection of shipping engaged on taking supplies to North Africa.

Survey of situation regarding personnel
replacements for conference of C-in-C with German
General at HQ Italian Army, Rome

1. According to reports at present available (not final), the Army is short of about 2,700 N.C.O.'s and 12,000 men. Appendix 1 shows deficiencies broken down into individual units.
2. Most urgent requirement is for N.C.O. replacements for Panzer regiments. Attached message, Appendix 2, shows that these replacements have been requested from III and XII Infantry Corps through German General at HQ Italian Army, Rome. Replacements of artillerymen, N.C.O.'s and men are also especially urgently needed. About 800 gunners are currently being flown over from 928th Army Coast Defence Artillery Abteilung and 363rd Army Coast Defence Battery; they will be absorbed by the Army as replacements. A further 1,000 artillerymen must be provided quickly.
3. The great shortage of N.C.O.'s has arisen because the number of them in Replacement Battalions 1 - 8 which have been flown over so far was too small. It is urgently necessary that, as in the case of Replacement Battalion 5, companies composed exclusively of N.C.O.'s should be provided.
4. According to a message from Rome, Africa Replacement Battalions 9 - 11 will be formed by 5/8/42 and be brought across quickly.
 When can these be expected?
 It is necessary for further Replacement Battalions to be formed continuously.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 5 August 1942
 22.01 hours

To:-

Africa Corps
 X Corps
 XX Corps
 XXI Corps
 90 Light Division
 164 Infantry Division
 Artillery Commander 104
 Flak Regiment 135
 Infantry Regiment 200
 Ramcke Group
 Reconnaissance Unit 33
 Battle Echelon Panzer Army Headquarters.
 Briel Battle Group
 IIA for Headquarters

As a result of enemy patrol and nuisance activity which has increased during the last few days troops must again be reminded of the necessity for extreme alertness at night. The following points should be emphasised:-

- 1) Unsettle the enemy by frequent bursts of fire and use of flares.

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- 2) The orderly officer will check the alertness of sentries at all times.
- 3) The artillery will employ observation officers at night.
- 4) Forward troops to intensify alertness as from 03.00 hours.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 5/8/42
22.40 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily Report 5/8/42

- 1) Enemy patrol activity increased in the northern sector during the night of 4-5/8. Apart from this there was the normal artillery and patrol activity at the front during the day.
- 2) Two German reconnaissance units have been transferred to the area 150 km south of Mersa Matruh to cover the rear Army area from operations by enemy raiding parties. After being relieved by the Bologna Division, newly brought up by the Italian High Command, the Pavia Division has been withdrawn from the front and employed in protecting the fortress area and the harbour of Mersa Matruh. Concurrently the Division is to be rested and re-equipped in that area.
- 3) Enemy air attacks are again being directed mainly against shipping and supply installations. A barge laden with ammunition and guns was sunk in Tobruk harbour during the night of 3-4/8. Attacks by eight enemy torpedo aircraft against the "Ankara" were driven off. No damage was caused. Several German barges were unsuccessfully attacked this morning by the R.A.F. between Sidi Barrani and Mersa Matruh.
- 4) So far 400 German paratroopers have arrived in the battle area.

German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome Ia

Rome, 6/8/42
12.40 hours

To: Panzer Army H.Q. Ia

Reference: Panzer Army Ia signal of 4/8. 22.46 hours

- 1) For several weeks there has been an agreement with Comando Supremo that shipping space to harbours in Cyrenaica shall be shared equally by the German and Italian armies, while the Italians will make greater use of the Tripoli route for supplying the needs of the administration and the civil population.
- 2) With regard to the present continuous flow of reinforcements the Italians are making use of several slow boats, hitherto held in readiness for other operations, to carry the Pistoia Division, which the Duce expressly ordered to be transferred as soon as possible. The Siena squadron is

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being used for the transport of German troops from the Aegean; two ships of this squadron have already been lost ("Delos" and "Citta di Agrigento") and have had to be replaced by the German vessels "Wachtfels" and "Menes". Tobruk is the port of disembarkation for German troops and Benghazi for the Italians.

- 3) The arrival of troop-ships in the Cyrenaican harbours can be made only at a slow rate, otherwise it will not be possible to unload supplies in adequate quantities. Efforts are constantly being made to increase the unloading facilities in Tobruk and Benghazi; moreover, in order to ease pressure on the Cyrenaican ports, wheeled vehicles must also be consigned to Tripoli. The urgent need is for the delivery of supplies to Tobruk and Benghazi, otherwise a crisis in the supply position will shortly develop in view of the great and growing increase in the number of troops.
- 4) At the present time the Italians are first transporting trucks. The reason for this, Marshal Cavallero informed me, was that Field Marshal Rommel had told him that the Italian troops could not be given adequate supplies of water and food owing to the shortage of vehicles and that, in addition, XX Corps (motorised) is completely immobilised. On the other hand, in compliance with the requirements of Panzer Army HQ. and C-in-C South, 8.8 A.A. guns are first of all being shipped in large numbers to the Germans, so that only a few spare vehicles can be shipped. To help in transporting A.A. artillery, Marshal Cavallero has taken over three heavy German A.A. batteries for shipment by the Italians, he has given up the vessel "Ruhr" to us and has promised to ship 100 trucks on the second trip of the Pistoia rear echelon. I shall further press to obtain individual concessions (as specified above) in order to improve the German quota, as it is impossible to alter the entire distribution scheme.
- 5) O.K.W. and O.K.H. have been notified similarly.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 6/8/42
22.25 hours

To: Army General Staff, Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily Report 6/8/42

- 1) Normal artillery and patrol activity by both sides. Sometimes enemy air activity was on a smaller scale than on previous days.
- 2) Fliegerführer Africa carried out successful raids with bombers and fighter-bombers on truck and tank concentrations in the Alamein area and against unloading operations at Burg el Arab.
- 3) A German officer who escaped from captivity confirms the presence of raiding parties on the north side of the Qattara Depression, in the area 150 km south of Mersa Matruh. Main task of these troops: sabotage against airfields and supply lines. Composition: British, New Zealand and French troops and a few German Jews from Palestine.

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4) Serviceable tanks:

| | | | |
|----------|------------------|---|-----|
| German: | Panzer Mark II | = | 26 |
| | " " III | = | 73 |
| | " " III Sp | = | 47 |
| | " " IV | = | 7 |
| | " " IV Sp | = | 15 |
| | Armoured Command | | |
| | Cars | = | 3 |
| Italian: | Panzer I | = | 19 |
| | " II | = | 108 |

Headquarters Panzer Army Africa
Abt. Ia No. 5912/42 Secret

Army Battle HQ
7 August 1942

Ref: Your Signal No. 4927 Secret of 29 July, 23.20 hours

Subject: Anti-Tank Gun Strength

To: O.K.H. Director-General of Equipment and Director-General of Training, General Army Branch, Department 6 (VIII)

In accordance with the above signal HQ Panzer Army Africa reports the following anti-tank gun strength as at 1 August, 1942:

Anti-Tank Gun

| <u>Formation</u> | <u>Number</u> | <u>Calibre</u> | <u>Carriage Number</u> |
|------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------------|
| <u>15 Pz Div</u> | | | |
| Pz Gren Rgt 115 | 1 | 3.7 cm | |
| | 12 | 5 cm | |
| A/Tk Abt 33 | 19 | 5 cm | |
| | 4 | 7.62cm S.P. | 1443 ^{x)} |
| Pz Eng Bn 33 | 4 | 5 cm | |
| Pz Recce Unit 33 | 5 | 3.7 cm | |
| | 3 | 5 cm | |
| Pz Smoke Bn 78 | 1 | 3.7 cm S.P. | |
| | | (Command TCV) | 796 646 |

x) These self-propelled mountings are still in the armoured workshops.

21 Pz Div

| | | | |
|-----------------|----|--|--|
| Pz Gren Rgt 104 | 16 | 5 cm | |
| | 3 | 7.62cm (Russian) - one unserviceable | |
| A/Tk Abt 39 | 11 | 5 cm | |
| | 3 | 7.62cm (Russian) S.P. - 2 unserviceable. | |
| | | Carriage number 1439; other numbers cannot be identified at present. | |
| Mot AA Bn 617 | 1 | 5 cm | |

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| <u>Formation</u> | <u>Number</u> | <u>Calibre</u> | <u>Carriage Number</u> |
|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Africa Corps Battle Echelon | 5 | 5 cm | |
| <u>90 Light Div</u> | | | |
| Mot Inf Rgt 155 | 3 | 3.7 cm | |
| | 3 | 7.62 cm | |
| | 4 | 7.62 cm field gun | |
| Mot Inf Rgt 361 | 5 | 3.7 cm | |
| | 2 | 5 cm | |
| | 3 | 7.62cm | |
| | 4 | 7.62cm field gun | |
| Mot Inf Rgt 200 and | 10 | 3.7 cm | |
| | 2 | 5 cm | |
| Heavy Inf Gun Coy 707 | 10 | 7.62cm | |
| Special Formation 288 | 3 | 3.7 cm | |
| | 3 | 5 cm | |
| A/Tk Unit 190 | 15 | 5 cm | |
| A/Tk Unit 605 | 11 π) | 4.7 cm (Czechoslovakian) S.P. | 13574 13514 15225 12583 12558 14754 16457 13532 13504 10501 12598 |
| | 2 π) | 7.62cm (Russian) S.P. | 5332 5329 |
| Recce Unit 580 | 4 | 3.7 cm | |
| | 5 | 5 cm | |
| Eng 900 | 1 | 3.7 cm | |
| | 2 | 5 cm | |

π) Of these, the following are in for repair.

| | | | |
|----------------------|----|-----------------------|--|
| | 6 | 4.7 cm and | |
| | 1 | 7.62cm | |
| <u>164 Inf Div</u> | | | |
| Inf Rgt 382 | 13 | 3.7 cm | |
| | 10 | 5 cm | |
| Inf Rgt 125 | 14 | 3.7 cm | |
| | 2 | 5 cm | |
| III./433 | 2 | 3.7 cm | |
| Recce Unit 220 | 6 | 3.7 cm | |
| | 3 | 5 cm | |
| Eng 220 | 4 | 3.7 cm | |
| Kiehl Battle Echelon | 3 | 5 cm anti-tank gun 38 | |

for A.O.K.,
Chief of General Staff

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German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome Ia Rome, 7/8/42
 No. 2148/42 Top Secret 12.30 hours

To: 1) Pz. A.O.K. Ia
 2) C-in-C South (Antonius II)
 3) HQ German Navy in Italy

Marshal Cavallero has instructed me to inform German command authorities that:

- 1) Panzer Army Africa (Italian designation: Armata corazzata italotedesca) will be directly subordinated to Comando Supremo in all matters relating to strategy w.e.f. 12/8/42.
- 2) As from that date General Bastico will retain only the positions of Governor-General in Libya and C-in-C Italian forces in Libya (Superlibya).
- 3) The Chief of Staff of GHQ North Africa, General Barbasetti, will continue to carry out the duties of the GHQ, insofar as they are not related to strategic considerations, as representative of Comando Supremo in North Africa (Delesee). His special duties are: Supplying Italian troops of Panzer Army, co-ordinating supply traffic with German troops, exercise of territorial jurisdiction in the rear areas of the army, disciplinary and administrative authority over Italian troops attached to Panzer Army.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 7/8/42
 22.34 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily Report 7/8/42

- 1) Apart from large-scale enemy air activity the day passed quietly along the entire front.
- 2) Fighters of Fliegerführer Africa shot down 13 enemy fighter-bombers in air combat. A further aircraft was shot down by flak.
- 3) The ship "Ankara" loaded with German supplies was slightly damaged during an attack by bombers on Tobruk harbour during the afternoon of 6/8/42. There was no great loss of men or materials. On the other hand the main jetty was completely destroyed. As a result unloading capacity has been reduced by 20%.

The Commander-in-Chief
Panzer Army Africa

Army Battle HQ, 8/8/42

No. 1544/42 Top Secret

Dear Gause,

I cannot reveal the future plans of the Army nor the proposed date for the offensive in writing. Lieutenant Diekmann will acquaint you with the main points concerned in these matters. Unfortunately, there are many aspects of the supply situation in

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which things are not going as well as one could have wished, owing to the fact that sea transport is operated to the disadvantage of the German troops of Panzer Army. I have described the reasons in an appended draft copy of a letter to Field Marshal Keitel, but I have decided not to send it because, although factually well-founded, it contains several sharp criticisms of Rintelen which might involve him in consequences I have no wish to bring about.

This letter, and above all the one to Field Marshal Keitel which is attached hereto, are intended solely for your personal information and must not be passed on to anyone. They contain details of my requirements which I trust you will succeed in getting Rintelen and General Cavallero to agree to.

As you will see from the letter to Field Marshal Keitel, the Italians have cheated us to a considerable extent in the matter of the allocation of shipping space. The authorised ratio for the division of shipping space between the Germans and the Italians is 1:1; in actual fact, however, it has worked out very much to our disadvantage. Your most important task, therefore, is to make Cavallero agree to a fair division of shipping space.

New Italian divisions are no use to me here, especially those with no battle experience - like the Pistoia Division; I need German soldiers and German materials as it is only with these, in the long run, that I must launch the offensive.

In this connection I have the following specific requests to put to Rintelen as regards the order in which personnel and materials are sent:

These must have arrived in the battle area (east of el Daba) by 20/8/42:

a) Personnel:

164th Infantry Division, Ramcke Brigade, personnel replacements excluding those to be brought over by air as usual in the same order that has applied hitherto:

- 1/3 164th Infantry Division (100 men still in Greece)
- 1/3 Ramcke Brigade (2100 men still in Greece)
- 1/3 personnel replacements (have not arrived so far)

After 164th Infantry Division has been flown over:

- 2/3 Ramcke Brigade (in Africa until 20 August)
- 1/3 Personnel replacements

b) Equipment by sea or air (excluding that delivered by 10/8/42):

a further

- 196 5 cm anti-tank guns for 164th Infantry Div.
(96 of them by air from Greece)
- 20 8.8 cm A.A. guns as replacements
- 10 10 cm cannon
- 30 tanks
- 15 armoured cars
- all the 7.62 cm anti-tank guns on S.P. mountings
(Russian) and medium field howitzers on
S.P. mountings ready for shipping from Italy.
- 40 semi-tracked tractors of 4 - 18 tons
- 36 semi-tracked tractors of 1 ton for 609th Anti-Aircraft Battalion (from Crete)

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400 trucks (possibly via Benghazi and Tripoli)
 Replenishment of the stocks of ammunition of types
 in short supply (7.5 cm tank gun, 10 cm cannon,
 17 cm cannon, 21 cm howitzer) so that there are
 stocks equivalent to 5 allocations of each type
 of ammunition in North Africa.

c) Supplies of all kinds: fuel, ammunition and spare parts.

If it is not possible to fulfil this schedule for the delivery of supplies etc. by the desired time, then all of the lorries, guns etc. listed above must be reduced by the same percentage.

Deliveries must be arranged so that tracked vehicles arrive at Tobruk and Mersa Matruh; wheeled vehicles may be sent to Benghazi or even Tripoli.

2 cm guns of 606th and 612th and 617th Anti-Aircraft Battalions still in Italy are to be loaded on the individual ships as deck cargo and to be used for air defence during the crossing.

In order to increase the unloading capacity of the North African ports, Comando Supremo must deliver quickly the promised barges and ferry-boats. Half of the 60 Italian ferry-boats consigned to Africa should be made available to the Germans, in accordance with the agreement. Please see to it that these 30 ferry-boats are loaded with German supplies in Italy and sent across at once.

Kindest regards,

signed ROMMEL

Panzer Army Africa
 Chief of General Staff

Army Battle HQ, 8/8/42
 12.05 hours

To: 1) German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome
 2) C-in-C South
 3) O.K.W. Operational Staff

The ship "Ankara", loaded with invaluable weapons and supply materials, has been in Tobruk since the morning of 6/8/42. Unloading operations expected to last another 10 days. The ship is therefore in the greatest danger and was heavily hit on 6/8/42. The attitude of the navy departments here appears to be too bureaucratic, inflexible and entirely out of keeping with the conditions.

Immediate intervention seems to me to be a vital necessity.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 8/8/42
 23.03 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily Report 8/8/42

- 1) Enemy situation largely unchanged. Artillery harassing fire livelier than on previous days.
- 2) Widespread enemy air activity.

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- 3) The 100 5 cm anti-tank guns promised to 164th Infantry Division for delivery by air in July had not reached Africa by 8/8/42.

COPY

GHQ Panzer Army Africa IIa

Army Battle HQ, 9/8/42

Panzer Army Africa Casualty List for period 26.5. - 31.7.42.

| | <u>OFFICERS</u> | | | <u>N.C.O.'s & MEN</u> | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | <u>Killed</u> | <u>Wounded</u> | <u>Missing</u> | <u>Killed</u> | <u>Wounded</u> | <u>Missing</u> |
| Panzer Army HQ Staff | 2 | 12 | - | 2 | 15 | 6 |
| Panzer Army HQ Squadron | 4 | 11 | - | 22 | 88 | 10 |
| 580th Recce Unit | 4 | 5 | 3 | 19 | 41 | 1 |
| O.C. Army Signals | 2 | - | 3 | 20 | 44 | 118 |
| O.C. Army supplies | - | 4 | - | 19 | 45 | 18 |
| 612th A/A Bat. (Mot) | - | 6 | 2 | 11 | 85 | 10 |
| 617th " " " | 1 | 2 | - | 7 | 36 | - |
| 104th Art. Commander | 9 | 32 | 1 | 100 | 425 | 16 |
| 90th Light Inf. Div. | 18 | 90 | 16 | 589 | 1503 | 775 |
| 164th Inf. Div. | 11 | 24 | 2 | 170 | 461 | 166 |
| <u>German Africa Corps</u> | | | | | | |
| Corps troops | 7 | 7 | 7 | 21 | 89 | 31 |
| 15th Pz. Div. | 34 | 108 | 24 | 484 | 1834 | 703 |
| 21st Pz. Div. | 47 | 143 | 15 | 722 | 2388 | 819 |
| TOTALS: | 139 | 444 | 73 | 2186 | 7054 | 2673 |
| | 656 | | | 11913 | | |

Total: 12,569Summary of Officer Strength:

| | <u>Establishment</u> | <u>Strength</u> | <u>Deficiency</u> |
|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 25th Panzer Div. | 381 | 281 | 100 |
| 21st Panzer Div. | 409 | 317 | 92 |
| 90th Light Inf. Div. | 404 | 233 | 171 |
| 164th Inf. Div. | 391 | 270 | 121 |
| TOTALS: | 1585 | 1101 | 484 |

SIGNAL

From: Panzer Army HQ. IIa

9/8/42

To: Acting Corps HQ Staff XII Army Corps and III Army Corps

Through: German General at HQ Italian Army, Rome

It is urgently requested that the following be dispatched for 8th and 5th Panzer Regiments:

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For each regiment: 50 NCO's as commandants for tanks Marks III & IV.
 65 NCO's and men as gun layers for Mark III & IV tanks
 45 drivers for Mark III & IV tanks
 30 tank W/T operators
 20 gun numbers for Mark III & IV tanks
 25 armoured car drivers
 40 truck drivers

(It was stated at a conference between the C. in C. and the German General in Rome that the above reinforcements were extremely urgent in order to bring the Panzer Regiments up to strength.)

Survey of position regarding reinforcements of personnel for the conference with the German General in Rome

- 1) According to available reports (not yet conclusive), the Army is short of about 2,700 NCO's and 12,000 men. Appendix 1 gives detailed information of the position regarding weapons.
- 2) The most urgent requirement is for additional NCO's for the Panzer regiments. As indicated by the attached signal, Appendix 2, a request for these reinforcements has been made through the German General at HQ Italian Army, Rome, to III and XII Army Corps. Reinforcements of NCO's and men are also urgently needed by the artillery. About 560 gunners of 529th Army Coastal Artillery Abteilung and the 363rd Army Coastal Artillery Battery are already being flown out and will be used to reinforce the Army. A further 1,000 gunners must be sent out very quickly.
- 3) The serious lack of NCO's arises from the fact that the number of NCO's was too small when reserve battalions 1-8 were flown over. It is urgently necessary that complete NCO companies be supplied, as in the case of reserve battalion 5.
- 4) According to a signal from Rome, Africa reserve Battalions 9 - 11 are to be formed by 5/8/42 and be transported as quickly as possible.
 When can the transfer of these troops be made?
 It is necessary for further reinforcement battalions to be formed continuously.
- 5) The Italian QMG North Africa will be placed under Deleaze as also the organisation for the supply of troops operating in Egypt (coastal shipping, road and rail transport). Panzer Army and C-in-C South are requested to set up liaison agencies with Deleaze.
- 6) Marshal Cavallero intends to issue this order personally in North Africa and to settle details on the spot. The principle underlying this is to alter as little as possible the former arrangement of command, apart from subordinating Panzer Army for strategic purposes.
- 7) As soon as to text of the order has been finally adopted, I will forward a copy to you. Meanwhile, it is requested that this information be treated as confidential.

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OKW Operations Staff

9/8/42, 01.15 hours

To: Army HQ Africa

Reference: Teleprint message from German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome, No. 2134, Top Secret, dated 6/8/42

OKW welcomes the Duce's decision to subordinate the German-Italian Panzer Army immediately under Comando Supremo in all matters affecting strategy. Nor has OKW any objection to raise regarding the command re-organisation affecting administrative and supply matters; it is assumed, however, that the German supply arrangements will remain unchanged and that the essential influence of C-in-C German-Italian Panzer Army in the allocation of transport is preserved.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 9/8/42
08.15 hours

To: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

German units of up to battalion strength - including German Africa Corps - have at present only 3 - 4 anti-tank guns each. Among these is 164th Division deployed over a width of 25 km. When will anti-tank guns finally arrive by air from Greece?

It is of the utmost importance that all available anti-tank guns be delivered by air and by sea.

10/8/42

Subjects to be discussed with Gen. Barbasetti

- 1) Questions arising from the subordination of Panzer Army immediately under Comando Supremo:
 - a) Territorial boundary with the former Comando Superiore.
 - b) Siwa must be tactically subordinated to Panzer Army.
 - c) Rear area up to the Egyptian frontier also subordinate to Panzer Army.
 - d) German supplies and coastal shipping on an equal footing with Delease, not subordinate to it. Both receive directives from C-in-C. Delease must set up a liaison section with Panzer Army to facilitate matters.
- 2) Comando Supremo wishes Sabratha Division to continue. What is the purpose of this?
- 3) Organisation of Pistoia Division. When is it intended to bring up this division?
- 4) One reinforced battalion of Paratroop Division is not to be brought up though it is urgently needed. Are aircraft and armaments prepared for paratroop operations?
- 5) 5th Battalion still missing from Bologna Division.

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Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 10/8/42
22.18 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily Report 10/8/42

- 1) The day passed quietly. Slight enemy artillery activity.
- 2) Enemy air activity less than on previous days. Benghazi bombed, slight damage in harbour area.
- 3) During the day the supply steamer "Santa Fe" arrived at Benghazi. It carried about 100 vehicles and two light field howitzer batteries for 164th Infantry Division.
- 4) Shortages of personnel:

| | <u>NCO's</u> | <u>Men</u> |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------|
| German Africa Corps | 1500 | 6500 |
| 90th Light Division | 900 | 4500 |
| Army artillery | <u>100</u> | <u>900</u> |
| | <u>2,500</u> | <u>11,900</u> |

Army General Staff Organisation Department
No. 3782 Secret

11/8/42, 08.43 hours

To: Panzer Army HQ

Through: Operations Staff.

Apart from constant replacements of tractors and trucks, Army General Staff has made provisions for fulfilling all the requests for materials made by Panzer Army HQ. There are at present in Italy, where they have been for a long time, about 180 tractors and the same number of trucks, but there is no prospect of being able to get them to Africa. Tractors and trucks are urgently needed in other places. General Staff HQ requests information regarding the scope of future deliveries to Africa, and when they can be made in view of the transport situation, in order to facilitate planning. Can an improvement in the transport situation be expected?

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 11/8/42
23.09 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily Report 11/8/42

- 1) Patrol activity by both sides during the night. Lively activity by enemy artillery along the entire front during the day, particularly on the northern sector.
- 2) There was little enemy air activity.

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3) Stocks of ammunition in North Africa:

About 2 issues of the most important types of ammunition with the exception of

5 cm anti-tank (1 issue)
 7.62 cm Russian guns (1 issue, tank ammo)
 17 cm cannon (1.6 issues)
 21 cm heavy howitzer (1.6 issues)
 5 cm long-barrelled tank gun (1.3 issues)

4) Shortages of officers:

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 15th Panzer Division | 100 |
| 21st Panzer Division | 92 |
| 90th Light African Div. | <u>171</u> |
| TOTAL | <u>363</u> |

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 12/8/42
 22.42 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily Report 12/8/42

- 1) There was again lively harassing fire by artillery in the northern sector. Slight enemy air activity. Luftwaffe shot down 13 enemy planes.
- 2) As the strong British convoy in the Mediterranean suggests that an attempt will be made by the enemy to make a landing in North Africa, during the day German motorised battle groups were sent to Sollum and Mersa Matruh. Further formations are standing by in case they are needed.

3) German Africa Corps Tank Situation:

3 armoured command vehicles
 25 Panzer II
 136 Panzer III
 24 Panzer IV

German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome Ia
 No. 2208 Top Secret

Rome 13/8/42
 02.47 hours

To: Panzer Army HQ

Comando Supremo is transmitting the following orders by courier to Panzer Army HQ.

- 1) By order of the Duce, Panzer Army will be subordinated immediately under Comando Supremo with effect from 16/8/42. Italian GHQ North Africa has been informed.
- 2) Existing orders regarding the command remain in force. The uses to which the formations are put and the measures that are taken (also for supply) must be conditioned by an acceleration of the preparations for the resumption of the offensive. The Duce will determine the time for the offensive to be resumed.

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- 3) The dividing line between the territorial Command of the Army and of Delease is the line Mersa-Matruh - Siwa (places on this line under Panzer Army). The organisation of the port and the air and coastal defence of Mersa Matruh will remain the responsibilities of Delease. The forces in Siwa will be subordinated tactically to Panzer Army.
- 4) The Duce desires to have two tactical reports and one enemy situation report every day. Panzer Army is requested to communicate these reports through the liaison officer with Delease. Panzer Army is further requested to submit to Comando Supremo as soon as possible a situation map and an order of battle showing status of all subordinate units; subsequent changes are to be reported as they occur, and if it is necessary to draw up new versions of the situation map and order of battle, they also must be submitted

CHIEF OF ARMY GENERAL STAFF

Cavallero

Post script:

German General at HQ Italian Army, Rome:

With reference to para. 4) above, Comando Supremo has requested that the daily reports be sent, as hitherto, to the German General at HQ Italian Army Rome, whence copies can be despatched immediately to Comando Supremo.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 13/8/42

22.51 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily Report 13/8/42

- 1) During the night of 12-13/8/42 a strong enemy reconnaissance thrust against Ruweisat was repelled, a number of Indians being taken prisoner. There was again considerable artillery harassing fire on the northern sector, especially in the early hours of the morning (2,500 rounds)
- 2) Widespread enemy air reconnaissance. Isolated attacks by fighter-bombers.
- 3) In view of the successful attacks against the British convoy in the Mediterranean the preventive measures that were taken to protect the ports have been lifted.

The Commander-in-Chief
Panzer Army Africa

Army Battle HQ, 14/8/42

07.56 hours

To: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome
Copy to General Gause, Rome

I cannot possibly agree to order of QMG/C-in-C^{South} allocating 2/5ths of transport space to Luftwaffe and including 5,000 Italians in German Army quota. It does not take into account the seriousness of the ground situation in North Africa.

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In view of the new reinforcement of the enemy, I propose that priority be given to flying over Ramcke Brigade, 164th Division, German personnel replacements and anti-tank guns and that the 5,000 Italians be transported under the Luftwaffe's quota.

I request you to act in the interests of the Army and to issue appropriate instructions yourself.

ROMMEL

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 14/8/42
22.50 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily Report 14/8/42

- 1) Enemy situation unchanged. An enemy reconnaissance thrust carried out in the evening on the northern sector under cover of a smoke-screen was beaten off. 3 Bren gun carriers ran on to mines.
- 2) Early in the morning there were two bombing attacks on the Italian airfield at Fuka. During the day there was activity by reconnaissance aircraft and fighter-bombers.
- 4) 4 enemy aircraft were shot down in air combat. Concentrations of trucks east of Alamein were effectively attacked by fighter-bombers.

The German General at
Italian Armed Forces H.Q.

15 August, 1942

- To: 1) OKW Operational Staff
2) OKH Operations Department

Attached (see below) is a translation of the full order of Comando Supremo concerning the rearrangement of command from 16/8/1942.

(signed) v. Rintelen

For distribution to:-

- 1) C. in C. South
- 2) Panzer Army Africa
- 3) German Naval Command Italy

Comando Supremo
Primo reparto

APO 21, 12 August 1942

Operations Department Africa

To: C. in C. North Africa
Army General Staff
Naval Staff
Air Staff
War Ministry

Re:- Reorganisation of forces in North Africa

- 1) From 16/8 the command of forces in Italian North Africa under

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Marshal of Italy and Governor-General of Libya, Ettore Bastico, will be renamed GHQ Libyan Forces (Superlibia). Superlibia has full authority in the entire area administered by the Governor-General of Libya.

- 2) From the same date, the German-Italian Panzer Army under the command of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel will be placed immediately under Comando Supremo, with whom the Armies will confer on strategic matters.
- 3) From the same date, a "Delegation of Comando Supremo in North Africa" ("Delease") will be set up. General Barbasetti di Prun will be at the head of this delegation. The command of the German-Italian Panzer Army will confer with Delease on all questions not relating to strategy. (see under 4 & 5)
- 4) The political representative for Egypt will deal exclusively with Delease.
- 5) Tasks and powers of Delease authorised by Comando Supremo:
 - a) Supplying Italian troops fighting in Egypt and reporting all their requirements to Comando Supremo; taking over and forwarding all supplies from the time they arrive in ports or at airfields until they reach front-line troops.
 - b) Co-ordinating this supply traffic with that of the Germans. In particular, this must be extended to the management of harbours, coastal shipping and rail traffic. To facilitate this, representatives of the German Army and Luftwaffe will be attached to Delease.
 - c) Delease will exercise absolute territorial authority over the rear areas. The boundary between the rear area and the zone of operations of the Panzer armies will be determined by Comando Supremo according to the situation at the front.
 - d) Delease will have authority over Italian troops being sent to the Panzer Army and over Italian troops being withdrawn to the rear areas for resting and re-equipping.
 - e) Italian troops allocated to Panzer Army are subordinate to Delease as regards discipline and administration but not as regards operations.
 - f) Also subordinated to Delease are the Italian Administration (Intendenza A.S.) and all Italian organisations and installations which govern the shipment of supplies from the mother country to the troops operating in Egypt, and also those concerned with coastal shipping and with road and rail traffic from supply bases to the front line. Delease is responsible for safe-guarding this transport.
 - g) Luftflotte 5 and the Italian air forces operating in Egypt are subordinate to Delease in matters affecting discipline. Delease will give orders for air cover for the rear areas and for coastal shipping on the recommendations of the Luftflotte.
 - h) Whenever G.H.Q. Italian Navy in Libya and its installations are engaged on Delease missions they will be subordinated to Delease.
 - i) The artillery commander and the engineer commander of G.H.Q. North Africa are placed on an equal footing under Delease.

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- 6) All other installations and agencies at present under the command of G.H.Q. North Africa and engaged primarily on Delease tasks will be made subordinate to Delease, even if they are in the territory of G.H.Q. Libya. In particular, coastal shipping under G.H.Q. Italian Navy in Libya and the harbour installations of Benghazi, Derna, Tobruk and Bardia are subordinated to Delease. The administrative subordination of these ports to G.H.Q. North Africa within the authority of the Italian Colonial Office, is not affected by this order.
- 7) G.H.Q. Libya is responsible for seeing that all its agencies contribute to the fulfilment of the tasks of Delease.
- 8) Delease will be formed from the existing departments of G.H.Q. North Africa, and requests are being made to Comando Supremo for additional personnel to complete the organisation. In order to facilitate the setting-up of Delease and to ensure co-operation in the initial stages between it and G.H.Q. Libya, General Barbasetti will remain for the time being as Chief of Staff, G.H.Q. Libya. He will supervise the gradual separation of the departments of G.H.Q. Libya from those of Delease. Until further orders he will ensure that both organisations co-operate.
- 9) G.H.Q. North Africa will inform Panzer Army of the above orders.

On behalf of the Duce

signed: UGO CAVALLERO

GHQ Panzer Army Africa Ia
No. 85/42 Top Secret

Army Battle HQ, 15/8/42

Assessment of the situation and the state
of Panzer Army Africa on 15/8/42

- 1) The situation of Panzer Army Africa, which was still critical in the first few days of August, has now become easier as the positions have been manned in strength by troops brought up by air, Italian units have been rested and re-equipped and some of the fast-moving formations have been deployed already for mobile defence just behind the front line. The front was strengthened still further by the construction of strong defensive positions with widespread mine-fields which are now almost complete.

The distribution of the forces of Panzer Army and the course of the defence front are shown on the appended situation map.

- 2) State of forces (for details see appended order of battle)

| <u>German:</u> | 21 July 1942 | 15 August 1942 |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Personnel | 30 % | 75 % |
| Tanks | 15 % | 50 % |
| Artillery | 70 % | 85 % |
| Anti-tank guns | 40 % | 60 % |
| Heavy flak | 50 % | 70 % |
| <u>Italian:</u> | | |
| Personnel | 30 % | 70 % |
| Tanks | 15 % | 50 % |
| Artillery | 25 % | 50 % |
| Anti-tank guns | 30 % | 65 % |
| Heavy flak | 30 % | 40 % |

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Comparison of the individual strengths of 21/7/42 and 15/8/42 shows that the state of the forces as regards personnel and material has improved considerably. The position regarding tanks and artillery is especially gratifying, the Italians having approximately regained their strength when the offensive began on 26/5/42; the strength of German artillery has also been raised again to this level. There are at present 200 German tanks at the front and this number may be increased to 250 approximately by the end of August. The small number of anti-tank guns with which 164th Division is equipped must still be regarded as a source of weakness. It can be rectified only by continued supplies arriving by air.

To sum up, it may be said that the state of the forces has improved considerably in the last few weeks as regards both manpower and equipment. The relative quiet at the front has also resulted in easing the tension of the troops.

3) Enemy Situation

Opposing Panzer Army at the front at the present time are 2 armoured divisions and 5 - 6 infantry divisions. The strength of these divisions has been increased in recent weeks through the arrival of reinforcements of men and equipment. The 50th (British) and the 1st (South African) Divisions, which were severely mauled during the May-June offensive, can on the whole be regarded as again ready for operations. They will probably be ready for full operational employment at the beginning of September.

Rapid progress is being made in the construction of enemy positions both in the forward line and in the rear. Recently work has begun on mine-fields in the central and northern sectors. So far the enemy has not prepared any strong defensive positions or minefields in the area 30 - 50 km south of Alamein. 7th Armoured Division is covering this area by mobile defence. At present the defence installations in the depth of the defended area are not linked up. However, it is to be expected that within a few weeks a closed defence system extending to the Qattara Depression will be established and afford good protection from tanks by means of a wide belt of mine-fields.

It must be assumed that the number of tanks available to the enemy is steadily increasing as a result of constant replacements and reconditioning and also because there have been no tank operations since 27/7/42. It is to be expected that by the end of August, apart from tanks arriving by transport vessels, those damaged in earlier engagements will have been repaired and then appear in increasing numbers at the front. The total number of enemy tanks at present at the front may amount to about 300.

As regards artillery, an increase in the number of medium and heavy guns has been observed. Since the enemy High Command will have recognised that the British Army has hitherto been deficient in medium and heavy artillery relative to the German Army, it must be assumed that more guns of these calibres will be delivered by sea in the near future.

Enemy forces will be considerably increased when the troops which began to arrive in Suez on 12/8/42 - said to amount to one armoured and one infantry division - have been brought up. Past experience has shown that newly arrived formations appear at the front about 14 days after disembarkation. A further period will elapse until they settle down so that they will probably be ready for action by the end of August. Another large convoy is expected between 1 and 5 September.

The British High Command is in a position to make a new attack with the forces, based on the Alamein defence positions, at present

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at its disposal at the front: 2 armoured divisions and 5 - 6 infantry divisions. However, it is more probable that it will now wait until the forces arriving by convoy have been brought up and then - about mid-September - launch a counter-attack with 3 armoured divisions and 6 - 7 infantry divisions. There have been some signs of preparations for an attack.

4) Air Situation

In recent weeks the activities of the strong and also much superior enemy air force have been directed mainly against the German Army's supply system, against shipping, a vital factor in German supply, and against the ground organisation of the Luftwaffe. It must be expected, especially in view of the growing scale of American assistance, that the RAF will also be steadily reinforced during September through ports on the Red Sea and by air through central Africa. In the opinion of Fliegerführer Africa the situation in the air can be maintained as it is at present if an attack is launched soon, provided that adequate supplies of fuel are available in Africa.

5) Supply SituationGerman forces:

General: The reinforcement of troops with weapons and equipment and providing them with supplies for renewing the offensive will end to all intents and purposes after the arrival of the goods already dispatched from Italy. Thereafter no large-scale reinforcements can be expected.

- a) Ammunition: As on 25/8/42 at least three allocations of ammunition were available to the forces in the area east of Matruh. Thus they are equipped for planned operations.
- b) Stocks of food have been fully replenished.
- c) Fuel: When supplies already dispatched from Italy have been delivered, the Army will have 7 - 8 V.S. (1 V.S. = 100 km.) i.e., a supply of fuel sufficient for operations of about 10 days' duration.

Requirements:

- a) Immediate delivery of the supplies shipped from Italy to either Tobruk or Benghazi.
- b) Guarantee of further continuous supplies of ammunitions and fuel by sea to the ports of Cyrenaica, especially before and during the operations.

Italian forces: All aspects of the supply situation have been taken care of and supplies are adequate for the offensive planned

6) Summary:

A comparison between the strengths of the German-Italian and the British forces shows that up to about the end of August the Axis forces will have a certain superiority as regards armour (25/8/42 between 450 and 500 German-Italian tanks compared with about 400 available to the British) and also 50 % more heavy artillery. In other weapons the opposing sides are equally matched. Up to the time of writing it is possible for a quick break-through of the enemy front to be made in the southern flank, where there are relatively weak enemy forces and where so far no

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large-scale minelaying or construction of defensive positions have been observed.

This unquestionably favourable situation will change in September to the considerable advantage of the British Eighth Army as the result (as explained more fully in the appraisal of the enemy's position) of the arrival at the front of a steady stream of new formations and reinforcements of men and materials brought by large convoys. Furthermore, hitherto the British army has limited the construction of defences and the extensive laying of mines mainly to the northern sector, but it is probable that in the near future strong defences will be developed also in the southern sector.

The enemy's great superiority in the air makes it necessary for the re-grouping of the Army before the attack, the first phase of which must be carried out during moonlit nights. Full moon 26/8/42. The C-in-C South, whose readiness to attack depends to a large extent on the provision of the fuel supplies which are at present lacking in North Africa, is also of the opinion that 26/8/42 is the most suitable time for the attack and that he could be ready by then provided the fuel required arrives promptly.

The supplies for the Italian formations have been ensured in all respects in the event of the planned operations being carried out at the end of August. The German troops' shortages of certain items of ammunition may have been made good by this time, while improvement to the present still critical fuel situation depends on the arrival of an adequate convoy from Italy.

Summing up, it may be said that round about 26/8/42 is the most favourable time for the attack. Viewing the situation as a whole, it would appear that only an offensive launched at this time offers prospects of success, while a postponement of the date for the attack, (owing to the need for a full moon the delay would not be less than four weeks) would make it very questionable whether it could be carried out successfully in view of the great improvement in the enemy's strength that would have been made by that time.

On 26 August, therefore, it is intended that the British army in the field shall be attacked and destroyed on the entire front in the El Alamein area and to the south. While enemy forces in the north are to be pinned down by frontal attacks with limited objectives, the mobile forces of the German Army will have the task of piercing the southern part of the enemy front, thrusting forward to the coast and encircling and destroying the enemy forces located in the area between Alamein and Ruweisat. After that the operations to the east will be continued.

Signed: ROMMEL

Distribution to General Jodl, General Halder, Field Marshal Kesselring
General von Rintelen, General Cavallero, H.Q. Panzer
Army Africa Ia.

Panzer Army Ia

Army Battle HQ, 15/8/42
23.06 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Through: German General HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily Report 15/8/42

- 1) Normal artillery and patrol activity by both sides.

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- 2) Slight damage was caused during the night of 14-15/8 by a British raiding party which landed behind the front from E-boats in the El Daba area and to the east. Using explosive charges, they damaged several lorries and blew up 5 piles of captured ammunition. The saboteurs probably escaped into the desert in order to break through to the British lines.
- 3) Casualties in Panzer Army Africa formations during the period 26/5 - 31/7/42:

| | Killed | Wounded | Missing |
|--------------|--------|---------|---------|
| Officers: | 139 | 444 | 73 |
| NCO's & men: | 2186 | 7054 | 2673 |

Total: 12569

Panzer Army Africa

Army Battle HQ, 16/8/42
23.35 hours

To: Commandant Siwa Oasis

- 1) With effect from today I assume command over Siwa Oasis.
- 2) Daily reports and special occurrences will be notified by continuous W/T contact to Italian Liaison Staff at Panzer Army H.Q.

ROMMEL

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 16/8/42
23.36 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Through: German General at HQ Italian Army, Rome

Daily Report 16/8/42

- 1) Enemy patrols very active, including in the southern sector. Harassing fire by artillery of varying intensity. Two members of a sabotage party that probably landed during the night of 14-15/8. were taken prisoner.
 - 2) Enemy air reconnaissance on a large scale.
 - 3) 14 enemy fighters shot down by Fliegerführer Africa, 1 enemy reconnaissance aircraft shot down by ground defences.
 - 4) So far 14 5 cm. anti-tank guns have been delivered to 164th Infantry Division.
-

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 17/8/42
22.05 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Daily report 17/8/42

- 1) Lively activity by patrols of both sides.

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The enemy is digging in and mining along the entire front, especially in the northern sector.

- 2) Two of three bombers raiding Mersa Matruh in the evening were brought down by ground defences. In addition, 1 Curtiss was shot down by Flak over the front and two further Curtiss aircraft were shot down by German fighters.

TRANSLATION

Comando Supremo

Army Post Office 11,
17/8/42

To: Field Marshal Erwin Rommel,
C-in-C German-Italian Army

Subject: General directions for the impending operations

The general directions of the Duce regarding the advance to the Delta and the Suez Canal, as given in the telegram No. 01/12236 dated 27/6/42 still apply.

The following details are added in view of the present situation:

- a) Assembly area: The present positions of the German and Italian armies between Arabs Gulf and the Qattara Depression; these positions will remain occupied at all times.
- b) Principal objective of operations: To strike at the enemy forces west of the Delta.
- c) Objectives of attacks: Alexandria, among other reasons for the purpose of making use, at least in part, of the harbour for the thrust to Cairo; the occupation of Alexandria makes it necessary for us to capture control of and retain the Nile crossings at Rosetta, particularly those at Disuq and Kafr el Zaiyat. These crossings can be used later;
 the Cairo area to cover the crossing of the Nile;
 the Suez Canal.
- d) The closest co-operation between land and air forces must be maintained at all times throughout the operations; the arrangements to this end between the German and Italian air forces will be completed in due course in line with the general directions as laid down.

In a few days' time the German and Italian armies will have forces which will enable them to attack the enemy with success.

Every effort will be made to fill the gaps still existing in the supplies of fuel and ammunition; a limited number of trucks for Italian army formations may arrive during the current month.

Similarly, arrangements will be made for supplies to the German and Italian air forces.

Arrangements will be made for the Army to be rested and re-equipped continuously during the offensive operations.

Deleaze will provide the bridging equipment necessary for crossing the Nile. It will of course be necessary to make use of materials of this sort captured on the site.

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The date for the resumption of offensive operations necessarily depends on there being no appreciable delay caused by the resting and re-equipping, and especially the build-up of fuel supplies, now being carried out.

It is desirable for the resumption of operations to be made as early as possible.

I shall submit to the Duce for his approval the date which you proposed.

CHIEF OF COMANDO SUPREMO

SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION AT CONFERENCE
BETWEEN MARSHAL CAVALLERO AND GENERAL VON RINTELEN

17/8/42

- 1) a) Situation regarding transportation of men and supplies:
 The troop units listed in Appendix 1 have long been awaiting transportation from Italy or Germany.
- b) The following supplementary weapons, vehicles, etc. are in Italy awaiting transportation:
 - 150 anti-tank guns
 - 18 light guns
 - 23 heavy guns
 - 900 vehicles including 210 half-tracks
- c) The German forces are short of about 15,000 officers, NCO's and men. Of this total the following must be flown across on priority as they become ready for transfer:
 - 900 tank personnel
 - 200 anti-tank personnel
 - 330 artillerymen
 - 1000 truck drivers
 - 300 engineers
 - 3000 men of 9th, 10th & 11th first line reinforcement battalions
 - 200 men of railway operating coy.
 - 120 replacements for 85th construction battalion & 788th eng. landing coy.
 - 70 replacements, 621 Signals coy.

Total 6120

The remaining 8,800 (approx.) men must be flown over as they arrive.

In addition, the personnel listed under 1) a) comprising about 9,000 men must be transferred. This means that altogether 15,000 men as reinforcements and 9,000 men for additional units must be flown over.

2) Supply position:

| | | |
|---|---------------|--|
| Present stocks in the zone of operations: | <u>German</u> | <u>Italian</u> |
| Verbrauchssatz (unit of consumption of P.O.L. = 100 km) | 5 | 12 - 15 |
| Issues of ammunition | 2½ - 3 | 4 - 5 (excluding 4.7 anti-tank ammo. = 1 issue) |

The Italians' supply position is therefore considerably better than the Germans'.

The following must be dispatched for the German troops by 25/8:

10 V.S. fuel = 6,000 tons and
2 issues of ammunition

If it is not possible for fuel to be delivered promptly, Italian stocks in North Africa must be drawn upon.

3) Co-operation with Delease:

It is absolutely essential that Delease HQ be moved up to a position within telephone range (in the Mersa Matruh area). It will then be possible to reduce the size of the present Italian liaison staff.

- 4) Which Italian reinforcements will arrive at the front by 25 August? When are the still missing three battalions of the Folgore Division due to arrive? By which date and in what strength is the Pistoia Division to be made available to the Panzer Army?
- 5) The allocation of ferry-barges must be revised. (Of a total of 50 the Italians have 28 serviceable, while of the Germans' total of 22 only 9 can be used.)
- 6) General management of rail traffic in North Africa.
- 7) The stocks of mines in Africa available to Panzer Army will be exhausted in the near future. Similarly, every one of the make-shift mines at present being assembled - 20,000 at the most - will have to be completely used. Thus if it becomes necessary for the Alamein position to be defended for a long period, the stocks of mines available will not be adequate. Even in the event of a German offensive a large number of new mines will be needed. It is therefore urgently necessary for reserves of mines to be built up and for stocks of materials used in the construction of tank and other obstacles to be accumulated. A reserve of 300,000 - 500,000 mines (70% anti-tank, 30% anti-personnel) and the materials necessary for making 100,000 make-shift mines must be provided.

To what extent can the Italians help in this matter?

- 8) Is there any Italian bridging equipment "Pontedi equipaggio 3", capable of carrying 30 tons, ~~bridging material~~ in Africa? As there is no German bridging equipment available here, heavy Italian equipment of this kind must be brought over immediately. When can it be expected? Italian equipment of the Benedetto type capable of carrying 12 tons, is inadequate for the tasks expected.
- 9) What general principles has Comando Supremo considered for taking over executive power in Egypt? It is requested that a draft copy be sent to enable Panzer Army to express its views.

NOTES ON CONFERENCE BETWEEN MARSHAL CAVALLERO, FIELD
MARSHAL KESSELRING, GENERAL VON RINTELEN AND
MARSHAL BARBASSETTI ON 18 AUGUST, 1942

- 1) After describing the situation at the front, the C-in-C made special reference to the fact that so far the Germans were worse off as a result of the allotment of shipping space. It would have to be changed radically since German troops were bearing the brunt of the fighting. It was especially important that the urgently needed vehicles (over 1,000) be shipped as quickly as possible.

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- 2) The main subject for discussion was the supply position, upon which the date for project, with which they were familiar, depended. Marshal Cavallero promised to do everything to ensure, that by X-Day
 - a) the petrol required (6,000 tons) would be delivered;
 - b) the two allocations of ammunition (and above all, the types of ammunition of which there was a shortage in North Africa) would be loaded and shipped by steamer;
 - c) 750 tons of fuel will be delivered to the front as supplies for German troops by Italian lorries;
 - d) the rate of delivery of petrol and ammunition by barges will be stepped up.
- 3) In addition, the C-in-C referred to the small number of anti-tank guns available to 164th Infantry Division and emphasised that the Division could be ready to meet enemy tank attacks at the specified time only if anti-tank guns were brought up by air. Field Marshal Kesselring will delay the delivery of other supplies in order to expedite transportation of these guns by air.
- 4) Marshal Cavallero turned down the C-in-C's request that the Delease HQ be removed forward to Mersa Matruh. In the Marshal's view, Delease must be located in Tobruk as this was the hub of the entire supply network.
- 5) The three missing battalions of the Folgore Division have already reached Tobruk and have been sent forward to the front. So far only two battalions of the Pistoia Division are ready for action and therefore the Division cannot yet be used operationally.
- 6) Marshal Barbasetti is responsible for the general direction of railway services in North Africa. However, Marshal Cavallero agrees that the administration of German railways should be in the hands of German railway personnel.

Marshal Cavallero emphasised that he would do everything in his power to ensure that the needed shipping space would be provided in good time. Of course, in view of the difficult situation in the Mediterranean, this depended also upon what action the enemy took.

The C-in-C confirmed that a postponement of about two days of the date fixed could be managed but that the attack would have to be made then. A longer postponement would mean that the full moon, necessary for the operation, would have passed.

The consequence will be that the enemy will be, as we know, heavily reinforced in the course of the next few weeks and the army will have to go over to the defensive. As the Italian formations are not capable of withstanding on their own a British attack, German troops must therefore help to defend Siwa.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 18/8/42
18.00 hours

To: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces Rome

Morning Report 18/8/42

The night passed quietly with the normal patrol activity. A patrol of three men of Trento Division was captured by a British patrol during the night of 16-17/8. The Trento Division took 1 Australian prisoner and the Pavia Division captured 2 English officers, who had been cut off from their units, at Qattara.

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Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 18/8/42
23.35 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Daily Report 18/8/42

- 1) Normal patrol activity by both sides along the entire front. Brisk artillery harassing fire in the northern sector.
- 2) Enemy air activity less than on previous days. Italian and German fighters shot down one Curtiss a/c each.
- 3) Air reconnaissance reported considerable westwards traffic on the Almeria - Burg el Abd road and further vehicles on the tracks behind the enemy front. This was probably supply traffic and vehicles bringing up a limited number of reinforcements.
- 4) German troops' fuel situation:
About 3,000 cubic metres available in Africa. With a continuous daily consumption of over 300 cubic metres, available stocks will last until 26/8/42, including fuel used for supply purposes.
- 5) Italian losses in the period from 26/5 - 31/7.

| | <u>Killed</u> | <u>Wounded</u> | <u>Missing</u> |
|-------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Officers | 98 | 672 | 44 |
| NCO's & men | 881 | 9939 | 5153 |
| | <u>979</u> | <u>10611</u> | <u>5197</u> |

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 19/8/42
08.50 hours

To: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Morning Report 19/8/42

During the night there was heavy artillery harassing fire along the entire front.

A reconnaissance thrust supported by tanks north of Deir el Shein was beaten off by defensive fire of our artillery.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 19/8/42
10.05 hours

To: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome
(with request that it be brought to the attention of Comando Supremo)

After a thorough check of all possibilities and necessities for the operation planned, the requirements put forward at the conference of 18/8/42 are now confirmed as being the minimum that will be needed. In addition, it is necessary that the duly promised Division (Pistoia) be held in readiness as mobile reserve behind the Alamein front during the offensive operations. It is to be expected that the enemy will launch strong counter-attacks on the north flank during the offensive. Mobile defence forces

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cannot be released from the troops at present available.

ROMMEL

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 19/8/42
22.28 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Daily Report 19/8/42

- 1) During the night of 18-19/8/42 an enemy reconnaissance patrol supported by tanks was repulsed north of Deir el Shein. Normal harassing fire by artillery during the day. Less movement in the enemy front line area than on the previous day. No changes were observed in the distribution of the enemy's forces.
- 2) Slight enemy air activity. 3 Curtiss a/c and one Beaufighter were shot down by Fliegerführer Africa.
- 3) Air reconnaissance reported there were only a few troops at Kufra Oasis. A new airfield is being constructed.
- 4) German and Italian engineers have so far laid 144,000 mines in the Alamein position, 142,000 of them being of the anti-tank type.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 20/8/42
01.03 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Daily Report 20/8/42

- 1) Lively activity by ground reconnaissance units on the entire front. Normal artillery activity by both sides. Slight enemy air activity. Air reconnaissance reported troop movements behind the enemy front line zone; which suggest that large-scale regrouping of enemy forces is being carried out.
- 2) According to an agent's report, it is probable that a new formation of divisional strength will be brought up.
- 3) Position of German troops regarding personnel, material and vehicles.
 - a) The troops in Africa are short of about 15,000 men, 210 tanks, 175 troop-carrying vehicles and armoured cars and 1,400 vehicles.
 - b) The following are in Italy (some having been awaiting transportation for more than a year):

about 4,000 men
1,250 trucks
20 half-tracks
60 guns of all types

In addition, the following material replacements are ready for transportation:

18 light guns
23 heavy guns

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690 tracks
210 half-tracks

- c) There are also about 130 anti-tank guns being brought up through Italy or Greece.
In Germany 6,000 men are on call and about 1,200 vehicles, including 120 tanks, are available.

4) Supply situation in August 1942:

- a) The following supplies arrived in Africa in the period 1 - 20/8/42:

For German troops:

Army: 5,271 tons of which 2,854 tons were fuel
482 tons of ammunition
156 tons of food

Luftwaffe:

3,261 tons

For Italian troops:

over 15000 tons

This makes a ratio of 3:5 for German and Italian supplies respectively.

- b) The current consumption of German troops in this period was 9,800 tons - a daily average of 490 tons. Thus the small amount of supplies arriving has resulted, not in the building up of stocks, but in a decrease of the total stocks by 4,600 tons.
- c) There has been no unloading in Tobruk harbour since 11/8/42 as no supply ships have arrived. Full use is not being made of Benghazi.
- d) Owing to the lack of escort vessels - in Africa there are only 3 Italian destroyers - coastal shipping is held up for unbearably long periods, sometimes as much as 8 days. If there were an adequate amount of escort vessels, enabling a speedier turn-round of shipping to be made, present tonnage could be doubled.

5) Position of Italian XX (motorised) Corps regarding trucks.

Italian XX (motorised) Corps is short of about half of its allowance of vehicles (600) so that only 4 of 10 motorised battalions can be transported. Moreover, one heavy A/A battery and 4 heavy batteries cannot be moved owing to lack of transport. The vehicle situation of XX Corps is further aggravated by the necessary allocation of 50 trucks to carry supplies for the Folgore Paratroop Division, the vehicles for which have not yet been delivered.

It is expected that about half of XX Corps' present strength of 220 tanks will become unserviceable after a short time simply through damage caused by over-driven engines and, to some extent, by inexperienced drivers.

It is urgently necessary that the missing vehicles of XX Corps and the Folgore Paratroop Division and also replacement engines should be dispatched by Italian sea or air transport.

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German General at HQ Italian Army, Rome

HQ Rome 21/8/42
21.00 hoursTo: Panzer Army H.Q. Staff
(attention: C-in-C)

Comando Supremo issues the following information for transmission to Field Marshal Rommel:

Comando Supremo acknowledges receipt of Daily Report of 20/8/42. As you already know, transportation is being carried out under the greatest difficulties as shipping space etc. available is inadequate for the demands made upon it. This situation has deteriorated still further recently as a result of the latest shipping losses. Moreover, transportation must be carried out in the face of enemy attacks; for this reason it must be regarded as the first phase of the operations.

I confirm that every possible effort will be made to transport to Africa the supplies still needed, especially fuel and ammunition. Some of the vehicles for XX Corps are ready for shipment and will be dispatched with the least possible delay. Steps have been taken to speed up as much as possible the flow of supplies from the African ports to the front.

Signed: UGO CAVALLERO

German General at HQ Italian Army, Rome

HQ Rome, 21/8/42
21.45 hoursSIGNALTo: Panzer Army H.Q. Staff.
(attention: C-in-C)

Comando Supremo has handed over the following information for transmission to Field Marshal Rommel:

- 1) The Duce approves in principle the date you proposed for the resumption of the offensive. (see last sentence of Order dated 17/8/42)
- 2) The Duce has confirmed the order regarding the greatest possible speed-up of deliveries of supplies.
- 3) Information regarding final decision requested as soon as possible.

Signed: UGO CAVALLERO

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 21/8/42
21.52 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Daily Report 21/8/42

- 1) Day passed quietly. Normal artillery activity.
- 2) Except for numerous reconnaissance sorties over the southern part of the front, enemy air activity was slight.

RESTRICTED3) Tank situation:

- a) German: 28 Pz. II
90 Pz. III
67 Pz. III Special
8 Pz. IV
23 Pz. IV Special
4 A.C.V's
 - b) Italian: 32 Pz. L
210 Pz. M
-

Africa Corps Ia
Nr. 4358/42 Secret

HQ, 21/8/42

To: Panzer Army Africa

Subject: Formation of a Reconnaissance Company

Appendices: (2)

Submitted herewith is a plan for the proposed establishment of a Reconnaissance Company equipped with captured enemy materials.

Africa Corps intends gradually to set up a reconnaissance company each for 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions to replace the Reconnaissance Unit released to Army. Enemy equipment will be utilised as and when it is captured and the current situation regarding replacements will be taken into consideration. In the case of 21st Panzer Division, the necessary personnel and equipment are already available.

The strategic need for the Divisions to have a reconnaissance unit at their disposal at all times is regarded as a matter of great urgency.

Without the services of special reconnaissance units, Africa Corps and the Panzer Divisions are not in a position to carry out the reconnaissance operations necessary for the conduct of the war.

Experience in past actions has shown:

- 1) that the Reconnaissance Units of the Army do not supply the Divisions with reconnaissance reports,
- 2) that battle reconnaissance carried out by the Luftwaffe does not produce much important information and that such as there is cannot be made available to the troops soon enough to be of value.

As the available means for carrying out reconnaissance are limited, the request for the provision of special reconnaissance units operating with the Divisions is all the more urgent.

Approval of the above proposal is therefore requested.

Sgd: NEHRING

HQ Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 22/8/42

To: HQ Africa Corps

- 1) Enemy situation: see intelligence report giving position as on 20/8/42.

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- 2) Africa Corps (for troops taking part see Appendix 1) will begin to attack in an easterly direction at 22.00 hours on X Day, after crossing the eastern edge of the German minefields. For assembly area, sectors of attack and advance and objectives see Appendix 2. It is essential that the Corps reaches its objectives by the times scheduled in Appendix 2. To do this, it is first of all necessary that it should not be delayed by enemy mines covering the front. Thus the immediate detailing of the necessary reconnaissance patrols and the most careful preparation of all measures to ensure speedy negotiation of minefields, are matters of special importance.

Movements into the assembly area will be carried out as follows:

- a) Armoured units in the nights of 24-25/8 to 26-27/8/42.
- b) Wheeled units in the night of 27-28/8/42.

By daybreak tanks must be in the assembly area and already camouflaged. Corps baggage will be moved forward during the night of 24-25/8. to the area held hitherto by 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions, in order to make it difficult for the enemy to recognise the nature of the transfers.

Corps will submit to HQ by 24/8/42:

- a) The forces it intends to use in the operation,
 - b) timetable for the movements during the nights from 24-25/8. to 27-28/8. and on X Day.
- 3) For details of assembly and disposition of the Reconnaissance Group and of XX Infantry Corps see Appendix 2.
 - 4) X Infantry Corps will remain in the attack sector of Africa Corps and be ready for defensive action in the hitherto fortified front.
 - 5) X Day will be ordered about 30 hours in advance. The necessary regrouping will take place in the night before X Day. It is forbidden for movements to be made on X Day.
 - 6) For special instructions for requests for air support, and for recognition arrangements see Appendix 3.
 - 7) Delivery of reports. Corps will report on the situation every two hours without prior request. Reports will be made even for those periods when no great changes in the situation have occurred. Morning and evening reports will be submitted in the usual way. Orders will be issued and reports made on basis of 1 : 100,000 map.
 - 8) For thrust line as on X Day at 18.00 hours see Appendix 4.
 - 9) Security. Corps will submit for approval to HQ on 24/8/42 the names of the officers who must be orientated the day before X Day. Information will not be released beyond this circle until X Day.
 - 10) Special instructions regarding the supplies for German troops will follow.
 - 11) For special instructions regarding signals communications see Appendix 5.

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- 12) From 18.00 hours on X Day Army Battle HQ will be in the area north west of Hisiyet Bushta.

The Commander-in-Chief

Signed: ROMMEL

5 Appendices

Distribution: HQ German Africa Corps
Pz. Armee HQ Ia

H.Q. Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ.
22 August, 1942

To: 1) X Corps
2) Ramcke Brigade

- 1) For enemy situation as on 20 August, 1942 see enemy intelligence report.
- 2) X Corps (for details of units see Appendix 1) will attack at 22.00 hours on X Day with elements of Folgore Division (1 infantry battalion reinforced by 1 anti-tank battalion), moving eastwards from the el Taqa area through Maqb el Khadem and will take Hill 216 east of Bab el Askar. This hill will be defended.

In addition, the Corps will send forward a strong battle group (2 infantry battalions and 1 anti-tank battalion from Folgore Division and 2 battalions each from Ramcke Brigade, XX Corps and Brescia Division) at 22.00 hours on X Day from the area south of Bab el Qattara with the objective of reaching the general line 145 left 17 - 143 left 14 - 142 left 11.5 - 141.5 left 8.5.

After reaching this objective, the battle group will deploy for defence. For this purpose adequate mines (about 6,000) and material for obstacles will be taken forward with the battle group. It is of primary importance that the above objective be held at all costs. The Corps will make arrangements for this battle group to resume the attack northwards on X + 1 Day. Orders for the resumption of the attack will be issued in good time by Army Headquarters. Both of the above battle groups will be sent in as laid down in Appendix 2.

In addition to X Corps artillery, strong Army Artillery detachments led by Artillery Commander 104 in positions west and north-west of Bab el Qattara will be available from 22.00 to 24.00 hours on X Day to support the battle group attacking from the area south of Bab el Qattara. The necessary arrangements will be made directly between X Corps and Artillery Commander 104. Artillery support will be taken over by X Corps as from 00.00 hours on X + 1 Day. However, advanced observers of Artillery Commander 104 will remain with the above-mentioned battle group.

The remaining formations of the Corps will defend the former fortified front. Non-mobile battalions of XX Corps still remaining available will also be used for this purpose.

- 3) Ramcke Brigade (without the elements operating with X Corps) will defend the former fortified front and will pin down the enemy forces facing them. For this purpose and to give the

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appearance of an attack from the Deir el Shein area, strong raiding parties will advance on the line 130 left 12.5 to 129 left 12; the first party will move forward at 22.00 hours on X Day, the second at 00.30 hours on X + 1 Day and the third at 03.00 hours on X + 1 Day. These raiding parties will take prisoners and will return to the fortified front by dawn on X + 1 Day. XXI Corps artillery will support these raiding parties on request. The necessary arrangements will be made directly with XXI Corps.

- 4) XXI Corps will send forward a strong raiding party south and north of the Ramcke Brigade patrol (see para 3) advancing from Deir el Shein at 22.00 hours on X Day and at 00.30 and 03.00 hours on X + 1 Day; raiding parties to be formed from:
 - a) 31st Guastatori Battalion with flame-throwers on el Ruweisat ridge in the direction of line 130.5 left 12.5 to 130 left 12.5
 - b) Bologna Division in the direction of line 128.5 left 12 to 127.5 left 10.5
- 5) 90th Light Division will be sent in as laid down in Appendix 2.

H.Q. Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
22 August, 1942

To: HQ XX Corps

- 1) For enemy situation as on 20 August 1942 see enemy intelligence report.
- 2) XX Corps will cross the eastern limits of the German minefields and attack in an easterly direction at 22.00 hours on X Day. For assembly area, sectors of advance and attack and objectives see Appendix 2. It is of primary importance that the Corps reach its objectives at the times laid down in Appendix 2. To achieve this, the Corps must not be delayed by any advanced enemy minefields. It is therefore of particular importance that all necessary reconnaissance be carried out immediately and that measures to overcome mines quickly be carefully prepared.

Tanks of the Ariete Division will reach the assembly area during the night 24/25 to 26/27 August; wheeled units will reach the assembly area during the night of 27/28 August. To prevent the enemy from observing these transfers, rear elements of the Corps (baggage transport) will move into the former Ariete Division area during the night of 24/25 August and on following nights. The tanks must be camouflaged and in the final assembly area by dawn. The construction of tank boxes in this area will be commenced immediately (verbal order to be issued in advance).

The Corps will submit the following information to Army Headquarters by 24 August:

- a) Intended employment of forces for the attack,
- b) Schedule of movements during the nights from 24/25 to 27/28 August and on X Day.
- 3) X Corps will remain in readiness for defence in the XX Corps sector of attack on the former fortified front.

The C-in-C

ROMMEL
Field Marshal

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H.Q. Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
22 August, 1942

To: Headquarters XXI Corps

- 1) For enemy situation as on 20 August 1942 see enemy intelligence report.
- 2) XXI Corps (for details of units see Appendix 1) will defend its fortified front and will pin down the enemy forces facing it. To give the appearance of an attack, a strong raiding party will be sent out at 22.00 hours on X Day and at 00.30 hours and 03.00 hours on X + 1 Day; raiding parties to be formed from:
 - a) 31st Guastateri Battalion with flame-throwers on el Ruweisat ridge in the direction of line 130.5 left 12.5 - 130 left 12.5
 - b) Bologna Division in the direction of line 128.5 left 12 - 127.5 left 10.5
 - c) Trento Division in the direction of line 119.5 left 13 - 117 left 11.5

Raiding parties mentioned in section b) and c) should also be issued with flame-throwers if possible.

The raiding parties will take prisoners and return to the fortified front by dawn on X + 1 Day.

The raiding parties will move forward under heavy fire support. For this purpose and to give the appearance of an attack on a broad front, all heavy infantry weapons, particularly heavy machine guns, will fire at maximum range in addition to artillery. Artillery and heavy weapons will open up suddenly. The preparatory bombardment will not commence before 22.00 hours on X Day.

Artillery Commander 104 will support the advance of XXI Corps raiding parties on el Ruweisat (see 2a) from positions northwest of Bab el Qattara. Elements of XXI Corps artillery will support 164th Infantry Division (see para 4) and Ramcke Brigade (see para 3) on request. The necessary arrangements will be made directly between XXI Corps, 164th Infantry Division, Ramcke Brigade and Artillery Commander 104.

The Corps will submit the plan of action and fire plan (including ammunition expenditure) to Army Headquarters by 24 August.

- 3) Ramcke Brigade will defend its fortified front and pin down the enemy forces facing it. The Brigade will send forward a strong raiding party at 22.00 hours on X Day and at 00.30 hours and 03.00 hours on X + 1 Day in the direction of line 130 left 12.5 to 129 left 12. These raiding parties will return to the fortified front by dawn on X + 1 Day.
- 4) 164th Infantry Division will defend its fortified front and pin down the enemy forces facing it. For this purpose and to give the appearance of an attack on a broad front, the division will send forward a strong raiding party at 22.00 hours on X Day and at 00.30 hours and 03.00 hours on X + 1 Day in the direction of:
 - a) line 580.2 left 5 to 580 left 7.5
 - b) line 571.5 left 16 to 569.5 left 17
 - c) line 569.5 left 19 to 570 left 21.2

These raiding parties will return to the fortified front by dawn on X + 1 Day.

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- 5) X Corps, adjoining XXI Corps to the south, will defend the former fortified front.

ROMMEL

H.Q. Panzer Army Africa

Army Battle HQ
22 August, 1942

To:- 90th Light Division

- 1) For enemy situation as on 20 August 1942 see enemy intelligence report.
- 2) 90th Light Division (for details of units see Appendix 1) will cross the eastern limits of the German minefields and attack in an easterly direction at 22.00 hours on X Day. For assembly area, sectors of advance and attack and objectives see Appendix 2. It is of primary importance that the division reach its objectives at the times laid down in Appendix 2. To achieve this, the division must not be delayed by any advanced enemy minefields. It is therefore of particular importance that all necessary reconnaissance be carried out immediately and that measures to overcome mines quickly be carefully prepared.

361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment will move up into the assembly area during the night 27/28 August. To prevent the enemy from observing these transfers, the divisional baggage transport will be moved up into the former 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment area during the same night.

The division will submit the plan for the intended employment of forces for the attack and a schedule of movements during the night 25/26 August and on X Day to Army Headquarters by 24 August.

- 3) For XX Corps assembly and plan of attack see Appendix 2.
- 4) X Corps will remain in readiness for defence on the 90th Light Division sector of attack on the former fortified front.
- 5) Artillery Commander 104 will support the attack by elements of X Corps (section 4) from positions west and north-west of Bab el Qattara from 22.00 to 24.00 hours on X. Day. As from 00.00 hours on X Day Artillery Commander 104 will follow up into the 90th Light Division sector of attack and will place his guns south of the first 90th Light Division objective in such a way that he can effectively support XX Corps and 90th Light Division when they resume their advance in a northerly direction at dawn.

The C-in-C

ROMMEL
Field Marshal

Panzer Army Africa H.Q.

Army Battle HQ,
22 August, 1942

To:- 164th Infantry Division

- 1) For enemy situation as on 20 August 1942 see enemy intelligence report.
- 2) 164th Infantry Division (for details of units see Appendix 1) will defend its fortified front and pin down the enemy forces

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facing it. To feint an attack on a broad front, strong raiding parties will move forward at 22.00 hours on X Day and at 00.30 hours and 03.00 hours on X + 1 Day as follows:

- a) Line 580.2 left 5 to 580 left 7.5
- b) Line 571.5 left 16 to 569.5 left 17
- c) Line 569.5 left 19 to 570 left 21.2

These raiding parties will take prisoners and return to the fortified front by dawn on X + 1 Day.

The raiding parties will move forward under maximum fire support. For this purpose and to give the appearance of an attack on a broad front, all heavy infantry weapons, particularly heavy machine guns, will fire at maximum range in addition to artillery. Artillery and heavy weapons will open up suddenly. The preparatory bombardment will not commence before 22.00 hours on X Day.

XXI Corps was ordered to give the division artillery support on request. The appropriate arrangements are to be made directly between the division and the Corps. The division will submit plans for the intended conduct of operations and the co-ordinated fire plan (including ammunition expenditure) to Army H.Q. by 24 August.

- 3) Trento and Bologna Divisions will defend XXI Corps fortified front and pin down the enemy forces facing them. At 22.00 hours on X Day and at 00.30 and 03.00 hours on X + 1 Day Bologna and Trento Divisions will each send out a strong raiding party in the direction of line 128.5 left 12 to 127.5 left 10.5 and line 119.5 left 13 to 117 left 11.5. These raiding parties will also fall back to the fortified front by dawn on X + 1 Day.

C-in-C
Signed: ROMMEL
Field Marshal

Panzer Army Africa H.Q.

Army Battle HQ
22 August, 1942

To:- Artillery Commander 104

- 1) For enemy situation as on 20 Aug, 1942 see enemy intelligence report.
- 2) Artillery Commander 104 (for details of units see Appendix 1) will deploy his forces in the area west and north-west of Bab el Qattara by dawn on 20 August so that from 22.00 to 24.00 hours on X Day he can effectively support the attack by a X Corps Battle Group (8 battalions) which will advance from the Bab el Qattara area at 22.00 hours on X Day in the direction of the heights south-east, south and south-west of Alam Nayl. In addition, Artillery Commander 104 will provide artillery support for an eastward advance on el Ruweisat by strong raiding parties of XXI Corps. The necessary arrangements will be made directly with X and XXI Corps.

Artillery Commander 104 will submit the co-ordinated fire plan and the schedule for the transfer of Army artillery to Army H.Q. by 24 August.

From 00.00 hours on X + 1 Day the Army artillery will move up into 90th Light Division sector of attack and take up positions

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south of the first 90th Light Division objective (see Appendix 2) so that as from dawn it can effectively support a northward advance by XX Corps and 90th Light Division and repulse a possible enemy attack on X Corps units which have advanced on Alam Nayl. Advanced observers will be left with the X Corps Battle Group attacking in the direction of Alam Nayl.

C-in-C

Signed: ROMMEL
Field Marshal

Panzer Army Africa H.Q.

Army Battle HQ
25 August, 1942

To: Fliegerfuehrer Africa

- 1) For enemy situation as on 20 August 1942 see enclosed enemy intelligence report (Appendix 1).
- 2) For German plans see enclosed map (Appendix 2).
- 3) Fliegerfuehrer Africa and the Commander of V Squadra Aerea were requested to support Panzer Army operations as follows:
 - a) Continuous fighter patrols to be flown over the southern sector on X + 1 Day to prevent enemy reconnaissance over the assembly areas.
 - b) Nuisance attacks on the coastal road between Burg el Arab and el Alamein as from 22.00 hours on X Day.
 - c) Continuous fighter cover over the Panzer Army motorised formations as from dawn on X + 1 Day; Italian fighters will cover the Italian XX Corps (motorised).
 - d) Fighter-bomber attacks on enemy ground forces facing the Panzer Army motorised formations on X + 1 Day. Further requests for operations will be made when necessary.
 - e) Convoys and ports will be provided with the usual protection.

Fliegerfuehrer Africa and the Commander V Squadra Aerea will later direct operations against enemy forces moving up into the battle area from the east and enemy elements withdrawing eastwards and south-eastwards from this area.

Fliegerfuehrer Africa was requested to assume the responsibility of instructing V Squadra Aerea. Army pointed out that in accordance with the Fuehrer's order of 12 July 1942, this information should be supplied in extract form only.

Army Battle Headquarters will be located at 558 right 3 as from 18.00 hours on X Day.

C-in-C
Signed: ROMMEL
Field Marshal

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To Headquarters Panzer Army Africa Ia
No. 88/42 Top Secret of 22 August 1942

Units of the Reconnaissance Force

Headquarters 15th Infantry Brigade

3rd Reconnaissance Unit
33rd Reconnaissance Unit
580th Reconnaissance Unit
XX Corps Reconnaissance Unit (Italian)
612th AA Battalion, less 1./612

Units under Artillery Commander 104

Artillery Commander 104
H.Q. Artillery Regiment 221
H.Q. Heavy Artillery Battery 408 with
1./Battery 408
3./Battery 408
364 Troop
5./Artillery Regiment 115
H.Q. Heavy Artillery Battery 528 with
2. and 3./Batteries 528
Artillery Battery 533
Troop 902
Troop 362
6./Artillery Regiment 115
H.Q. II./Artillery Regiment 115 with
2./Battery 408
4./Army Coastal Artillery
Battery 149
4./Artillery Regiment 115

} to be
brought up
to Africa
Corps later

Units of 164 Infantry Division

164 Infantry Division

Heavy Infantry Gun Companies 707 and 708
H.Q. Heavy Artillery Battery 523 with
1./Army Coastal Artillery Battery 523
3./Army Coastal Artillery Battery 523
H.Q. Flak Regiment 102 (being brought up)
H.Q. I./Flak 53 with 1., 2., 3., 4. 353 and 5./53
1./Flak 6
AA Battalion 609
I./33 to be brought up later

Units of 90th Light Division

90th Light Division

less 580 Reconnaissance Unit and
Heavy Infantry Gun Companies 707 and 708
H.Q. II./Flak 25 with
6., 8. and 9./Flak 25 (7. and 10./25 being brought up)
H.Q. AA Battalion 606 with
3./AA 606
AA Company 190

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to G.H.Q. Panzer Africa Ia
No. 88/42 Top Secret of 22 August 1942

Units of XXI Corps

H.Q. XXI Corps with Corps Units

Trento Infantry Division
Bologna Infantry Division
31st Guastatori Battalion

Units of X Corps

H.Q. X Corps with Corps Units

Folgore Infantry Division
Brescia Infantry Division
2 Battalions of Ramcke Brigade
6 immobile battalions of XX Corps } only until arrival
immobile artillery of XX Corps } of vehicles

Units of XX Corps

H.Q. XX Corps with Corps Units
less Reconnaissance Unit and immobile elements
of the Corps Artillery *)

Ariete Armoured Division } less 6 immobile
Littorio Armoured Division } battalions *)
Trieste Motorised Division } and immobile artillery *)

*) Will revert to Corps after arrival
of vehicles

Units of Africa Corps

H.Q. Africa Corps with Corps Units

15th Panzer Division less 33rd Reconnaissance Unit
21st Panzer Division less 3rd Reconnaissance Unit
H.Q. Flak Regiment 135
H.Q.I./Flak 18 with Troops 1 - 5 (1st Troop being
brought up)
H.Q.I./Flak 43 with Troops 1, 2, 4 and 5
H.Q.I./6 with Troops 2 and 3 (being brought up)
Troops 4 and 5./6 to be brought up later
617th Light AA Battalion
2./606 Light AA Battalion

The following will be brought up later:

H.Q.II./115 Artillery Regiment
2./408 Abt.
4./149 Army Coast Defence Artillery Abt.
4./115 Artillery Regiment

N.B. Abteilung (Abt.) is approximately equal to a British battery
Batterie (Btr.) is approximately equal to a British troop

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Appendix No. 3 to
Panzer Army Africa H.Q. Ia Order
No. 88/42 - Top Secret
of 22 August, 1942

Special Orders regarding Requests for Air Support and
Reconnaissance

- 1) All requests for support of ground operations by the German and Italian Air Forces will be made to Fliegerfuehrer Africa by Army HQ. As far as is possible, particular requests for operations from Army Corps HQ etc. will be taken into consideration. Requests will be directed to Army HQ (Fliegerfuehrer's Liaison Officer).
- 2) In all requests for air support of ground operations care will be taken that the flying formations cannot be over the target before about 2 hours after the request has been sent off. The target must be such that German troops cannot have reached it within two hours. Formations already airborne cannot be diverted later than one hour after the request has been received.
- 3) Early Warning Service
 - a) Air observation squads will be detailed to watch for German and enemy air activity, to give warning in the event of a threatened enemy attack and to report the presence of German aircraft. Brigade, battalion and regimental headquarters and companies, batteries and M/T columns will detail air observation squads, which will comprise an NCO and two men. Each man will be equipped with a Verey pistol, flares (smoke trail), hand smoke signals and ground panels.
 - b) Employment of Aircraft Observer Service:
 - aa) if reconnaissance aircraft request ground troops to identify themselves by firing a recognition signal (5 coloured stars),
 - bb) on the approach of bomber formations, if the leading aircraft fires a recognition signal requesting ground troops to identify themselves,
 - cc) by order of the officer in command of the ground troops, particularly if an attack on German troops is threatened (e.g. in the event of long-distance and rapid changes in the location of advanced elements, flanking movements, etc).

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 22/8/42
06.52 hours

To: XX Corps (Italian)
15th Infantry Brigade

The reconnaissance unit of XX (Italian) Corps is instructed to co-operate with the reconnaissance group. In this connection, the former will transfer with 3rd Reconnaissance Unit to the area west of el Taqua on 22/8/42.

Contact is to be made with 3rd Reconnaissance Unit and with the Reconnaissance Group of 15th Infantry Brigade.

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Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 22/8/42
08.30 hours

- To: 1) German General At HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome,
for Comando Supremo
2) Delesee for Ex. Barbasetti via Italian liaison staff
at Panzer Army HQ
- 1) Heavy enemy artillery fire on Deir el Shein and to the north; 2,300 rounds per hour. Lively patrol activity in front of Italian XXI Corps' sector.
 - 2) Night attacks on the central sector of the front and on Mersa Matruh

Panzer Army Ia

Army Battle HQ, 22/8/42
19.48 hours

To: Africa Corps, XX Corps (Italian), 90th Light Division, 288th Sondervverband (= special formation roughly similar to infantry brigade group), Reconnaissance Group

Troops are to be instructed immediately regarding the steps to be taken by units that have had to fall out during the movement of motorised formations owing to mechanical break-downs: they are to make their position a defended locality (hedgehog) and thereby cover the supply route. Such isolated units must consider themselves as outposts.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 22/8/42
20.35 hours

To: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome
(General von Rintelen for submission to Comando Supremo)

Panzer Army Africa will be able to carry out the planned project at the time sanctioned by the Duce only if the following requirements are met:

- a) The advised 1st, 2nd and 3rd formations of supply ships arrive in Tobruk or Benghazi by 25/8/42 with about 2,000 tons of fuel, 500 tons of ammunition, etc.
- b) The 4th formation of supply ships arrives in Tobruk by 27/8/42 with about 2,000 cu metres fuel, etc.
- c) Sufficient lorries arrive by 27/8/42 to motorise six battalions and five batteries of Italian XX (motorised) Corps at the front and also the supply vehicles of the Folgore Division. (see Daily Report 20/8/42). Panzer Army is of the opinion that these vehicles can, if necessary, be taken from the stocks of Q.M.G. of Delesee.
- d) Delivery of the proposed further 3,600 tons of fuel and approximately 2,000 tons of ammunition can be guaranteed at Tobruk or Benghazi by 30/8/42.

If these requirements cannot be met it is useless to think of carrying out the project at the time proposed. The operation, which was planned on the assumption that the favourable period of the full moon would be used, will then have to be postponed and replanned on a different basis. Accordingly,

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the decision which is to be made on 27/8/42 will be reported.

In view of the considerable increase in the enemy's strength which is to be expected in the coming months, it will be possible to launch an attack later with prospects of complete success only if the present German strength in men and materials is built up and large new forces are added. At the same time it must be expected that in the course of September the enemy will achieve superiority in strength and will himself go over to the offensive.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 22/8/42
22.25 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Daily Report 22/8/42

- 1) Enemy situation largely unchanged.
- 2) During the night of 21-22/8 there was heavy enemy artillery fire on defence positions at Deir el Shein and to the north; 2,300 rounds were fired within an hour. Lively enemy patrol activity on the northern sector. During the day normal artillery and patrol activity by both sides.
- 3) Intensified night bombing attacks on the front line area and airfields and on the town and harbour of Mersa Matruh. German fighters shot down four enemy aircraft in air combat during the day.
- 4) In connection with the raid made at El Daba on 14-15/8 by a sabotage party landed from the sea, a Lieutenant Alexander and others have been captured. When he was taken prisoner the Lieutenant was wearing an Africa Corps cap. He is to be charged with a breach of international law as a franc-tireur. Alexander is a second cousin of the present C-in-C Middle East, General Alexander.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 23/8/42
07.59 hours

To: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome
(for the attention of Comando Supremo)

- 1) Normal artillery and patrol activity along the entire front.
- 2) Large-scale night bomber attacks over the entire front line zone.

Panzer Army Africa
Commander-in-Chief

Army Battle HQ, 23/8/42
12.25 hours

To: C-in-C German Naval HQ in Italy, Vice Admiral Weichold

The supply position of the Army is again critical. For instance, the fuel supplies in Africa will not last beyond 28/8, and a very large part of anti-tank weapons are short of

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ammunition. I request you to exert the utmost pressure to ensure that supplies, which are a matter of life and death to the German troops, are transported immediately. First of all, it is vital that the six convoys carrying a total of 7,525 tons of fuel and 2,449 tons of ammunition promised according to Order no. 3203, German General at HQ Italian Army, Rome, dated 20/8/42, arrive in Africa by the end of the month. Otherwise it will not be possible to carry out the planned operation.

Rommel

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 23/8/42
22.35 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Daily report 23/8/42

- 1) Enemy situation unchanged.
 - 2) Heavy bombing attacks on Africa Corps area and lively activity by enemy artillery during the night of 22-23/8. On the whole the day passed quietly.
 - 3) With effect from 23/8/42 HQ ^{19th} Flak Division subordinated strategically to C-in-C Panzer Army.
-

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Battle HQ, 24/8/42
08.48 hours

- To: 1) German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome
for the Comando Supremo
- 2) Delesee (for Gen. Barbasetti), through Italian liaison staff, Panzer Army HQ

Morning Report 24/8/42

Considerable enemy air activity over the southern sector (photo-flash reconnaissance and bombing raids). Normal artillery and patrol activity by both sides on the rest of the front.

Panzer Army Ia

Army Battle HQ
24 August 1942
10.00 hours

To: XX Corps

Ref: Panzer Army Headquarters Ia No. 88 Top Secret
Second Appendix, of 22 August 1942

One quarter of Ariete division's armour will be moved into the new area during the night 24/25 August. Army particularly emphasises the necessity of camouflage, and the tanks must therefore be camouflaged in blast bays in the new area by dawn. This order will be destroyed immediately after it has been passed on.

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C-in-C German Naval HQ in Italy

Rome, 24/8/42
13.40 hours

To: H.Q. Panzer Army Africa

Please rest assured that I am doing and will continue to do everything in my power to help Panzer Army realise its general and specific needs. With the best will in the world, however, this help is restricted by the familiar difficulties of a coalition war as for example the number of authorities commanding and by the efforts of the Italians.

As much as I, in common with all other German authorities in Rome, strive to overcome these difficulties, I feel it is my duty to draw attention to the limitations mentioned and to warn you against false hopes and decisions.

Enemy successes have resulted primarily in a reduction in the rate and volume of deliveries of supplies from Italy to Africa; so that, in view of the difficulties arising from the lack of merchant and escort vessels and the Italians' own limited capabilities, the Italian navy today is, in fact, doing all it can.

As regards the conveyance of supplies between ports on the Cyrenaican coast and the quantity of shipping these ports can cope with, the reorganisation of naval forces and changes in the supply organisation have brought the hitherto largely independent German naval forces under Italian control, so that, here again, no improvement in achievement can be expected.

In spite of this negative assessment of the situation, there will be no relaxation here of the pressure being brought to bear on the Italian navy and supply organisations.

Panzer Army may be certain that everything humanly possible will be done under the existing circumstances, which cannot conceivably be changed at present, to overcome the current crisis and to raise the rate and volume of the supply traffic.

Panzer Army IaArmy Battle HQ
24 August 1942
19.57 hours

To:- Africa Corps
90th Light Division
Artillery Commander 104
Q.M.G. Panzer Army

To increase stocks of fuel and ammunition (particularly those types in short supply) every available unit vehicle will be sent to the rear army area immediately. Details to be arranged by Q.M.G. Panzer Army. The vehicles must return to their units during 28 August.

Panzer Army Africa IaArmy Battle HQ, 24/8/42
22.41 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Daily Report 24/8/42

- 1) Enemy situation unchanged.

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- 2) Bombing attacks and reconnaissance sorties (photo-flash bombs used) in the night, especially over the southern sector. Considerable activity throughout the day by enemy artillery and patrols; isolated attacks by fighter-bombers.
- 3) German and Italian ground defences shot down two aircraft each in the front-line area.
- 4) Air reconnaissance on 12/8/42 revealed that shipping in Suez had increased by 150,000 tons. It must therefore be assumed that the reported large reinforcements for Egypt of troops and materials have arrived.

Panzer Army Africa Ia
No. 1728/42 Top Secret

Army Battle HQ 25/8/42

To: Army General Staff Organisation Department

Subject: 1) Formation of a Reconnaissance Brigade
2) Formation of Reconnaissance Companies

The peculiar nature of the North African theatre of war makes it necessary for the closest integration of the few available reconnaissance forces immediately under the command of Panzer Army GHQ.

The reasons for this are as follows:

- 1) The absence of any sort of reconnaissance organisation for strategic ground reconnaissance, plus the fact that Panzer Army must operate in the vast areas of North Africa with an uncovered flank.
- 2) The completely inadequate provision of reconnaissance units of XX Inf. Corps (Italian). Italian Infantry Corps have no reconnaissance organisation of any kind.
- 3) The numerical superiority of enemy reconnaissance forces over the entire front which necessitates the concentration of the German reconnaissance organisation at any given point. At present the proportion of British to German reconnaissance units is 4 : 1.

In order to be able to carry out its assigned tasks, Panzer Army proposes the formation of a Reconnaissance Brigade (See appendix 1). At the same time permission is requested to form, on the lines of the establishment shown in appendix 2, one reconnaissance company each for short-range operations for 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions, 90th Light Africa Division and 164th Infantry Division. Captured enemy materials will be used. The two Armoured Reconnaissance Companies of the Reconnaissance Unit will also be equipped with captured armoured cars.

For the Army HQ Staff
Chief of General Staff

GHQ Panzer Army Africa IIb

Battle HQ, 25/8/42

Subject: Situation regarding personnel

According to the Establishment and Strength Return of 1/8/42 the Army is deficient of about 17,500 N.C.O's. and men.

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The survey of 17/8/42 showed that the following are urgently needed:

1,000 artillerymen
 900 tank personnel
 600 anti-tank personnel
 1,000 M.T. drivers
800 engineers

Total 4,300

4th Flak Battalion requires at least 1,000 replacements.

Africa Corps requires about 6,000 men to bring Pz. Grenadier Regt. and 90th Light Division up to strength, and a further 1,800 N.C.O.'s and men are needed in connection with the conversion of 288th Special Formation.

Summary:

Total deficiency: 17,500

Break-down:

| | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Riflemen: | 7,800 |
| Artillery-men | 1,000 |
| Tank crews | 900 |
| Anti-tank units | 600 |
| M.T. Drivers | 1,000 |
| Engineers | 800 |
| Flak units | <u>1,000</u> |

13,100

Numerous requests have been addressed to the German General in Rome and through him to Military Districts (Wehrkreise) III and XII. In consequence it has been established that up to 18/8/42 that the 9th and 10th first line reinforcements battalions have arrived in Athens. The transfer that has not yet taken place has been reported twice by radio.

Preliminary reports give the strength of each battalion as 1,000 men.

In the last week 1 officer and 192 men have arrived by troop transport for 8th Panzer Regiment.

IIb

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 25/8/42
 07.52 hours

To: 1) German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome
 2) Delease (Général Barbasetti) through Italian Liaison with Panzer Army HQ

Morning Report 25/8/42:

- 1) Harassing artillery fire along the entire front. Patrol activity by both sides.
- 2) Bombing attacks in the front line area during the night. Slight damage.

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Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 25/8/42
20.00 hoursTo: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome
(for the attention of Comando Supremo)

Copy to: QMG Panzer Army

As a result of the loss of the ship "Pozzarica", the fuel situation of the Italian troops of Panzer Army is also very critical. XX (motorised) Corps have 3 V.S. at their disposal but X and XX Infantry Corps have only enough fuel for their current needs. Apart from 2 V.S. of XX (motorised) Corps, there are no stocks between the front and Mersa Matruh, and Panzer Army has had to loan 500 cu. metres from the supply brought by the tanker "Fascio" so that supply convoys could enable the Italian troops to continue their preparations. As a result German stocks have been reduced by almost one V.S. Information is requested as to when fuel supplies for the Italians may be expected. Will they be sent to Tobruk or to Benghazi?

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 25/8/42
23.20 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Daily Report 25/8/42

- 1) Present disposition of enemy troops is believed to be as follows:
 - a) Southern sector

XIII Infantry Corps comprising 7th Armoured Division with reconnaissance formations in the front line with New Zealand Division 1st Armoured Div. behind the front.
 - b) Northern sector

XXX Corps with 5th Indian, 50th British and 9th Australian Divisions. Behind the front, on the coast, 1st South African Division.
 - c) West of Sidi Hammam two unidentified divisions are immediately under Eighth Army HQ; one of them may be the 10th Indian which has been reformed and re-equipped in the Nile Delta.
- 2) Lively harassing fire by enemy artillery along the entire front. Much activity by battle reconnaissance patrols of both sides.
- 3) Heavy bombing attacks during the night of 24-25/8, particularly on the southern sector. Scattered raids by bombers and fighter-bombers during the day.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 26/8/42
09.02 hoursTo: 1) German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome
2) Deleaze (General Barbasetti) through Italian Liaison Staff.Morning Report 26/8/42

RESTRICTEDMorning Report 26/8/42

- 1) Very heavy fire during the night from 6 - 8 batteries of enemy artillery on the northern and central sectors (8,000 rounds). An enemy reconnaissance thrust was beaten back south of Deir el Shein. Slight German losses.
- 2) Heavy attacks by night bombers in the southern sector.
- 3) An enemy destroyer bombarded the coast and road near el Daba.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 26/8/42
22.37 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Daily Report 26/8/42

- 1) Air reconnaissance and agents' reports show no change in the disposition of enemy forces. The presence of the New Zealand Division on the central sector has been confirmed by prisoners.
- 2) During the night of 25-26/8 there was very heavy enemy artillery fire on the central sector (about 8,000 rounds) and bombing attacks over the entire front line area. Powerful thrusts by relatively strong enemy patrols to the south and north of Deir el Shein were repelled. During the day there was the normal harassing artillery fire and wide-spread activity by enemy recce patrols.
- 3) During the night of 25-26/8 light enemy ^{naval} forces bombarded the coastal road in the el Daba area.

Conference Agenda

27/8/42 Conference between Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Kesselring and Lieutenant-General von Waldau.

- 1) Carrying out the planned operation is dependent on the supply situation. Fixing X-Day dependent on the arrival of ship with fuel supplies due on 28/8. It is hoped to make it 30/8 (phase of moon!)
- 2) Fuel situation very critical as 500 tons had to be given up to the Italians and the supplies of fuel arriving are totally inadequate.
- 3) Field Marshal Kesselring is offering 1,000 cu metres from Luftwaffe stocks.

28/8/42 Conference between Commander-in-Chief, the Commanding Generals of Africa Corps, XX Italian (motorised) Corps, the Commanders of 15th Panzer, 21st Panzer and 90th Light Divisions and the Commander 3rd Reconnaissance Unit.

- 1) The date to be fixed for X-Day dependent on fuel situation. It is hoped to make it 30/8.
- 2) Discussion of details regarding the carrying out of the planned operation.

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- 3) Orientation by C-in-C on intentions for the further conduct of the war after the end of the battle for Alamein. The carrying out of these intentions dependent on the supply situation (fuel and ammunition).

Panzer Army Ia

Army Battle HQ, 27/8/42
12.52 hours

To: Africa Corps

- 1) Another quarter of armoured units is to be moved into a new area in the night of 27-28/8.
- 2) Make preparations to move the last quarter of the armoured units in the night of 28-29/8 and wheeled units in the night of 29-30/8. Order for putting transfers into effect will be issued in good time.
- 3) This order is to be destroyed immediately it has been noted.

Panzer Army Ia

Army Battle HQ, 27/8/42
12.57 hours

To: 164th Infantry Division

- 1) 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment will not leave its present area till the night of 28-29/8. 288th Special Formation will move during the same night into the area hitherto held by 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment.
- 2) The Briel Battle Group will not leave its present area till the night of 29-30/8.
- 3) This order is to be destroyed immediately it has been noted.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 27/8/42
22.05 hours

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Daily report 27/8/42

- 1) Air reconnaissance showed that the number of trucks in the area between Wadi Natrun and Cairo had increased from 500 to about 1000. Disposition of enemy forces at the front unchanged.
- 2) A thrust by an enemy reconnaissance patrol in the middle of the day at el Ruweisat was repulsed. Normal artillery harassing fire and lively patrol activity over the rest of the front.
- 3) Bombing attacks in the front-line area during the night of 26-27/8. Normal air reconnaissance and isolated fighter-bomber sorties by enemy air force during the day.
- 4) 1 Spitfire and 1 Curtiss were shot down by German fighters.

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Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 28/8/42

To: Army General Staff Operations Department

Daily Report 28/8/42

- 1) Enemy situation: According to agents' reports and information obtained from prisoners, it is possible that 10th Indian Division, which until now was thought to be an Army Reserve located to the west of Hammam, is in fact in the front line. Agents also report that on 26/8 advanced HQ of Eighth Army was moved back from Burg el Arab to el Amiriya. According to information supplied by Fliegerführer Africa, some elements of enemy daylight bomber and fighter formations have been moved back to the Suez area.
- 2) There were bombing attacks on the southern sector during the night of 27-28/8. Lively enemy patrol activity along the entire front. Work on entrenchments on the northern and central sectors has been intensified. During the day there was considerable harassing fire from enemy artillery. Isolated attacks by fighter-bombers and bombers. Wide-spread activity by ground and air reconnaissance patrols. 3 enemy aircraft shot down by ground defences and another two by German fighters.
- 3) On 27 or 28/8/42 the ships "Camperio", "Istria" and "Dielpi", together carrying a total of about 730 tons of fuel and 170 military vehicles as well as other supplies, were sunk.
- 4) Tank situation:
 - a) German:

| |
|------------------------------------|
| 29 Pz. II |
| 93 Pz. III |
| 71 Pz. III Special |
| 10 Pz. IV |
| 26 Pz. IV Special |
| <u>5</u> armoured Command vehicles |
| 234 |
 - b) Italian:

| |
|------------------|
| 38 Pz. L |
| <u>243</u> Pz. M |
| 281 |
- 5) Supply situation:
 - a) Fuel

Partly as a result of the sinkings reported under para. 3), only about 100 tons of the 2,400 tons scheduled for delivery on 28/8/42 have arrived. The stock of fuel in North Africa as on the evening of 28/8/42 was 2,400 cu. metres = 4 VS.
 - b) Ammunition

3 issues of ammunition are at this disposal of German troops in North Africa. Exceptions: 5 cm anti-tank gun and 7.5 cm tank gun (long barrel) ammunition (only .5 issues) and 5 cm tank gun (long barrel) ammunition (only 1 issue) It is a matter of extreme urgency that a steady stream of supplies of these specially important

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types of ammunition in short supply in North Africa be delivered by air or submarine.

The critical fuel situation and the relatively low stocks of ammunition have resulted from fact that Panzer Army, in contrast to the Italian troops, received only very small quantities of supplies during the months of June, July and August. Hence during this period the Germans had to use up their stocks instead of being able to build up a reserve.

If a serious crisis over supplies and the grave set-backs that such a situation might cause are to be averted, it is absolutely essential that the 2,950 cu metres of fuel and 580 tons of ammunition promised for 1/9/42, and the 1,000 cu metres of fuel and 1,650 tons of ammunition scheduled for delivery on 4/9/42 be brought over very quickly.

Apart from these supplies, Panzer Army will require the following during September to maintain its supply situation:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| a) up to 10/9/42 | 2,000 tons of ammunition 3,000 tons of fuel 2,000 tons of rations |
| b) between 10/9/42 and 20/9/42 | 4,000 tons ammunition 5,000 tons fuel 2,000 tons rations |
| c) between 20/9/42 and 30/9/42 | 3,000 tons ammunition 4,000 tons fuel 2,000 tons rations |

These requirements were notified to German General in Rome on 27/8/42.

As QMG Rome states that the small number of ships available for transporting German supplies is totally inadequate for coping with the supply requirements of Panzer Army, German General in Rome is requested to make immediate representations to Comando Supremo in order to obtain the allocation of further shipping space for German purposes.

Army General Staff Organisation Department 28/8/42, 04.45 hours

To: Panzer Army HQ

- 1) GHQ subsequently authorises the reorganisation carried out under Panzer Army orders, of 288th Special Formation. However, OKH draws attention to the fact that the present situation regarding personnel and materials permits enlargement of existing troop units and the establishment of new units to only a very limited extent. For this reason the principle that prior authority must be obtained from OKH for all new formations and conversions of existing formations must be strictly adhered to. Moreover, the creation of new units carried out by the independent action of Panzer Army has created a false picture of the actual position regarding personnel and materials.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 28/8/42
10.25 hours

To: 1) German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome
(for Comando Supremo)

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To: 2) Deleaze (General Barbasetti) through Italian Liaison Staff.

Morning Report 28/8/42

- 1) The night passed quietly. Normal artillery and patrol activity by both sides. Bombing attacks in southern sector.
- 2) As already stated in a supplementary report, 3rd Battalion 39th Infantry Regt. of the Bologna Division lost

7 killed
10 wounded and
27 taken prisoner

during the reconnaissance patrol carried out by New Zealand troops north of el Ruweisat in the morning of 26/8/42.

Panzer Army Africa
Commander-in-Chief

Army Battle HQ, 29/8/42

To: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Copies to: QMG Panzer Army
Commander-in-Chief, South

Field Marshal Kesselring has promised to send me by air short supply ammunition arriving in Italy, particularly 5 cm anti-tank and long barrellled tank gun ammunition. All available transport aircraft are to be used.

Please arrange a) to expedite transport of ammunition in short supply from Germany to Italy, and b) to ensure that short supply ammunition arriving in Italy is flown out here immediately.

Detailed information is requested as to how much short supply ammunition is ready for transportation from Italy, particularly of the calibres mentioned above. Your attention is drawn in para. 2 b) of Daily Report of 28/8/42.

ROMMEL

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 29/8/42
10.45 hours

To: 1) German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome
2) Deleaze (General Barbasetti) through Italian Liaison Staff

Morning Report 29/8/42

- 1) Lively activity by enemy reconnaissance patrols along the entire front. Fairly heavy bombing attacks in the southern sector. Losses were light.
- 2) In the early hours of the morning 4 enemy destroyers shelled the coast in the el Daba area. The enemy naval force was attacked by German aircraft.

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Panzer Army Africa Ia
104/42

Army Battle HQ, 29/8/42
16.27 hours

To: 1) German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome
2) O.K.W. Operations Staff
3) O.K.H. Operations Department

Subject: Panzer Army Africa Ia reports dated 15, 22 and
27 August

The fact that the quantities of fuel and ammunition, requisitioned and promised as essential preliminaries to the planned operation, have failed to arrive means that it will not be possible to undertake more than a limited local operation, with the object of hitting the enemy forces in the Alamein position.

Even this limited operation has only been made possible because the Commander-in-Chief, South has lent the Army 1,000 tons of fuel for the time being from his stocks. The delivery of supplies of fuel, ammunition (especially types in short supply) and rations in the quantities and in the periods specified under para. 5 of Daily Report dated 28/8/42 remains a prerequisite for success in the forthcoming operation described above and for the exploitation of such success if it should prove considerable.

Note for German General, Rome:

Field Marshal Kesselring has been notified verbally.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ, 29/8/42
21.50 hours

To: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Daily Report 29/8/42

- 1) Enemy situation unchanged.
- 2) In the early hours of the morning 4 enemy destroyers ineffectually shelled the coast in the region of el Daba.
- 3) There were heavy bombing attacks in the southern sector during the night. During the day there was the normal artillery and patrol activity.
- 4) German fighters shot down 4 enemy aircraft and ground defences accounted for another.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
30 August 1942
08.15 hours

To: German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome
for Comando Supremo

Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya, to be passed to Marshal Barbasetti via Italian Liaison Staff at Panzer Army Headquarters.

Morning Report, 30 August 1942

Bomber attacks on the southern sector. Slight artillery harassing fire. Apart from this the night passed quietly.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
31 August 1942
11.33 hrs.

To: Army General Staff, Operations Department

The Panzer Army motorised group launched an attack eastwards from the el Taqa - Bab el Qattara line at 22.00 hours on 30 August. The advance was delayed by a large number of regular and unplanned minefields placed one behind the other which were crossed during the morning. The attack was continued in a north-easterly direction.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
31 August 1942
22.16 hours

Daily report for 31 August 1942.

- 1) After negotiating many more deep minefields and obstacles, the Panzer assault force threw back enemy mobile forces (7th British Armoured Division) to the east and north-east and was holding the line Manaqir el Taiyara (28 km south-east of el Alamein) - directly south of Alam Nayil by the evening. Reconnaissance groups are protecting the eastern flank in the area east of Deir el Ragil. Air reconnaissance and agents' reports show that enemy dispositions in the Alamein position have remained unchanged.

A number of prisoners were brought in during the raids carried out on the fortified front between Bab el Qattara and the coast during the night 30/31 August and the presence of the 1st South African Division in the fortified area south of el Alamein was thus established.

- 2) According to air reconnaissance there were no large-scale movements on the Cairo-Alexandria - el Alamein road or on tracks leading west from Cairo.
- 3) The Luftwaffe carried out a number of effective fighter-bomber and dive-bomber attacks on enemy vehicle concentrations and positions in support of the Panzer Army attack.
- 4) General Nehring, G.O.C. Africa Corps, has been wounded and Major General von Bismarck, Commander of 21st Panzer Division, killed.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
1 September 1942
08.40 hours

To: Army General Staff, Operations Department

Morning report for 1 September 1942

Intensive bombing attacks along the entire front. Heavy artillery fire on the northern sector of the fortified front. Apart from this, nothing of particular importance occurred during the night 31 August/1 September.

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Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ,
1 September 1942
22.46 hours

To: Army General Staff, Operations Department

Daily Report of 1 September, 1942Enemy Situation:

- 1) Enemy grouping remained virtually unchanged. Although there was no fighting apart from patrol activity on the central sector, an attack by elements of 9th Australian Division supported by about 30 tanks was launched in the early morning. After an initial penetration had been made into the German positions south of Tel el Eisa the situation was restored, the enemy sustaining heavy losses.
- 2) Air reconnaissance observed no large-scale movements on the Cairo-Alexandria-Alamein road or on the tracks leading up to the battle area. Since 27 August the amount of shipping in Suez harbour has increased by more than 100,000 tons, and it is assumed that the convoy expected at the beginning of September has arrived.
- 3) As the fuel promised by 1 September did not arrive, Panzer Army temporarily deployed for defence in the line it had reached during the day. SS St. Andrea has been sunk and SS Abruzzi is still at sea.
- 4) Several enemy counter-attacks on the motorised group and on the coastal sector were successfully repulsed. 10 tanks and 15 Bren carriers were knocked out on one battalion sector alone.
- 5) Extremely heavy enemy air attacks - continuous day and night operations - have caused considerable personnel and material losses and were not without influence on the morale of the troops. The heaviest losses were sustained in the night attacks, the enemy airmen taking advantage of the numerous fires on the ground before dropping their bombs. The absence of trained German night fighter pilots made itself unpleasantly noticeable. 4 enemy aircraft were brought down by ground defences.
- 6) During the day the Luftwaffe also inflicted appreciable losses on enemy formations in continuous dive-bomber and fighter-bomber attacks. 25 enemy aircraft were shot down.

From:- Commander 19th Flak Division

Battle Headquarters,
2 September, 1942

To:- General Gause, Chief of Staff, Panzer Army

After carrying out only reconnaissance over the Army area during the night of the attack (30/31 August), air attacks in strength on columns on the move north-east of the minefields commenced early on 31 August. These attacks, generally carried out by close formations of 20 to 30 multiple-engined bombers with fighter escort at 2 - 3,000 metres, intensified considerably when the assault force turned north and when the advance stopped and finally were carried out every 1 - 2 hours. Operations ceased only when sand storms blew up.

Altogether there were seven of these attacks on 1 September, and on 2 September six were carried out before the C-in-C's

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Headquarters moved back at 15.00 hours.

The Africa Corps batteries employed for A.A. defence (eventually five) constantly improved their aim and by 15.00 hours on 2 September had shot down 5 multiple-engined bombers and 2 escorting fighters from the attacking formations. As a result of this, the initially close enemy formations dispersed slightly and operated at higher altitudes. However, Panzer Army casualties increased with every attack and losses of men and material became more grievous.

German fighters were frequently observed covering ground forces and also at other times.

However, according to reports, air battle between fighters and twin-engined aircraft took place only to a limited extent.

The night attacks of 31 August/1 September, and particularly those of 1/2 September, were even more effective and damaging than the daylight operations. Whereas about 100 aircraft were operational from 01.30 - 02.40 hours on the first night, continuous and exceptionally heavy bombing attacks were carried out over the whole of the Africa Corps area from 00.00 - 04.10 hours on the second night. It was estimated that in all 2 - 300 aircraft were operational (according to London radio, 500 sorties were carried out).

Panzer Army losses continued to increase. At times A.A. guns could not go into action owing to the absence of searchlights and radar installations. Night fighters apparently did not operate at all. Under these conditions continued and constantly increasing losses to Panzer Army and its associated formations had to be expected.

This situation and other reasons led to the Panzer Army decision to break off the operation.

Sgd. Burchardt
Lt. General & Divisional Commander.

C-in-C South
Top Secret

Battle Headquarters
2 September, 1942

From:- Antonius 4, Ia

To:- Fliegerfuehrer Africa
X Fliegerkorps
Special Luftgau Headquarters Africa
Antonius 2 (Luftgau South-East)
Panzer Army

Order for 3 September, 1942

1) In face of overwhelming enemy air superiority, Panzer Army will make a gradual fighting withdrawal to the start-line, leaving rearguards behind the British minefields. In view of intensive enemy air activity by day and night, this movement will take several days.

2) As his main task for 3 September, Fliegerfuehrer Africa was ordered to provide Panzer Army with dawn-to-dusk cover against enemy low and high-level aircraft. In co-operation with Setto Est (Cyrenaica) complete fighter cover will be maintained throughout the day (sandstorm periods excepted) over Panzer Army in such strength that bomber attacks can at least be driven off.

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I hold all airmen responsible (this order will be read to fighter pilots) for the protection of their sorely pressed comrades of the Panzer Army. The primary objective must be to shoot down enemy bombers or fighter-bombers, and then to drive off fighters or at least bomber formations.

The plan for the employment of fighters will be submitted in writing. I will make special mention of this point to V Squadra Aerea.

At the same time fighter-bombers will open their effective operations with a dawn attack on enemy airfields - more detailed instructions for this will be issued by the Fliegerfuehrer - and then attack enemy batteries operating against Panzer Army or other ground targets if no artillery can be found.

In the event of a surprise attack on the Panzer Army by tanks, a dive-bomber formation at maximum strength will be sent in immediately.

- 3) Reconnaissance must provide a complete picture of movements in front of and on the flank of the Panzer Army and, in particular, identify transfers in the enemy rear area.
- 4) The Battle Group instructed to move to Quasaba-West by 08.00 hours to today's orders did not arrive until 15.00 hours.
- 5) Panzer Army requested in particular that the damaging effect of enemy night bombing attacks be matched by similar German attacks on enemy divisions.

I therefore order that during the night 3/4 September, commencing at dusk and terminating at dawn, a continuous attack in strength be made on the 10th Indian Division area and on the formation adjoining it to the north. For this purpose all aircrews and aircraft suitable for night operations in the entire Luftflotte will be employed irrespective of their daylight activity, with the provision that aircrews on operations during the day carry out one sortie, while other crews or formations fly two sorties.

For this operation the remaining formations of II Fliegerkorps will transfer to airfields at Athens; aircraft suitable for night operations of Kommando Herling, the Fliegerfuehrer and Me 110's of X Fliegerkorps will move to Quasaba-West.

The damaging effect on German and Italian troops achieved by the British by the extensive employment of flares, incendiaries and tracer composition must also be attained in this massed raid on the two divisions. The formations themselves will bring the initial supplies of these bombs into the operational zone; further supplies will be made ready. So far as new flares are available these will be employed and, in addition to SD bombs, extensive use will be made of incendiaries. The employment of single flame bombs would also be suitable for this purpose.

Special Luftgau Headquarters Africa will arrange ground organisation in co-operation with Fliegerfuehrer Africa in accordance with special instructions which will be issued today. The special order for the operation will be issued to officers commanding formations, independent formation leaders or their deputies of all formations concerned at Antonius 4 Battle Headquarters on 3 September. However, only one officer will be sent from each Geschwader. The following will also be present: the General Staff officers of the Fliegerfuehrer and the Special Luftgau Headquarters and the Chief of Staff or Ia of X Fliegerkorps.

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During the night the Korps etc. will organise the operation so that aircraft to be used for covering activities the next day are employed early enough on 3 September to allow them adequate rest before the exhausting escort operations are carried out. Senior officers will personally ensure that this is done.

- 6) A similar mass operation against R.A.F. bases used by night bombers has been planned for the night of 5/6 September.
- 7) Officers of the fighter and bomber Geschwader will report to Panzer Army by day and night respectively for information about enemy ground activity and will plan operations by their formations accordingly.
- 8) The Corps and Fliegerfuehrer will report the estimated number of aircraft available immediately.

Sgd. Kesselring
 Antonius 4, Ia
 2635/42 Top Secret

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
 2 September, 1942
 07.12 hours

- To:-
- 1) German General at Italian Armed Forces, Rome for Comando Supremo
 - 2) Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya to be passed to Marshal Barbasetti by Italian Liaison Staff at Panzer Army Headquarters.

Waves of enemy aircraft attacked the Panzer Army motorised group for seven hours on end during the night. Considerable personnel and material losses were again sustained.

Apart from this the night passed quietly.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
 2 September, 1942
 22.30 hours

- To:
- 1) German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome for Comando Supremo
 - 2) O.K.W. Armed Forces Operational Staff
 - 3) O.K.H. General Staff of the Army, Operations Department

Ref: Report No. 104/42 Top Secret issued by Panzer Army Africa HQ on 29 August, 1942

- I. 1) The fuel requested in the above-mentioned report is essential to the successful continuation even of the locally limited operations and its absence is preventing a resumption of the offensive.

The present Panzer Army fuel situation is as follows:

- a) In Africa there are 3 V.S. between ports of discharge and the front. Thus, with a maximum consumption of only 1 V.S. per day, supply of units is assured only until 5 September.

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- b) In the last few days the following supplies -

arrived: 2,610 tons of fuel = 4.2 V.S.
 443 tons of ammunition

were lost at sea: 3,352 tons of fuel = 5.5 V.S.
 350 tons of ammunition

Of the 5,000 tons of fuel which Comando Supremo stated would arrive by 3 September in report No. 3998 of 30 August, 2,600 tons have already been lost at sea and there are prospects of a further 1,500 tons from Italy. Time of arrival is not known.

- c) Provided that SS "Bianchi" and "Sportivo" arrive at Tobruk on 3 September, supplies at the rate of 1 V.S. per day are assured for 3 more days as from 7 September. Unloading and transportation to units will take 3 days.
- d) The Italian fuel situation ("Otto" fuel) is even more unfavourable. SS "Picco Fascio" with 1,100 tons of fuel was sunk on the morning of 2 September.

- 2) In addition to the inadequate supply situation, the following reasons also necessitate the discontinuation of the offensive:

- a) The operational plan provided for the motorised group to move forward in moonlight during the night 30/31 August from the line el Taqa - Qaret el Abd through an area which, according to reconnaissance, was only lightly held and mined in places. Advanced elements of the group were to reach the area 40 - 50 km east of the start-line and then attack in a northerly direction at dawn on 31 August. However, the advance was slowed down to such an extent by a large number of hitherto unidentified obstacles and minefields, some of them several kilometres in depth, that elements did not achieve the first objective until the evening of 31 August. Thus the element of surprise - an essential condition for the success of the operation - was lost.
- b) As already reported in the daily report of 1 September, considerable personnel and material losses have been caused by continuous enemy night and day air attacks in strength. These attacks were also not without influence on the morale of the German and Italian troops. Owing to the lack of night fighters, troops could not be given adequate protection in the 7 - 8-hour-long night attacks.

The enemy continued to seriously disrupt supply by systematic nuisance attacks on supply columns, the railway and coastal shipping.

These conditions force the Panzer Army to discontinue the offensive. The Army will therefore gradually fall back to the start-line under enemy pressure if there is no fundamental change in the supply and air situation.

- II During the night 1/2 September many more attacks were carried out, with enemy aircraft bombing and shooting up targets. 7 attacks, each with 20 - 30 aircraft, were carried out during the morning.

Nuisance raids by enemy tanks and armoured cars in the flank and rear of the motorised group were repulsed.

No. 107/42 - Top Secret

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3rd Reconnaissance Unit

Unit Battle HQ
3 September, 1942Report on the Bombing Attack on the Unit carried out
during the Night of 31 August/1 September, 1942

At about 18.30 hours on 31 August the unit received an Army signal ordering it to move directly south-east of Deir el Ragil to provide rear and flank cover for the Africa Corps' withdrawal to Alam el Halfa. The unit, together with 33rd Reconnaissance Unit and subordinated elements of 612th A.A. Battalion and of the Italian Nizza Reconnaissance Unit, reached the specified area towards 19.45 hours and, after brief instructions were issued, the occupation of the defence zones was completed at about 20.30 hours.

After much air activity in east-west and west-east directions, about 8 parachute flares were dropped over the defence area shortly before 21.30 hours, followed immediately by 6 - 10 bombs, most of which fell among 33rd Reconnaissance Unit (baggage) transport, setting a fuel tanker lorry on fire. There were 5 - 8 enemy aircraft over the unit from the very first, and this number was maintained throughout the whole of the operation. After the fuel tanker lorry was set on fire, the first enemy aircraft formation was reinforced by a second wave which also dropped flares immediately, so that for a time the defence area was lit up as bright as day by as many as 15 flares. Attempts to move the vehicles out of the effective area of the flares failed, as any movement, even by individual soldiers was immediately prevented by a low-level bombing attack. All the aircraft dropped their bombs singly on identified targets - practically no sticks were dropped - each aircraft thus making about eight attacks. The first and second waves concentrated on vehicles in the outer circuit and these were also shot up. After this attack there were 18 vehicles on fire as a result of direct hits. A third wave, which arrived as the second was moving off, circled round the formation at 1 - 2 km dropping very bright magnesium flares. These burnt for approximately 20 minutes and were apparently intended to serve as a guide for following aircraft. In contrast to their predecessors, only one aircraft in the following waves dropped flares, circling over the unit so that there was always a ring of flares burning, the number varying between 6 and 10.

A very mixed variety of aircraft was observed dropping bombs. Most of these were twin-engined aircraft, but there was also a type of fighter-bomber and obsolete biplanes. Four-engined aircraft were very rarely seen.

Like the aircraft, the number of bombs dropped varied between 4 - 12, the last two waves dropping mainly large numbers of fragmentation bombs. These highly-explosive missiles were fitted with an instantaneous fuze and did not make the slightest crater on the ground. Splinters from bombs falling up to 5 metres from armoured cars went straight through the armour plating.

The bombing attack lasted from 21.30 to 03.45 hours with a short respite from 02.00 to 02.15 hours.

Sgd: Everth
Captain and Unit
Commander.

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Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ,
3 September, 1942
21.40 hours

To:- Army General Staff Operations Department

Daily Report of 3 September, 1942:

- 1) No change in enemy grouping.
- 2) Heavy enemy air attacks on the motorised group during the night and day.
The Luftwaffe made effective attacks on enemy vehicle concentrations, particularly on the south-eastern flank of the motorised group. An enemy reconnaissance force was wiped out in these operations. German and Italian fighters shot down 25 enemy aircraft.
- 3) The regrouping of the motorised group proceeded according to plan. The enemy followed up cautiously; 4 tanks were knocked out in local enemy attacks.
Usual artillery activity on both sides along the rest of the front.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
4 September, 1942
08.12

- To:-
- 1) German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome for Comando Supremo
 - 2) Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya - to be passed to Marshal Barbasetti by Italian Liaison Staff at Panzer Army HQ.

Morning Report, 4 September 1942:

Regrouping proceeding according to plan. Enemy air activity less intense than on previous nights.

An enemy attack south of Alam Nayil was repulsed, a number of New Zealand troops being taken prisoner.

Usual artillery and patrol activity along the rest of the front.

Panzer Army Ia

Army Battle HQ
4 September, 1942
18.15

- To:-
- 1) 90th Light Africa Division
 - 2) Ramcke Brigade
 - 3) Acting C-in-C

Ramcke Brigade was instructed to give 90th Light Division the closest tactical co-operation. 90th Light Division will place heavy anti-tank weapons at the disposal of Ramcke Brigade, which will be responsible for anti-tank defence in their sector.

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Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
4 September, 1942
22.52

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Department

Daily Report of 4 September, 1942:

- 1) Enemy grouping generally unchanged. According to captured documents and prisoners' statements, 132nd British Brigade has once more been placed under command of the New Zealand Division.
- 2) During last night and today several enemy tank-supported attacks east of Bab el Qattara were repulsed with heavy enemy losses. Several hundred prisoners, including the Commander of 6th New Zealand Brigade, were brought in. Enemy patrols and tanks are feeling their way forward on the south-eastern flank of the Army. The withdrawal in stages of the motorised formations was continued according to plan.
- 3) During last night and today enemy bombing attacks were less intense than on previous days. The Luftwaffe made effective attacks on enemy forces south of Ruweisat during the night and on tank and vehicle concentrations east of Alam Nayil during the day.
- 4) A ship carrying 800 tons of fuel arrived on 4 September. 3 ships with a total of 500 tons of ammunition and 1,200 tons of fuel were sunk or damaged by torpedo-bombers during the period 2 - 4 September. The fuel situation continues to be extremely acute. Fuel stocks in Africa on the evening of 4 September will enable current supply to be carried out only for about 7 days.

List of German and Italian Casualties
for the Period from 26 May to 5 September,
1942 (inclusive)

German

| | <u>Officers</u> | <u>NCOs and Men</u> |
|---------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Wounded | 521 | 8,505 |
| Killed | 172 | 2,636 |
| Missing | 75 | 2,985 |
| Total: | 768 | 14,126 |

Italian

| | <u>Officers</u> | <u>NCOs and Men</u> |
|---------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Wounded | 742 | 10,733 |
| Killed | 115 | 1,323 |
| Missing | 54 | 5,533 |
| Total: | 911 | 17,589 |

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Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
5 September, 1942
09.20

- To:- 1) German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome
for Comando Supremo
- 2) Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya - to be passed to Marshal
Barbasetti by Italian Liaison Staff at Panzer Army
Headquarters

Morning Report, 5 September 1942:

The night passed quietly.

Regrouping proceeded according to plan.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
5 September, 1942
23.10

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Department

Daily Report of 5 September, 1942:

- 1) Enemy situation unchanged.
- 2) Usual artillery activity on both sides along the entire front. Enemy patrols felt their way forward on the eastern and south-eastern fronts of the Panzer Army.
- 3) Enemy air activity was less intense than on previous days. The Luftwaffe again made effective attacks on tank and vehicle concentrations east of Alam Nayil.
- 4) General Plans:

To go over to the defensive using the extensive British minefields on and west of the line Qaret el Himeimat - Deir el Munassib - Deir Umm Khawabir.

It is planned to deploy forces as follows:

- (a) XX Corps (Ariete and Littorio Armoured Divisions and Folgore Infantry Division) and the German reconnaissance group on the southern sector from Qaret el Himeimat - Deir el Munassib.
- (b) X Corps (Brescia Infantry Division and Trieste Motorised Division), 90th Light Division and Ramcke Brigade on the central sector from Deir el Munassib - Deir Umm Khawabir.
- (c) XXI Corps (Bologna and Trento Infantry Divisions) and 164th Light Division on the northern sector from Deir Umm Khawabir to the coast as before.
- (d) Most of the Africa Corps will be assembled behind XX Corps and 2 Battle Groups behind XXI Corps as counter-attack forces.

Supplement for Comando Supremo: A 1 : 100,000 map showing the intended deployment has been forwarded to Field Marshal Kesselring.

Supply of fuel and ammunition to be carried out.

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- 5) SS "Albachiria" carrying 500 tons of ammunition and food was sunk on 4 September.

No. 1094 - Top Secret

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
6 September, 1942
23.20

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Department

Daily Report of 6 September, 1942:

- 1) The enemy forces in the Alamein position have been reinforced by the 131st and 132nd Infantry Brigades of the newly-arrived 44th British Infantry Division. The division disembarked at Suez in the first half of August and was put into the central sector towards the end of the month. In addition, the 50th British Division - hitherto held as reserve in the coastal sector - has once again been put into the northern sector of the front.
- 2) There was heavy artillery harassing fire throughout the day. On the southern sector occasional enemy attacks by tank-supported patrols were repulsed.
- 3) Axis successes for the period 30 August - 5 September, 1942:
124 tanks and armoured cars destroyed or captured, about 100 vehicles, 10 field guns and 22 anti-tank guns destroyed and about 400 prisoners taken.
- 4) Axis losses for the period 30 August - 5 September, 1942:

| a) <u>Personnel</u> | <u>Killed</u> | <u>Wounded</u> | <u>Missing</u> | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| German | 369 | 1,163 | 272 | |
| Italian | 167 | 587 | 297 | |
| b) <u>Material</u> | <u>Tanks & Armoured Cars</u> | <u>Vehicles</u> | <u>Field Guns</u> | <u>Anti-tank Guns</u> |
| German | 36 | 277 | 11 | 20 |
| Italian | 11 | 97 | 6 | 16 |

The heavy losses in personnel and material are attributed to incessant air attacks in strength and to the constantly high rate of ammunition expenditure by the British artillery.

- 5) As on 5 September, Panzer Army personnel strengths were as follows:

- a) German troops 82,000
- b) Italian troops 42,000

However, the rate of supplies brought over during August was as follows:

- a) for German forces 8,500 tons (approx.)
- b) for Italian forces 25,700 tons

Thus, of the Panzer Army's monthly requirement of 27,000 tons, only 8,500 (32%) were delivered. Owing to this, the following critical supply situation has resulted:

Fuel for 8 days current supply

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Ammunition for 14 days of action (excluding types not in stock),
Food for about 23 days.

As the German General in Rome was informed on 27 August, this indicates that a critical supply situation is imminent and serious reverses probable unless vital supply requirements are sent to Panzer Army immediately. As the uncertainty of movements by sea must be expected to continue, adequate air transport must be made available.

- 6) In view of the reinforcements reported in paragraph 1 as having already arrived and the fact that further reinforcements are expected, the transportation to Africa of 22nd Infantry Division is a particularly urgent matter. The division's vehicles must be brought to Africa at the same time as personnel are being flown over, as Panzer Army supply services are not in a position to take over the supply of further units. The additional vessels required for this purpose must therefore be provided. With reference to this, it was reported that no progress has been made recently with the transportation of German troops assembled in Italy (see Daily Report of 20 August) or with that of the Luftwaffe Infantry Brigade and vehicles still required by 164th Light Africa Division.

No. 1908 - Top Secret

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
7 September, 1942
21.20

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Department

Daily Report of 7 September, 1942:

- 1) According to agents' reports and prisoners' statements, 10th Armoured Division will probably be put into the central sector. This division was formerly 22nd Armoured Brigade under command 1st Armoured Division. 2nd Armoured Brigade has remained with 1st Armoured Division.
- 2) There was lively artillery activity on both sides on the southern sector. Enemy tanks and armoured cars are again feeling their way forward on the eastern and south-eastern fronts of Panzer Army. Small-scale enemy attacks on the commanding Qaret el Himeimat hill were thrown back. Usual artillery harassing fire on the northern sector.
- 3) Enemy air activity was less intense than of late.

No. 6966/Secret

19th Flak Division
- Ic -

Divisional Battle HQ
8 September, 1942

Subject:- Reply to query about bombs dropped
made on 6 September, 1942

To:- Panzer Army Africa HQ.

Bombs were dropped almost exclusively by Douglas D B 7 bombers. However, very few of these aircraft carried their full bomb load

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and practically all of them dropped 50 kg fragmentation bombs. In calculating bomb loads and the number of bombs dropped - and this generally checks with observations - it may be concluded that on each sortie a bomber dropped 15 50 kg (750 kg) bombs by day and 20 bombs (1 ton) by night, so that in the two large-scale attacks during the nights of 1/2 and 2/3 September 6 100 kg bombs were dropped in each sortie.

According to our own observations and records, and reports from 135th Regiment, the following list was compiled in reply to the query:

| <u>Date.</u> | <u>Time</u> | <u>No. of bombers or sorties</u> | <u>No. of bombs or tonnage dropped</u> | | <u>Target Area</u> | |
|--------------|-------------|--|--|-----|---|--------------|
| | | | | | <u>Width</u> | <u>Depth</u> |
| | | | | | <u>in kilometres</u> | |
| 31 Aug | 01.30 | 20 sorties | 400 | 20 | 12-15 | 8 |
| | 07.15 | 21 with 6 fighters) | | | 15 | 8 |
| | 10.30 | 21 with 8 fighters) | 900 | 45 | 15 | 8 |
| | 16.20 | 18 with 8 fighters) | | | 20 | 10 |
| | 21.10 | 10 sorties | 200 | 10 | 20 | 15 |
| | 23.35 | 12 " | 240 | 12 | 20 | 15 |
| 1 Sept | 01.20 | 12 sorties | 240 | 12 | 15 | 10 |
| | 03.50 | 15 sorties | 300 | 15 | 15 | 10 |
| | 07.00 | 18 with 10 fighters) | | | 12 | 8 |
| | 07.12 | 21 " 12 " | | | 15 | 8 |
| | 07.30 | 18 " 8 " | | | 12 | 8 |
| | 10.20 | 21 " 8 " | 1920 | 96 | 12-15 | 8-10 |
| | 11.55 | 18 " 6 " | | | 12-15 | 8-10 |
| | 17.25 | 20 " 10 " | | | 12-15 | 8-10 |
| | 17.35 | 12 " 6 " | | | 12-15 | 8-10 |
| | 20.30 | 6 sorties | 120 | 6 | 15 | 10 |
| | 21.00 | 6 " | 120 | 6 | 20 | 15 |
| | 21.40 | 8 " | 160 | 8 | 15 | 12 |
| 2 Sept | 00.00 | Heavy attacks with | | | Over the whole of the Africa Corps area, and part of the Motorised Corps adjoining it to the west. | |
| | 01.10 | about 200 - 250 | | | | |
| | 01.18 | sorties; 6 100 kg | 1200- | | | |
| | 02.25 | bombs dropped in | 1500 | 135 | | |
| | 02.32 | each sortie | | | | |
| | 04.10 | | | | | |
| | 06.40 | 18 with 12 fighters) | | | 12-15 | 10 approx. |
| | 06.55 | 12 " 6 " | | | 12-15 | 10 approx. |
| | 07.25 | 18 " 10 " | | | 12-15 | 10 approx. |
| | 09.26 | 18 " 8 " | | | 12-15 | 10 approx. |
| | 10.30 | 14 " 8 " | | | 12-15 | 10 approx. |
| | 12.17 | 18 " 12 " | | | 12-15 | 10 approx. |
| | 13.02 | 18 " 12 " | | | 12-15 | 10 approx. |
| | 13.58 | 12 " 6 " | 3480 | 174 | 12-15 | 10 approx. |
| | 14.02 | 18 " 10 " | | | 12-15 | 10 approx. |
| | 14.15 | 14 " 8 " | | | 12-15 | 10 approx. |
| | 15.20 | 15 " 6 " | | | 20 | 20 |
| | 16.00 | 18 " 12 " | | | 20 | 25 |
| | 16.34 | 15 " 8 " | | | 20 | 30 |
| | 16.38 | 12 " 6 " | | | 20 | 30 |
| | 17.45 | 12 " 4 " | | | 20 | 35 |
| | 21.45 | 18 sorties | 360 | 18 | 12 | 8 |
| 3 Sept | 00.00 | Incessant heavy | | | Over the whole of the Africa Corps area and part of the 90th Light Division and the Italian Armoured Division areas. | |
| | 03.55 | with about 250 - 300 sorties; 6 100 kg bombs dropped in each sortie | 1500- 1800 | 175 | | |
| | 06.40 | 18 with 8 fighters) | | | 15 | 10 |

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| <u>Date</u> | <u>Time</u> | <u>No. of bombers or sorties</u> | <u>No. of bombs or tonnage dropped</u> | <u>Target Area</u> | |
|-----------------|--|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------|
| | | | | <u>Width in kilometres</u> | <u>Depth</u> |
| 3 Sept contd | 07.04 | 18 with 10 fighters | 2955 148 | 15 | 10 |
| | 07.24 | 15 " 6 " | | 15 | 10 |
| | 09.30 | 18 " 8 " | | 12 | 8 |
| | 10.14 | 17 " 12 " | | 12 | 8 |
| | 10.52 | 18 " 12 " | | 12 | 8 |
| | 12.18 | 17 " 8 " | | 12 | 8 |
| | 13.26 | 18 " 10 " | | 12 | 8 |
| | 13.51 | 21 " 12 " | | 15 | 10 |
| | 15.40 | 16 " 8 " | | 15 | 12 |
| | 16.20 | 21 " 12 " | | 12 | 8 |
| 4 Sept | Only sporadic bomb- ing during the night. About 20 sorties. | | 400 20 | 12 | 8 |
| | 06.50 | 18 with 12 fighters | 810 40 | 12 | 10 |
| | 09.17 | 18 " 6 " | | 15 | 8 |
| | 10.40 | 18 " 6 " | | 15 | 8 |

TOTAL

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Attacks</u> | <u>No. of Bombs</u> | <u>Tonnage</u> |
|---------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|
| 31 August | 6 | 1,740 | 87 |
| 1 September | 12 | 2,860 | 143 |
| 2 September | 20 | 5,190 | 327 |
| 3 September | 12 | 4,600 | 313 |
| 4 September | 4 | 1,210 | 60 |
| <u>TOTAL:</u> | <u>64</u> | <u>15,600</u> | <u>930</u> |

These 15,600 bombs were distributed over a front averaging 12 - 15 km in length and 8 - 10 km in depth, i.e. approximately 100 bombs to the square kilometre were dropped in 5 days.

BURCHARDT

Lt. General and Divisional Commander.

Africa Corps Ia

HQ
8 September, 1942

Subject:- Panzer Army HQ Ia Report of 14.31 hours 5 September, 1942
Ref:- R.A.F. Operations
To:- Panzer Army Africa

1) Bombing Attacks from 30 August to 4 September, 1942

| | | <u>Bombs</u> |
|----------------------|---|--------------|
| Night 30/31 August: | Attacks in waves lasting 4 hours by about 50 aircraft | 400 |
| 31 August: | 4 attacks each by about 18 aircraft | 350 approx. |
| Night 31 Aug/1 Sept: | Attacks in waves lasting 4 hours by about 50 aircraft | 400 |
| 1 September: | 9 attacks each by about 18 aircraft | 800 approx. |
| Night 1/2 September: | Attacks in waves lasting 6 hours by about 200 a/c | 1,600 |
| 2 September: | 10 attacks each by about 18 a/c | 900 approx. |
| Night 2/3 September: | Attacks in waves lasting 6 hours by about 300 a/c | 2,400 |

RESTRICTEDBombing Attacks from 30 August to 4th September, 1942 (contd.)
Bombs

| | | |
|----------------------|--|---------------|
| 3 September: | 11 attacks each by about 18 a/c | 1,000 approx. |
| Night 3/4 September: | Attacks in waves lasting 4 hours by about 100 a/c | 800 |
| 4 September | 7 attacks each by about 18 a/c | 550 approx. |

Estimated Total Number of Bombs Dropped

- a) by day about 3,600)
b) by night about 5,600) = 9,200

2) R.A.F. Tacticsa) Daylight Attacks

Targets were reconnoitred by fighters and night photographic operations apparently with the intention of determining sectors containing a series of favourable targets (artillery positions, tank and transport concentrations etc.)

Very few attacks were made on the front line, even in support of attacks by ground troops. In general, a number of attacks were made on one sector.

Bombs were not dropped simultaneously by all the aircraft in the formation; instead an extensive area was covered by bombs being dropped one after the other.

Estimated weight of the bombs: 250 - 500 kg

The number of fighters providing escort at least equalled the number of bombers employed. However, fighter-bomber attacks were rarely carried out.

b) Night Attacks

Night reconnaissance aircraft with parachute flares were sent over first of all. Targets were reconnoitred by means of these and by magnesium flares which burnt on the ground and were difficult to extinguish.

Red flare signals were used to mark areas worth attacking and to call up the bombers. Routes of approach and departure were marked by "flare paths" (inexperienced aircrews ?).

Single parachute flares indicated the dropping area to the next formation to approach. Bombs were dropped singly or in closely-placed sticks, occasionally without illumination of the target area.

In one instance aerial mines appear to have been dropped as no external injuries to those who had been killed could be identified and an extremely large crater was caused.

It is probable that the same aircraft carried out several sorties. Apparently obsolete types were also used.

During the whole operation night photography was carried out with the aid of powerful photo-flash bombs which exploded immediately after being shot down.

RESTRICTED3) Effect of the Attacks on the Troops

In addition to the extensive material damage caused, the effect on morale was also great. The spirit of the troops was considerably depressed owing to the totally inadequate German fighter cover. Incessant night attacks in particular served to reduce the degree of readiness for action of both officers and men (no sleep, continual waiting for the next bombs, dispersal of units etc).

4) Approximate Casualties and Losses:

- a) Killed: 10 officers, 100 NCOs and men
- b) Wounded: 5 officers, 300 NCOs and men
- c) Vehicles - completely destroyed: 170 (including 1 tank)
- d) Vehicles - temporarily out of action: 270 (including 2 tanks)
- e) Guns - completely destroyed: 8 (over 2 cm), including 1 predictor
- f) Guns - temporarily out of action: 12 (over 2 cm)

5) Necessary Measures for Defence:

- a) By Day: There must be a considerable increase in German fighter operations. More use must be made of heavy A.A. batteries; the range of light A.A. is inadequate.

By Night: Night fighters must be employed. Light A.A. and machine gun fire only forced the enemy bombers to increase altitude, and no aircraft were shot down. Of particular importance: Airfields must be neutralised (delayed action bombs).

von Vaerst
Major General

C-in-C South
Operations Staff Ia
Top Secret
Report No. 2670/42

Battle HQ
8 September, 1942

To:- Antonius 4 for C-in-C Panzer Army

- 1) The Duce is abiding by his order to speed up supplies to North Africa. Reports put out by the enemy are regarded as propaganda and an effort to cause dissension.
- 2) An urgent request was made for the neutralisation of Malta. Further measures to increase security for Mediterranean supply transport are being put into effect.
- 3) The formation of mixed Italian and German motorised units was regarded by the Duce as particularly effective and received his approval.
- 4) Will fly to Headquarters today.

Kesselring
Antonius I
1026 Top Secret.

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Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
8 September 1942
21.35

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Department

Daily Report of 8 September, 1942

- 1) Enemy situation unchanged.
- 2) Lively artillery activity on both sides on southern sector; usual artillery activity on northern sector.
- 3) 3 ships with a total cargo of approximately 2,500 tons of fuel, 1,100 tons of ammunition and other supplies arrived at Tobruk and Benghazi.
- 4) Major General Kleemann, Commander 90th Light Division, was wounded as a result of driving over a mine.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
9 September, 1942
21.20

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Department

Daily Report of 9 September, 1942

- 1) Enemy situation unchanged.
- 2) Usual artillery and patrol activity on both sides and slight enemy air activity along the entire front.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
10 September,
18.30To:- O.K.H. General Staff of the Army, Organisation Department
through German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome

Ref:- Organisation Staff (I) Report No. 3743 Top Secret

In view of the great British superiority in infantry, Panzer Army HQ requests that when 164th Light Division is reorganised into 3 Infantry Regiments, each regiment consist of 3 battalions.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
10 September, 1942
22.47

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Department

Daily Report of 10 September, 1942

- 1) Enemy situation unchanged.
- 2) Artillery harassing fire of varying strength, normal patrol activity and slight enemy air activity along the entire front.

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- 3) During the period 30 August - 9 September a total of 170 enemy tanks and armoured cars were destroyed. This includes the numbers given in the Daily Report of 6 September.

4) Serviceable Tanks:

| | |
|------------|--------------------------------|
| a) German: | 19 Pzkw II |
| | 66 Pzkw III |
| | 66 Pzkw III (Special) |
| | 7 Pzkw IV |
| | 17 Pzkw IV (Special) |
| | <u>4</u> armoured command cars |

Total: 179

| | |
|-------------|------------------|
| b) Italian: | 208 Mark M |
| | <u>19</u> Mark L |

Total 227

No. 1976 Top Secret

C-in-C Panzer Army Africa
Ia No. 111/42 Top Secret

Army Battle HQ
11 September, 1942

- To:- 1) O.K.W., Armed Forces Operational Staff
to be passed to General Jodl
- 2) O.K.H. General Staff of the Army
to be passed to General Halder

I report on the situation of the Army:

1) The offensive which was discontinued owing to the absence of supplies of fuel and ammunition promised by Comando Supremo has resulted in the capture of valuable ground which constitutes a threat to the British southern flank and a basis for any attacks which may be made at a later date. The extensive British minefields in this area will be used within the framework of German defence.

2) The German troops once again demonstrated their superiority in the recent fighting. The enemy lost 170 tanks and armoured cars while German tank losses were slight. The considerable German losses in men and vehicles are due to the great superiority of the British artillery and R.A.F. I would like to make the following comments regarding British air superiority: German fighters are too weak numerically to be able to attack the British fighter escort as well as the powerfully armed bomber formations. The latter can therefore drop their bomb loads unmolested. According to British reports, approximately 1,300 tons of bombs were dropped on ground forces during the period 31 August - 6 September.

Reinforcement of the Luftwaffe, which is at present confronted by a greatly superior air force, is therefore absolutely essential. This reinforcement must consist primarily of fighters, but bombers must also be included so that large-scale reprisal attacks may be carried out. I can therefore support similar proposals made by Field Marshal Kesselring only to a certain extent.

3. The Italian troops have failed once again, just as they did during the last offensive. The reasons for this are as follows:

The Italian Command is not equal to the requirements of mobile desert warfare, which at times entails making fresh decisions at a

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moments' notice and then putting them into effect immediately. The training of the Italian formations is below the standard required for modern warfare. For example, units brought up to a division to replace its lost battalions fired for the first time at the front. Officers who had been out of the service since the end of World War I were sent up as battalion commanders. Owing to their armament, Italian formations are not capable of withstanding British attacks without German assistance. In addition to the well-known technical deficiencies of the Italian tanks - range too limited and engines too weak - the artillery in particular with its low rate of mobility and inadequate ranges (6 to a maximum of 8 km) is completely inferior to the excellent British artillery. Insufficient equipment with anti-tanks weapons also gives the Italian soldier a feeling of inferiority.

The Italian soldiers receive insufficient supplies. The troops have no field kitchens and rations are small. The fundamentally unassuming and very easily contented Italian soldiers therefore often come to their German comrades to ask for something to eat and drink. The basic differentiation in officers' and O.R.s' rations has an unfavourable effect on the morale of the men.

Experience has shown that Italian formations must have German stiffening units even for defensive operations. The Italian soldier is not equal to the bayonet charges of the British infantry. He has not the nerve to hold on when enemy tanks have broken through. Artillery bombardment and repeated enemy bombing attacks quickly wear down his will to resist. Thus the Italian soldier can hold fast in defensive actions only with German support, while in offensive operations the German soldier bears the entire burden of the fighting.

4) According to the latest information, the Eighth Army has 1 Armoured and 5 Infantry Divisions in the front line and a further 2 Armoured and 2 Infantry Divisions in reserve in the battle area. Strength at the front has therefore increased by 1 Infantry and 1 Armoured Division. Operational formations in the Nile Delta number 1 Armoured and 2 Infantry Divisions. The enemy thus enjoys considerable superiority. The possibility of the enemy launching an offensive in the immediate future (perhaps in October) must be taken into account. In view of the German forces available and the low fighting value of Italian troops, an operation of this type could not be effectively opposed. It is therefore absolutely essential that 22nd Airborne Division be brought over as quickly as possible during the month of September. It is planned to put the division into the southern sector of the front so that the fast-moving units now there may be withdrawn for mobile operations and to strengthen the defensive potential of the Italian troops. To bring over more Italian troops would merely burden supply routes and is therefore not advisable.

5) The supply situation of the Army is extremely acute as the requirements of the German troops of the Panzer Army have been consistently put aside in favour of those of the Italian Armed Forces and the Luftwaffe. This critical situation is affecting food as well as fuel and ammunition. Thus, the bread ration had to be halved and the allocation of supplementary rations stopped. This resulted in the troops becoming undernourished and a high rate of sickness. The supply question therefore presents a particularly serious problem which must be solved by the employment of all available shipping and air transport if the Panzer Army is to maintain the African theatre of operations for any length of time. Proposals regarding this subject have been repeatedly submitted. The following is a summary of their context:

- a) 30,000 tons of supplies must be sent in September and (after 22nd Airborne Division has arrived) 35,000 tons as from October.
This includes the 8 ammunition issues, 30 Fuel VS and 30 daily food issues which I consider necessary as reserve stocks.

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- b) Reinforcements amounting to approximately 5,200 men, 2,000 vehicles and 70 field guns which have been assembled in Italy for some time must be sent over, as must the reinforcements numbering approximately 6,000 men and 1,200 vehicles (including 120 tanks) still in Germany.
 - c) 17,000 vacancies in establishment must be filled and approximately 17,000 men must be sent over so that troops with more than 12 months service in Africa may be transferred in accordance with O.K.H. orders.
- 6) I summarise further measures which I consider necessary to the successful conduct of operations in Africa as follows:
- a) The Luftwaffe must be reinforced with fighter and bomber formations.
 - b) 22nd Airborne Division must be brought over before the end of September.
 - c) The supply and personnel situations must be assured as proposed in para. 5.

I am aware that, in view of the strategic air and sea situation in the Mediterranean, great efforts will have to be made to assure German supply in Africa at all times. However, unless these conditions are fulfilled, the German troops who are bearing the main burden of the fighting in Africa will not be able to maintain this theatre of operations against the best troops of the British Empire for any length of time.

Signed: The C-in-C
Rommel
Field Marshal

C-in-C Panzer Army Africa

Army Battle HQ
11 September, 1942
15.50

To:- German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome
General von Rintelen

Subject:- Report from Ia to German General in Rome No. 2475/42
Top Secret of 10 September, 1942 (not available)

My views on the above report are as follows:

- 1) As reported, the actual strength of Italian troops subordinated to Panzer Army amounts to 48,000 men. According to Comando Supremo, Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya should therefore have approximately a further 90,000 men under its command. This figure appears to be extraordinarily high as, apart from the I.A.F. and Italian Navy (at most 10 - 15,000 men), there is only one operational formation and this consists of one half of the Pistoia Division (about 3 - 4,000 men).
- 2) It is a fact that during the month of August the following supplies were sent to Benghazi and Tobruk:

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| a) | for German troops of the Panzer Army: | 8,470 tons |
| b) | for the Luftwaffe: | 8,447 tons |
| c) | for Italian troops: | 25,672 tons |

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A fantastic disproportion still exists even if 800 tons for the civilian population, 945 tons of food for German troops and a considerable amount of road and port construction materials are deducted from the total supply tonnage received by the Italians. The critical Panzer Army supply situation arose as a result of the constantly inadequate amounts of supplies dispatched. In the first 7 months of 1942 107,000 tons of supplies were sent to Panzer Army, i.e. an approximate monthly average of 15,000 tons, which represents one half of requirements.

3. The Comando Supremo statement of 2 September 1942, according to which 524 vehicles were to be sent over for Italian troops and only 162 for German troops, was passed on to this headquarters in written form by a staff officer by order of Marshal Cavallero and will be forwarded by signal.

4) The critical Panzer Army supply situation still exists. Army has already been compelled to reduce the bread ration by half owing to the absence of flour supplies from Italy. No supplementary rations can be issued. The rate of sickness is extremely high and is largely due to undernourishment. For example, in one infantry regiment of 164th Light Division it amounts to over 1,000 men. Fuel stocks will permit only current supply to be carried out for a limited period and motorised formations cannot carry out movements on any appreciable scale. The ammunition situation is also very acute. All available sea and air transport must be employed to keep up a constant flow of supplies essential to life and the conduct of operations to 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, as otherwise it will no longer be possible to maintain successfully this theatre of operations and, in the event of a British offensive, the troops will sooner or later suffer the fate of the defenders of Halfaya.

Rommel
Field Marshal
No. 110/42 Top Secret

Panzer Army Africa

Army Battle Headquarters
12 September, 1942
22.48 hours

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Department

Daily Report for 12 September, 1942

- 1) Enemy situation unchanged.
- 2) Usual artillery and patrol activity and slight enemy air activity along the entire front.
- 3) The Duce has agreed to the Panzer Army proposal to mix German and Italian formations down to battalion strength when operating at the front.
- 4) According to calculations made from 30 August to 10 September, enemy and German-Italian artillery ammunition expenditure is in a ratio of 10 : 1. It should not be forgotten that the Germans have used a great deal of captured British ammunition, without which the ratio would have been even more unfavourable.
- 5) The hospital ship "Arno" was sunk off Tobruk by a torpedo-bomber during the night 9/10 September. There were no casualties aboard, and no losses were caused.

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C-in-C Panzer Army

Army Battle HQ
13 September, 1942
17.07 hours

To:- 1) 90th Light Division
2) X Corps
3) Ramcke Brigade
4) XX Corps

1) The situation necessitates the speedy transfer of 90th Light Division to the new area east of el Daba. This movement will begin immediately. Times of departure to be reported by units.

2) Trieste Division will also be withdrawn and will be temporarily at the disposal of XX Corps until the arrival of Pavia Division.

3) X Corps will carry out the re-organisation ordered by me immediately. Centre points of battalion sectors:

| | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1 battalion Folgore | 121 right 5 |
| 1 battalion " | 124 right 5.5 |
| 1 battalion Ramcke | 123 right 1.5 |
| 1 battalion Brescia | 120 right 0 |
| 1 battalion " | 122 left 2.5 |
| 1 battalion " | 118.5 left 3.5 |
| 1 battalion Ramcke | 119 left 6 |

The object of the re-organisation is dispersal in breadth and depth to reduce losses. X Corps will report on progress. Folgore battalions released as a result of the re-organisation will be placed at the disposal of their division.

4. 2 battalions of 90th Light Division will remain in position until relieved by 2 battalions of Folgore Division.

Panzer Army Ia

Army Battle HQ
13 September, 1942
18.45 hours

To:- 1) XX Corps
2) Africa Corps

The relief and transfer of the Littorio Armoured Division will be arranged in conjunction with Africa Corps in such a way that the entire Littorio Division will have moved into the new area by the evening of 16 September and will be well dug in and completely ready for defence by the evening of 19 September.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
13 September, 1942
21.55 hours

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Department

Daily Report for 13 September, 1942

- 1) Enemy situation unchanged.
- 2) In general, the day passed quietly.
- 3) The supply situation has improved slightly.
Total stocks in Africa:

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- a) Fuel for 16 days
- b) 3.5 ammunition issues.

Exceptions: 1.1 issues for 5 cm anti-tank guns,
1.2 issues for 21 cm mortars.

- c) 25 daily food issues.

O.C. Army L. of C. Area
Report No. 1989/42 Secret

HQ
14 September, 1942

To:- Panzer Army HQ, Operations Staff

Subject: Battle report on the attempted British landing repulsed
at Tobruk during the night 13/14 September, 1942

I. By order of O.C. Army L. of C. Area, Major General Deindl, the
following elements of the three services were used:

- 1) Directly subordinate to O.C. Army L. of C. Area:
 - a) Staff O.C. Army L. of C. Area with Secret Field
Police and 613th Forward Security Company (motorised)
 - b) 2 companies of Local Defence Battalion Africa (third
company at Mersa Matruh),
 - c) 909th Supply Detachment (motorised),

totalling approximately 35 officers and 680 NCOs and men.
- 2) All local Army units in Tobruk totalling about 40 officers
and 1,400 men under the command of O.C. Supply Staff Tobruk,
Major Hardt.
- 3) All Luftwaffe units in Tobruk totalling about 20 officers
and 292 men under the command of the senior Luftwaffe officer,
Major Schewe.
- 4) A.A. Group Tobruk under the command of Major Hartmann.
- 5) Land-based naval units totalling about 2 officers and
25 men under the command of Lt. Commander Meixner.

According to a pre-arranged plan and upon issue of the code-
word "landing alert", most of the formations subordinate to Major
Hardt were to be put into the north-west defence sector from the
coast north of Tobruk to the Via Balbia west of Tobruk in the event
of an enemy airborne or seaborne landing. The other formations
were to assemble at their alarm stations and remain at the disposal
of O.C. Army L. of C. Area.

II. According to a report from A.A. Group, an attack by 178 twin-engined
and four-engined aircraft was made on Tobruk during the night 13/14
September from 20.40 to 03.30 hours. As the air attack was
carried out with great intensity from the beginning, Major General
Deindl in the secondary H.Q. O.C. L. of C. Area 20 km west of Tobruk
issued the following verbal order to the O.C. Local Defence Guard
Battalion Africa, Major Leibr, at 23.00 hours when the usual
duration of an air attack had been exceeded by 1 - 2 hours:

"The strength and long duration of the air attack is
suspicious. Sentries will be warned immediately to
keep a special watch for the pre-arranged Verey signals.
Officers on duty will report to their posts. Prepare
for landing alert."

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At 22.30 hours the O.C. ordered Captain Schulz Ingenohl to investigate and report on damage in the harbour area. At 00.20 hours Captain Ingenohl made the following report by telephone:

"Lt. Petzel (5/686th Supply Column Detachment) had informed him that the enemy had landed 3 km east of Tobruk. Artillery bursts as well as a large number of bombs had been identified in the town. Supply Staff Hardt had given the landing alert".

O.C. sent the following order to Supply Staff Tobruk through Cpt. Ingenohl:

"Enemy landing parties will be attacked immediately with all available forces. I am driving along Via Balbia towards Tobruk. Reports will reach me en route or in Tobruk. The Local Defence Guard Battalion has been alerted."

At the same time Major General Deindl issued the following order to 909th Supply Column Detachment through Cpt. Ingenohl:

"The enemy has landed at Tobruk. Reconnaissance will be carried out on the line el Gazala - Via Balbia. H.Q. 909th Supply Column Detachment will await my orders at kilometre 19 on Via Balbia."

At 00.30 hours O.C. informed subordinated formations of the "Landing alert" by telephone.

At 02.10 hours O.C. issued the following orders by telephone to Major Liehr (Local Defence Guard Battalion Africa):

"The enemy has landed at Tobruk. The Local Defence Guard Battalion will assemble at kilometre 19 on Via Balbia, leaving small defence groups on the coastal sector north of the tent encampment (about 20 km west of Tobruk). 1st Company with its own vehicles will move on ahead immediately to kilometre 19. I will drive to kilometre 19, and will later continue to Tobruk along Via Balbia."

At 02.30 hours Major Hardt sent the following verbal report through Sonderführer 1) Dr. Geiger:

"A.A. Battle Headquarters reports:

The British have made landing attempt 3 km east of Tobruk, presumably in the Bay of Marsa Umm er Sciausc. The Italian coastal battery has been overrun. No occurrences in Tobruk itself. All telephone communications have been disrupted. The Supply Staff and all members of the Local Defence Guard Battalion, Supply Staff and H.Q. O.C. Army L. of C. Area have a common headquarters. Major Hardt is present. All necessary defensive measures have been taken. A.A. guns have engaged landing craft."

At about 04.30 hours O.C. gave the following verbal order to Lt. Soldt, 1st Company Local Defence Guard Battalion Africa at kilometre 19:

- 1) -----
specialist, subject to military law but not holding substantive military rank.

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"Company will advance as quickly as possible to the road fork directly west of Tobruk. Further orders will be issued upon its arrival there. Runners will be left behind to bring up the rest of the battalion."

At 04.40 hours a report from Supply Staff Tobruk passed on through Cpt. Ingenohl was received on the Via Balbia:

"Report on enemy landing east of Tobruk incorrect. The enemy is supposed to have landed north of the port."

On the journey to Tobruk it appeared that light and heavy A.A. guns were putting down defensive fire east of the port and out at sea north of Tobruk. Isolated shell-bursts observed, presumably on hill north of the port. Reports and appearances indicated that the main enemy effort was being made on the peninsula north of Tobruk. The situation south-east of the port appeared less dangerous. At 05.30 hours Supply Staff reported that the Army signals centre was in danger. O.C. gave the following verbal order to the commander of 1st Company Local Defence Guard Battalion:

"1st Company will proceed to the Army signals centre immediately and attack the enemy landing party."

O.C. thereupon proceeded to Major Hardt's Battle Headquarters on the hill 1 km north of Tobruk harbour.

At 05.45 hours the situation appeared as follows:

An approximate total of 12 ships from 2 to 10 km out to sea. Two destroyers on fire 3 and 6 km out to sea. Landing craft were engaged by well-directed A.A. fire.

German and Italian units are moving forward towards the beach on the northern shore of the peninsula. Between 05.30 and 06.00 hours Army and Luftwaffe unit commanders sent in strength returns of their units to the Adjutant to H.Q. O.C. L. of C. Area at Headquarters in Tobruk.

Following a report of a landing north of the signals centre, the Adjutant dispatched 3rd Company Local Defence Guard Battalion and 1/60 Transportstandarte Speer to the Army signals centre at 05.50 hours.

At 06.00 hours the Adjutant sent No. 1 Company of 36th Army Rations Depot Tobruk to A.A. Battle Headquarters upon request of the latter. At about 06.00 hours O.C. made the following observations at Battle HQ:

Landing craft putting out to sea. The danger north of Tobruk appeared to be averted.

At 06.30 hours most of the enemy vessels were moving off on an easterly course.

At 07.00 hours Major Deindl requested the I.A.F. to carry out reconnaissance to ascertain the position of the enemy warships.

At 07.17 the Adjutant (at HQ) received the following report from the Construction Battalion:

"The British attack north-west of Tobruk has been repulsed. (5 landing craft). More than 75 prisoners and 5 landing craft were captured. The operational orders also fell into German hands."

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At 07.43 the O.C. issued the following order:

"Landing alert: with the exception of Local Defence Guard Battalion Africa, all units will stand down."

At the same time the following verbal order was issued to Major Hardt:

"All work in port to be resumed."

At 07.50 hours Major General Deindl issued the following verbal order to Commander Local Defence Guard Battalion Africa:

"After mopping up the beach, the battalion will assemble at the road fork 1 km west of Tobruk. An officer of the battalion will report to me at headquarters."

At about 08.30 hours a discussion with officers of the Italian Fortress Command concerning the allocation of mopping-up sectors was held at H.Q. O.C. L. of C. Area. German troops will take over the area north of the Via Balbia from Marsa abd el Crim to the west, while the Italians take over the rest of the fortress area.

Immediately afterwards the Local Defence Guard Battalion was issued with appropriate orders for carrying out mopping-up operations.

III. The following units took part in the action:

5th Company of 85th Construction Battalion with 778th Landing Company and 1 - 2 groups of Italians under the command of Cpt. Rippich on the Mengar el Auda point; these units destroyed or captured the enemy forces which landed here.

Army signals centre and 1st Company Local Defence Guard Battalion 1,800 metres north of the north-western tip of the harbour basin; these units forestalled an enemy attempt to land.

Elements of the A.A. Group under the command of Major Hartmann and Cpt. Nitzki with forwarding station personnel west of the bay 5 km south-east of Tobruk; these units neutralised the enemy force which landed here.

Local Defence Guard Battalion Africa operated against an enemy group cut off from the main force at Wadi el Caf west of Marsa el Auda

IV. Reports from O.C. L. of C. Area dispatched to Operations Staff and C-in-C South between 06.45 and 07.45 hours:

1st. Signal (could not be transmitted owing to breakdown).

About 12 enemy warships, including about 4 cruisers, off Tobruk harbour since early morning. Small enemy force landed. Request support by bombers and motorised formation.

2nd. Signal

Request for motorised formation cancelled. Landing failed; two enemy ships on fire.

3rd. Signal

Enemy warships proceeding on easterly course since 06.00 hours. Two burning ships left behind.

V. A.A. Group Tobruk under Major Hartmann took the main share of the fighting, then the O.C. Supply Staff Major Hardt and Cpt. Rippich. Of all the units taking part, most of the credit is due to the A.A. Group.

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According to an Italian report, a total of approximately 590 prisoners were taken. This figure includes men picked up when their ships were sunk.

Count of prisoners taken by German and Italian Land Forces:

| | |
|---|---|
| 5th Company 85th Construction Battalion | 55 prisoners (after subtracting 20 - 30 accredited to the Italians) |
| A.A. Group and Forwarding Station | 35 prisoners |
| Local Defence Guard Battalion Africa | 24 prisoners |
| Italian forces | 50 prisoners (approx.) |

Most of the prisoners were members of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines. A Canadian doctor was also captured. These men came primarily from Palestine and left Alexandria during the night 12/13 September.

Army formations captured the following material:

- 1 tug with 6 landing barges,
- 1 craft with 2 barges,
- 4 light machine guns,
- 1 mortar,
- 1 sub machine gun,
- 2 automatic rifles,
- A number of rifles,
- 1 wireless set with aerial,
- 1 field telephone,
- 2 Aldis lamps.

German (and Italian) Losses:

8 killed, 8 seriously injured, 11 slight injured. Six of the killed were patients of the 36th Field Hospital.

VI. Supplementary Reports:

- a) Regarding the Italian report that "German troops have at last gone into action", I wish to report that this statement is untrue, as may be easily perceived from the battle report submitted. Two reports from Major Hardt (Supply Staff) and Major Hartmann (A.A. Group) prove the contrary.
- b) Towards 06.00 hours at A.A. Battle HQ on the hill north of Tobruk, I requested Colonel Battaglia to leave his dugout for a discussion. Colonel Battaglia, who I knew only as O.C. Italian A.A. did not inform me that he was acting as O.C. Fortress for the Sector Commander, General Giannantoni, who had meanwhile been taken ill. I was not aware that Admiral Lombardi was in charge of defence against enemy landing operations in addition to his duties with the Navy and as port controller.

Deindl,
Major General
O.C. L. of C. Area

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Supply Staff Tobruk

In the Field,
14 September, 1942Subject: Battle Report on Attempted British Landing during the
Night 13/14 September, 1942

Reference: Letter of 14 September

To:- G.O.C. Rear Army Area Tobruk

At about 21.00 hours on 13 September a heavy British air attack developed over Tobruk and continued without respite until about 03.00 hours on 14 September. The operation was carried out by about 140 enemy aircraft which dropped approximately 600 bombs. This headquarters observed German A.A. shoot down 3 enemy aircraft; altogether, 7 aircraft were reported to have been shot down. A large number of the aircraft flew in from the sea and this indicated the presence of an aircraft-carrier.

At about 00.30 hours enemy warships also opened up on Tobruk and the surrounding area and, almost at the same time, green Verey lights were sent up east of Tobruk, whereupon a general landing alert was ordered. The control centre at the airfield informed me by telephone that a British landing party had come ashore 3 km east of Tobruk (allegedly in the bay of Marsa Umm es Sciause) and had overrun an Italian battery.

Most of the sector commanders reported their state of readiness for action to me at about 01.30 hours. Meanwhile green, red and white Verey lights and tracer ammunition were sent up at various points along the coast to the east, north and west of the port, so that no clear picture of the battle situation could be obtained. At about 03.00 hours Commander Sector IV reported to me that patrols which had been sent out had as yet had no contact with the enemy.

With the exception of those to the trunks exchange and to the Army signals centre, all telephone lines from the local exchange were out of action after 1 o'clock.

In so far as they were accessible and runners were available, I informed Sector Commanders to remain ready for action and to keep a special watch for green Verey lights and heavy infantry fire and to take independent action accordingly.

At about 03.30 hours I received two telephone calls, one shortly after the other, from the signals centre. I was informed that British warships had been sighted in the immediate vicinity of the coast (about 1,000 metres away) and were being picked up from time to time by our searchlight batteries. The enemy immediately fired on the searchlight batteries in the area north of Tobruk and on Marsa Mreira Bay. At the same time the look-outs I had posted reported green flares.

I immediately took 1 car, 1 small lorry and about 20 men, some of them Luftwaffe personnel, equipped with light arms and hand grenades and proceeded in the direction of Marsa Mreira Bay. I stopped at the battle headquarters of the Italian coastal artillery to obtain a picture of the entire situation. I could not fail to notice that the Italian sentries were extremely nervous and almost undisciplined.

I then observed 2 destroyers immediately they were picked up by our searchlight batteries. At times infantry and machine-gun fire could be heard in the west. I established contact with the nearest German troops (Luftgau Abt.) and posted the troops I had brought with me in positions of readiness.

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As dawn broke I was able to identify small craft out at sea which had apparently been lowered by the two destroyers, which had meanwhile been engaged by German A.A. and Italian artillery. Upon orders from General Deindl, I sent the 20 men I had brought with me under the command of a Luftwaffe NCO to engage the enemy troops who had landed about 800 metres away. One of the two destroyers was damaged, but with the assistance of the second, succeeded in escaping. The boats which had been lowered were engaged with machine guns and made for the two destroyers again. At about 09.00 hours the two destroyers were sunk. Altogether, I was able to identify 12 enemy warships including about 4 - 5 destroyers, one heavy cruiser and a torpedo-boat dispersed along about 10 kilometres of the coast.

One warship was set on fire by German aircraft. At about 07.00 hours a report from Cpt. Rippich, Commander 3rd. Sector, was received at Supply Staff Orderly Room. This stated that he had frustrated a British landing in Marsa abd el Krim Bay and had taken about 70 prisoners.

Reports so far received concerning German losses are as follows:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1) Engineer Landing Company | 3 seriously wounded, 2 slightly |
| 2) 5th Coy 85th Construction Battalion | 2 " " 2 " wounded |
| 3) 309th M.T. Repair Section | 1 killed 1 " " |

According to a report from the Field Hospital, a further 30 men were killed.

The casualties mentioned in 3) were definitely caused by British paratroops on the Via Balbia about 19 km east of Tobruk.

2./532 (?) captured a landing craft containing a secret order and an appeal to the Arab population. 2 light machine guns, 2 automatic rifles and a carbine were also captured.

At 08.00 hours General Deindl ordered all units, with the exception of the Local Defence Guard Battalion, to stand down. I passed this order on to subordinated units.

The panicky attitude and lack of leadership of the Italian troops caused considerable confusion in some sectors. I received a report that uncontrolled shooting was in progress between kilometre 10 and 15 east of Tobruk although the enemy forces had been identified. Definite directions regarding the conduct of Italian troops in the event of a landing alert being issued have yet to be laid down.

Sgd. Hardt

Commander 85th Construction Battalion

In the Field
14 September, 1942

Subject:- Alert during the Night 13/14 September, 1942

Reference:- Letter of 14 September, 1942

To:- G.O.C. L. of C. Area.

1) Air Raid Warning.

The air raid warning was given at about 21.00 hours. At first enemy aircraft dropped bombs in the vicinity of Tobruk harbour and

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airfield and in the area of P.Q. 85th Construction Battalion tent encampment between 23.00 and 24.00 hours. Several bombs fell in the immediate vicinity of the headquarters tent. In addition, the vicinity of the tent encampment and the area at the start of the Via Balba to El Adem (presumably on account of the Italian fuel dump located there) were brightly illuminated by a large number of parachute flares and a number of bombs were observed to have been dropped.

2) Landing Alert.

At about 01.00 hours 5th Company 85th Construction Battalion and 778th Engineer Landing Company observed enemy warships being engaged by Italian coastal artillery at Fort Peroni. After a lull lasting until about 04.00 hours 5th Company 85th Construction observed the first landing boats (about the size of German assault craft). The Company Commander, Cpt. Rippich, did everything possible to prevent the British troops landing, but in spite of this 80 - 100 British troops were put ashore. By encircling the enemy landing party (with the help of some men from 36th Field Hospital and about 5 Italian soldiers) 5th Company was able to mop up the enemy troops in its area between dawn and 07.00 hours. About 70 - 80 prisoners were taken, including a seriously wounded British Captain and a British Lieutenant. Some of the prisoners were handed over to the Italian headquarters at Fort Peroni while the rest were picked up by another German unit which arrived later. In addition, the British lost about 10 killed and 10 wounded. 5th Company 85th Construction Battalion captured the following material:

1 mortar, 2 machine guns, a number of rifles, a large amount of explosives, 5 landing craft (one with engine)

5th Company observed the sinking of a cruiser or destroyer which heavily bombarded its area from midnight until about 01.00 hours. According to a statement made by the captured Lieutenant, the enemy intended sending ashore more troops from the ship which had meanwhile been sunk.

Operations ended at 07.00 hours on 14 September, 1942

German Losses:

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| inflicted by enemy | 5th Company, | 3 seriously |
| landing party: | 85th Construction Battalion | wounded |
| | 778th Engineer | 2 seriously wounded |
| | Landing Coy. | 3 slightly wounded |

By order of the Supply Staff, the battalion sent the 2nd Company to Tobruk to be used for operations if required. 4th Company was held as reserve in readiness at the tent encampment.

The Construction Battalion's deficiency in not being equipped with machine guns once again made itself evident.

Sgd. Kaiser
Captain and Battalion Commander.

18th German Army Signals Centre

In the Field,
14 September, 1942

The Attempted British Landing and Counter-Measures
carried out by 18th German Army Signals Centre
during the night 13/14 September, 1942.

At first light the 3 enemy destroyers appeared in port-astern

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echelon formation off the bay 200 metres north of the Army Signals Centre and stood about 1 kilometre off the coast for about an hour until daybreak. There was another large destroyer further out to sea in a fog bank and a larger warship which put down a broadside near our line of sentries. A report was made by telephone to Supply Staff Tobruk.

From 03.45 hours a line of sentries numbering 1 officer and 12 men (13 rifles) covered the bay and the coastline to the north and east, while a party numbering 1 officer and 14 men (13 rifles and 1 machine gun 34) covered the western coastline 200 metres to the north-west. The remainder of the Signals Centre detachment maintained operations and later made preparations to burn secret documents if the necessity arose. Afterwards, the most important equipment at the Signals Centre was loaded on to German lorries.

Apart from an A.A. battery 1 kilometre south of the Signals Centre, no other German or Italian units were observed on either flank in the Signals Centre area.

At 04.45 hours enemy motor boats were sighted for the first time in the north and north-west, but owing to the darkness their progress could not be followed further. As it became light the first destroyer began to cover the second with a smoke screen, the latter remaining stationary and bombarding A.A. positions. Both warships then began to move along the coast putting down smoke screens. When, at 05.15 hours, 2 motor boats towing other craft appeared out of the fog bank opposite the left and right lines of sentries and attempted to land, the German troops opened fire. The motor boats turned back in face of this fire leaving two empty boats behind (some of the men were taken aboard the motor boat, others clung to the sides). On the way back to the fog bank the boats were subjected to effective rifle and machine gun fire.

At this moment the first Italian units and 1st Company Local Defence Guard Battalion Africa arrived.

Other reinforcements which arrived were no longer needed.

During the morning a German patrol searched along the coast for enemy troops cut off from their units.

No prisoners were taken and there were no German losses.

Sgd. Schröter
Lieutenant and
O.C. Signals Centre

A.A. Group Tobruk

Battle HQ
14 September, 1942

Battle Report for the Night 13/14 September, 1942

From 20.40 hours on 13 September until 03.30 hours on 14 September 178 enemy aircraft operating in waves attacked the town and port of Tobruk. Aircraft approaching the harbour area were impeded by well-aimed A.A. fire. As usual, the attack was concentrated, but was neutralised by appropriate allocation of targets to A.A. batteries. Altogether, 576 high explosive bombs and 22 sticks of incendiary bombs were dropped. Of these, only one stick of high explosive bombs fell in the harbour area and no damage was caused. Of the rest of the bombs, some fell far from protected targets and the majority were jettisoned owing to accurate A.A. fire.

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The following differences from all other night attacks were observed:

- 1) The duration of the operation (almost 7 hours without respite)
- 2) The particularly violent attacks on the A.A. batteries themselves, especially the "Grossbatterie" (battery group) on the headland. 20 sticks of bombs fell across this battery's position alone. In addition, aircraft shot up the "Grossbatterie" and a number of searchlights on the peninsula.

These tactics were apparently aimed at wearing down and putting A.A. units out of action from the very beginning, particularly the "Grossbatterie" (1st and 4th Batteries of 114th A.A. Regiment on the headland) which was of primary importance for employment later against shipping.

- 3) The extremely small number of flares used. This was apparently done so that the employment of landing forces should not be betrayed prematurely.

At 22.45 hours Lt. Grelli of the A.A. Group reported that small British forces had landed 3 kilometres east of the Group Battle HQ. All units were alerted and elements of the light batteries of the subordinated 914th A.A. Regiment covered the penetration area with 2 cm guns to deny the enemy access to the harbour at all costs and thereby forestall any possibility of destruction to shipping. Two 10-man patrols, one from Headquarters and the other from 4th Battery 914th Regiment, under the command of Cpt. Frintop, battery commander of 4th Battery 914th Regiment, succeeded in encircling and capturing a party of 35 British troops which had come ashore. In addition, the following material was captured: 2 medium lorries, 5 radios, 5 heavy machine guns, 1 carbine and about 10,000 rounds of ammunition.

At about 04.30 hours the enemy warships began a heavy bombardment, which covered the Group and Sub-Group Battle Headquarters and some of the A.A. positions. By means of radar equipment it was ascertained that there were 2 small and 1 medium warships off the headland. When searchlights definitely identified 1 cruiser and 2 destroyers, the heavy batteries opened fire at 05.25 hours. The first salvos fell across the warships causing large fires and damage, and the ships immediately put down a smoke screen. The cruiser and a burning destroyer moved off in direction "1" while the other destroyer received further hits. This warship stopped, began to list and was unable to move. One of the warships moving out to the open sea exploded and sank afterwards. The cruiser took aboard survivors from the crippled destroyer under cover of a smoke screen. This destroyer capsized at 07.58 hours and sank shortly after 08.00 hours. During the engagement the minimum range was 4.3 km and the maximum 11.4 km. The bombardment was carried out by 22 88mm guns using armour-piercing, percussion and time fuze shells.

Losses sustained by the A.A. Group were as follows:

2 killed, 4 seriously wounded and 2 slightly wounded.

A.A. Group inflicted the following losses on the enemy:

6 aircraft shot down (2 more probably shot down), one destroyer sunk, another destroyer seriously damaged and set on fire; explosion caused aboard a cruiser which was damaged.

The bridgehead was contained and 35 British troops were taken

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prisoner.
Lorries and signals equipment were captured.

Sgd. Erlemann
Lieutenant and Adjutant.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
14 September, 1942
01.38 hours

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Department

Daily Report for 14 September, 1942

- 1) Enemy situation unchanged.
- 2) During the night there was heavy artillery fire along the entire front and bombing attacks were made on Mersa Matruh and el Daba. Usual artillery and patrol activity on both sides during the day and extensive enemy air reconnaissance.
- 3) British forces which landed at Tobruk on the morning of 14 September were destroyed or taken prisoner at the cost of slight German losses. In this action 300 prisoners were taken and several landing craft, weapons and equipment captured.
Defensive operations were carried out by -
German troops under G.O.C. Rear Army Area and Italian formations in co-operation with the Navy and German A.A. The latter played a particularly distinguished role in the action. 3 destroyers and 2 escort vessels or landing craft were sunk off Tobruk by A.A. and coastal artillery.

According to captured documents, the enemy force had been ordered to destroy harbour installations and shipping in the port. Of the naval forces moving off eastwards from Tobruk, the following were sunk or damaged by German and Italian aircraft:

- 1 cruiser (5 - 6,000 tons), 1 destroyer and 2 escort vessels sunk,
 - 1 light cruiser (4,000 tons) and 1 destroyer badly damaged,
 - 3 4 other destroyers damaged.
- 4) Italian troops wiped out enemy sabotage parties at Benghazi and Barce. A number of prisoners were taken and several trucks and lorries were destroyed.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
14 September, 1942
03.20 hours

- To:-
- 1) German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces Rome for:
Comando Supremo,
O.K.W. Armed Forces Operational Staff,
O.K.H. General Staff of the Army, Operations Department.
 - 2) Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya - to be passed to Marshal Barbasetti by Italian Liaison Staff at Panzer Army HQ

Morning Report, 14 September, 1942.

- 1) Heavy artillery harassing fire along the entire front

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101.

during the night 13/14 September. Usual patrol activity by both sides.

- 2) In the evening enemy destroyers bombarded the coast in the el Daba area.
- 3) After a night raid lasting 7 hours by 178 bombers which dropped 576 high explosive bombs, the enemy attempted to make a landing at Tobruk. A.A. artillery is at present in action against 3 warships, two of which are on fire. According to reports so far received, the landing attempt has failed. Fast-moving German troops have been dispatched in the direction of Tobruk. Army Headquarters expects that landing attempts of this type will be repeated. Panzer Army requested the tactical subordination of all Italian troops in and east of Tobruk for the purpose of unified defence.
- 4) Bombers carried out night attacks on Mersa Matruh and el Daba.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
14 September, 1942
08.46 hours

To:- G.O.C. Rear Army Area

Distribution:-

- 1) C-in-C South
- 2) Italian Liaison Staff at Hq Panzer Army Africa for Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya
- 3) Panzer Army Q.M.G.

G.O.C. Rear Army Area is responsible for ensuring that German troops at Tobruk maintain a constant state of defensive preparedness. For this purpose all Panzer Army troops located in the Tobruk area will be subordinate to him. Arrangements will be made for the closest co-operation with A.A. and naval units stationed at Tobruk with a view to their inclusion in the defence system. Similar arrangements will also be made with the Italian area commander. It is of primary importance that the Sidi Daud and harbour areas in particular be constantly under the protection of German units (supply units too) which may be transferred there. Moreover, picquets will be set up on the roads from Tobruk to Bardia, El Adem and Gazala. All troops stationed in the Tobruk area must be accommodated in their own particular defence sectors (fortifications etc.). The defence plan will be submitted to Army HQ as soon as possible.

A.A. Group Tobruk

Battle HQ
15 September, 1942

Ref:- G.O.C. Rear Army Area 556 of 15 September, 1942

To:- G.O.C. Rear Army Area 556,
Panzer Army Africa

Concerning the Italian report stating that German troops had at last participated in the action, A.A. Group Tobruk reports that German A.A. units were the first to open fire on enemy aircraft and warships and were not supported in these operations by the Italians until later. The landing of enemy troops was reported to A.A. Group by Lt. Grelli from Italian A.A. Headquarters at 22.45 hours and at the same time a request was made for 200 men to be made available to contain the bridgehead. As all-units were

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engaged on anti-aircraft activities and Headquarters personnel were moving ammunition, this request had to be declined. Italian A.A. Headquarters was referred to the appropriate German authorities. However, A.A. Group immediately deployed the 2 cm artillery sections located in the port area to cover Tobruk harbour against the enemy troops. At about 05.00 hours the 4th Section of 3rd Battery 914th Regiment came under machine gun fire and opened up on the enemy with their 2 cm guns. The enemy thereupon withdrew and was attacked by elements of Headquarters personnel and of 4th Battery 914th Regiment under the command of Cpt. Frintrap. These forces encircled the enemy group and took 35 prisoners.

Sgd. Erlemann
Lieutenant and Adjutant

German General Rome Ia
No. 2545 - Top Secret

15 September, 1942
11.15 hours

To:- Panzer Army HQ

O.K.W. has suggested to Comando Supremo that German and Italian formations on Crete also be mixed with a view to increasing defensive preparedness. In order to provide a basis for putting this proposal into effect, O.K.W. requires a report on Panzer Army experience regarding the recently effected mixing of formations in the Alamein position. It is therefore requested that detailed information be supplied regarding the manner in which Panzer Army effected this mixing of formations and to which points particular attention should be paid.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
15 September, 1942
22.23 hours

Daily Report for 15 September, 1942

- 1) Enemy situation unchanged.
- 2) Usual artillery and patrol activity on both sides along the entire front.
- 3) The number of prisoners taken when the British landing at Tobruk was broken up has increased to 580.

German losses: 8 killed, 19 wounded. Six wounded men in a field hospital tent are included in the killed.

Italian losses were slight; the exact number is not known.

Supply Staff Tobruk

In the Field,
16 September, 1942

Subject:- Participation in Operations on 14 September

Reference:- Letter of 15 September

To:- G.O.C. Rear Army Area 556 - Tobruk

The Italian report stating that participation by German units in the operations of 14 September came too late may be absolutely refuted as far as the western sector is concerned. The British landing operation commenced after 04.00 hours. German troops had already been occupying defensive positions in

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Sectors II, III and IV from the time the landing alert was given. According to reports received, the patrols which were sent out had absolutely no contact with the enemy until 04.00 hours. Until this time, however, Italian troops kept up uncontrolled fire in the area, endangering the German patrols. The flare signals laid down by the Italians were not used in the prescribed manner. As a result of incorrect flare signals being sent up, the Italian troops became panicky and from 01.00 hours fired blindly to the west as well as to the east of Tobruk.

Between 02.00 and 03.00 hours searchlights picked out 2 British destroyers off Sectors III and IV about 1,000 metres from the coast. Patrols sent out by Lt. von Rosenstiel, O.C. IV Sector, discovered that the Italian picquet in the eastern area of the sector had not posted any sentries at all and was not to be found, so that the forward area of the whole sector was occupied by German troops only. In Sector III, O.C. Cpt. Rippich, the only Italian troops in the forward area during the alert period were one field gun crew and one machine gun crew, the rest of the sector being held by German troops only. The general situation indicated that the British would make their main landings in sectors III and IV. From 03.30 hours I was on Hill 42 in the centre of Sector IV and observed Italian Naval and A.A. personnel posted as sentries on Hills 40 and 42. The distance to the coast from the hills amounted to about 800 metres.

When the British commenced their landing attempt at dawn I sent the battle group numbering 20 men which I had brought with me to the coastal sector, which 5 British landing craft lowered by the two destroyers were approaching. The above mentioned Italian troops made no preparations for action. When the group sent forward by me had already reached the coast, General Deindl, who had meanwhile arrived on the hill, ordered the Italian commanders to send their available forces forward as well to reinforce the Germans. Thereupon about 25 men with one machine gun advanced in the direction of the coast in extended order. The Italians took up positions about 200 metres from the coast and opened fire with the machine gun on the landing craft, which had meanwhile approached within 100 metres of the coast. Lt. Rosenstiel, who was located east of the British landing point, attempted to bring a group further west, nearer the intended landing area, but this movement was rendered impossible by the Italian machine gun fire, which caused the British landing craft to turn about and proceed in the direction of the two destroyers.

10 British landing craft succeeded in reaching the shore in Sector III. About 100 men from these boats attacked in "85th Bay" (a bay between Marsa el Auda and Marsa Abd el Krim) and succeeded in reaching the Field Hospital. Although the main action was now developing in this sector, the only appreciable Italian support given to the German forces numbering about 150 men consisted of the above mentioned one field gun crew and one machine gun crew.

An NCO sent by the Sector Commander to the Army Rations Depot by way of Fort Perone to bring up reinforcements encountered about 10 Italians with a machine gun and under the command of an officer fleeing towards the rear in the vicinity of Fort Perone.

He questioned the officer and learnt from his statements that they had fled from Marsa el Auda Bay.

About 30 prisoners were taken (4 British soldiers were killed). Of these, the Sector Commander handed over about 40 to the Italians for transfer to the rear so that German strength should not be reduced. About 20 wounded were moved to the Field Hospital with 7 men of the medical services. 25 prisoners were handed over to G.O.C. Army L. of C. Area.

Shortly before leaving my battle headquarters for Tobruk just after 03.00 hours I encountered about 15 Carabinieri, one of whom spoke German, and invited them to drive in with me. The leader expressed his willingness, but when I arrived at the arranged assembly point they had all disappeared.

Sgd. Hardt

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
16 September, 1942
06.35 hours

To:- German General at HQ Italian Armed Forces, Rome
Subject:- Signal from Ia to above No. 2545 Top Secret of
15 September, 1942

Practical experience with mixed German-Italian formations has so far been gained only in the field of defence. In these instances a German and Italian division usually operate mixed together, battalion or regimental formations remaining intact. The headquarters located near one another are instructed to co-operate and issue orders to their troops (from time to time). It is important that Italian formations should operate in close contact with German troops. Italian commanders experience difficulty in reaching decisions, but on the other hand are accustomed to receiving exact and detailed orders. The German headquarters instructed to co-operate with the Italians should therefore also issue detailed orders for the employment of Italian battalions etc. The inadequate equipment of Italian formations with signals equipment has been rectified by the employment of German signals units. Supply of mixed formations will be carried out separately.

Panzer Army Ia

Army Battle HQ
16 September, 1942
20.00 hours

To:- 1) Africa Corps
2) 90th Light Division
3) Q.M.G. Panzer Army
and Italian Liaison Staff at HQ Panzer Army

1) 33rd First Line Reinforcement Battalion (in area 90 km west of Mersa Matruh), 200th First Line Reinforcement Battalion (east of Mersa Matruh) and the Draft Conducting Battalion of 90th Light Division (east of el Daba) will be tactically subordinated to Army as Gruppe Hain under the command of Major Hain, O.C. 90th Light Division Draft Conducting Battalion, and will be transferred with all units and vehicles to upper (Fort Sollum) and lower (harbour area) Sollum. The Italian garrison at Sollum (12th Naval Artillery Battery - 7.6 cm guns) will be subordinate to Gruppe Hain.

2) Tasks allocated to Gruppe Hain:

- a) to guard the coast at upper and lower Sollum against enemy landing attempts,
- b) to guard the Sollum "serpentine" (tracks across plateau) against enemy sabotage raids (also from the air by paratroops) and defence against enemy land attacks.

3) Accommodation - in the barracks at upper Sollum if possible.

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- 4) Q.M.G. will arrange for the removal of empty M.T. and for supply.
- 5) Signals communication to Army will be made through the Bardia teleprinter centre (house at meeting-point of three roads) by arrangement with Lt. Posse, local exchange Mersa Matruh.
- 6) Major Hain will report the time of arrival of his group and when a state of defensive preparedness has been established. A sketch map of defences with the proposed plan of action will be submitted to Army.

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
16 September, 1942
22.37 hours

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Department

Daily Report for 16 September, 1942

- 1) Enemy tanks and infantry felt their way forward on the southern sector. Usual artillery harassing fire along the rest of the front.
- 2) Usual enemy air activity.
- 3) Losses sustained by the Italians in defensive operations during the attempted British landing at Tobruk:

54 killed, 29 wounded.

No. 7338 - Secret

Panzer Army Ia

Army Battle HQ
17 September, 1942
20.34 hours

To:- Commander Pavia Division

Distribution: Artillery Commander 104
580th Reconnaissance Unit
Q.M.G. Panzer Army HQ
Italian Liaison Staff at Panzer Army HQ (written)

- 1) The commander of Pavia Division is responsible for the defence of Mersa Matruh fortress. The Mersa Matruh fortress defence area extends from Ras el Kenayis (place included) to Sidi Barrani (town not included). Any enemy landings in this area will be prevented.
- 2) All Italian and German troops located in the Mersa Matruh area will be subordinate to the commander of Pavia Division in his capacity of Fortress Commander.
- 3) Commander Pavia Division will prepare the defence of the Mersa Matruh fortress area and will submit the defence plan to Army HQ. In making these preparations it should be remembered that 580th Reconnaissance Unit is only temporarily based in the Mersa Matruh area.
- 4) Gruppe Hain (HQ Upper Sollum) will carry out defensive operations against enemy landings in the Sidi Barrani - Sollum area (both towns included). This formation will establish contact with Pavia Division.

No. 7414

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Panzer Army Ia

Army Battle HQ
17 September, 1942
20.38 hours

To:- 90th Light Division for Gruppe Hain

Copy:- Italian Liaison Staff at Panzer Army HQ

1) The following instructions were issued extending Ia order dated 16 September 1942 at 20.00 hours.

As commander of Gruppe Hain, Major Hain is responsible for the defence of the Sollum - Sidi Barrani area (both towns included) against enemy landings.

2) In addition to the 12th Naval Artillery Battery (7.6 cm) at Sollum, the following Italian units will be subordinate to Gruppe Hain for this purpose:

a) Eight 2 cm A.A. guns situated between Sollum and Sidi Barrani,

b) The Sidi Barrani garrison consisting of:

676th Carabinieri Platoon (motorised)
2nd Battalion 350th Infantry Regiment (one company)
94th Light A.A. Battery (2 cm)
519th Light A.A. Battery (2 cm)

3) Gruppe Hain will establish contact with Fortress Commander Mersa Matruh.

4) The Italian Liaison Staff is requested to:

a) inform Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya,

b) to arrange for the officers commanding the Italian units mentioned in sections a) and b) of para 2 to contact Major Hain at Upper Sollum.

7412 - Secret

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
17 September, 1942
23.10 hours

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Department

Daily Report for 17 September, 1942

1) Enemy situation unchanged.

2) In General, the day passed quietly.

3) During the afternoon an attack was made on the Italian garrison at Gialo Oasis. According to the latest report, British troops may capture the oasis.

C-in-C South and Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya have been requested to employ all available aircraft to destroy the enemy forces in the Gialo area.

4) A German and an Italian Reconnaissance Unit were transferred to Siwa to reinforce the Italian garrison.

5) On 16 September about 12.00 hours British aircraft flying at 1,000 metres dropped several bombs on a clearly marked German-

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Italian field hospital at Mersa Matruh. No casualties resulted.

- 6) Lt. General von Thoma took over command of the German Africa Corps in place of General Nehring who has been wounded.

No. 7444 - Secret

(from German translation of Italian Document)

HQ Pavia Infantry Division

Order No. 3060 - Secret

In the Field,
18 September, 1942

Subject:- Coastal defence between Ras el Kanays (place included) and Sidi Barrani (excluding town)

To:- Comando Supremo Liaison Staff in North Africa
and for the information of HQ Panzer Army

According to the signal received yesterday, a copy of which I enclose, HQ Panzer Army has allotted the responsibility for the defence of Mersa Matruh fortress and the adjoining coastline between Ras el Kanays (place included) and Sidi Barrani (excluding town) to Pavia Division. It has laid down the principle of subordinating all Italian and German units located in Mersa Matruh and the above-mentioned coastal area to this headquarters.

I should like to make the following comments -

- 1) In view of

- the length of the coastline to be defended,
- the present weakness of the division,
- the necessity of posting permanent parties to be supported by mobile formations along the entire coastline so that the problem of preventing any enemy landing may be solved -

I consider it essential that the division be re-organised and deficiencies made good as quickly as possible. The following represent the minimum requirements which should be provided immediately:

- a) Units missing from Establishment:

1 battalion complete in personnel and weapons for 27th Infantry Regiment,
2 companies complete in personnel and weapons for 28th Infantry Regiment,
4 draft conducting companies for 28th Infantry Regiment,
1 10 cm howitzer battery and 3 7.5 cm batteries complete in personnel and equipment,
Of the three missing 7.5 cm batteries, two (11th and 12th) are in the process of formation at El Abiar.

- b) Communication Equipment:

Telephone material:

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Exchanges for 10 lines | 10 |
| " " 6 " | 18 |
| Telephones - G.A. | 12 |
| Telephone cable for artillery | 280 kilometres |
| 1.5 T 10 batteries | 200 |
| Insulating tape | 8 kilogrammes |

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Radio Equipment:

| | |
|---|----|
| Wireless stations R F 3 C (complete with batteries) | 12 |
| " " R 4 or R 4 A | 3 |
| Tool-box for radio mechanic | 1 |

Personnel:

1 NCO radio mechanic
 15 NCOs and subordinate commanders to
 take charge of wireless stations
 45 radio operators

c) Other Equipment:

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 50 pairs field glasses) | } so that at least the most important coastal observation posts and mobile formations can be equipped. |
| 120 Verrey pistols | |
| 50 pocket compasses | |

15,000 flares for Verrey pistols (in the three colours).

d) Vehicles:

10 cars (one for each of the battalion and company
commanders engaged on coastal defence)
 16 light trucks (2 each for companies engaged on
coastal defence)
 4 heavy trucks (2 each for battalion headquarters
engaged on coastal defence)
 Two-seater motor-cycles, if possible some with rests
for 32 light machine gun (one for each
platoon engaged on coastal defence)
 24 Motor-cycles (2 for each company and 4 for each
battalion)

e) Maps: 1 : 100,000 German issue (Egypt - north-west coast):

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Sidi Barrani (Special issue VI - 1941) | } 50 copies of each |
| Mersa Matruh (" VI - 1941) | |
| Ras el Kanays (" V - 1941) | |
| El Daba - El Alamein (88/36 and 92/36) | |

- 2) As 580th Reconnaissance Unit is only temporarily available, I must stress the necessity of allocating the unit with a mobile formation, equipped with armoured cars and S.P. guns if possible, capable of immediately countering any landing, even if a bridgehead has been established at some distant point.
- 3) Ground reconnaissance should be supplemented by air reconnaissance at sea and instructions to this effect should be issued in order to establish close contact between this Headquarters, Headquarters Air Defence, Sector East and the Headquarters of the Luftwaffe, which is responsible for this area.

In addition, I request that the following questions be answered:

- is General Paoletti (I.A.F.) directly subordinate to me in matters concerning the defence of Mersa Matruh and coastal defence in my command area,
- will the infantry formations (6th and 7th Companies of 350th North African Infantry Regiment) at present engaged on coastal defence remain at my disposal at least until the division receives the reinforcements mentioned in section (a) of para. (1).

I await the decision reached by Italian Advance G.H.Q. Libya so

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that I may bring about the state of defensive preparedness desired by HQ Panzer Army.

The Commander

General N. SCATTAGLIA

Translation

Appendix to Signal No. 3059
of 18 September, 1942

Signal

From:- Panzer Army

To:- Commander Pavia Division

The Pavia Division is responsible for the defence of Mersa Matruh. The area to be defended extends from Ras el Kanays (place included) to Sidi Barrani (excluding town). All enemy landings in this area must be prevented. As Fortress Commander, all German and Italian units in the Mersa Matruh area are subordinate to the commander of the Pavia Division. Commander Pavia Division will prepare and submit to Army a draft plan of action to be carried out by the Mersa Matruh defence forces. In formulating this plan it should be remembered that 580th Reconnaissance Unit will remain only temporarily in Mersa Matruh. Gruppe Hain has been made available for the defence of the Sidi Barrani (town included) - Sollum (town included) coastal sector, and this formation will establish contact with Pavia Division.

Army Headquarters - Abt. Ia

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
18 September, 1942
22.20 hours

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Department

Daily Report for 18 September, 1942

- 1) Enemy situation unchanged.
- 2) Renewed attempts by enemy forces to feel their way forward on the southern sector were repulsed. The day passed quietly along the rest of the front.
- 3) Regrouping of Panzer Army has been carried out as follows:
 - a) Southern sector Qaret el Himeimat - Deir Umm Khawabir:
X Corps comprising Folgore Division, Trieste Division (motorised), Brescia Division and $\frac{1}{2}$ Ramcke Brigade. In addition, one reinforced German Reconnaissance Unit to cover the southern flank.
 - b) Northern sector Deir Umm Khawabir to the coast:
21 Corps comprising Bologna Division, Trento Division, 164th Light Division and $\frac{1}{2}$ Ramcke Brigade.
 - c) To support the front which is lightly manned owing to low battle strengths and for mobile defence -

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21st Panzer Division and Ariete Armoured Division were placed behind the northern sector of X Corps and

15th Panzer Division and Littorio Armoured Division behind the northern sector of XXI Corps

in three mixed battle groups so that most of the divisional artillery could put down defensive fire in front of X and XXI Corps main defence line,

d) German Army Artillery was formed into a number of groups and placed behind the southern and northern sectors.

e) The Young Fascist Division and a German and an Italian Reconnaissance Unit were sent to Siwa.

f) Army reserves were also to be used for coastal defence:

90th Light Division and Special Formation 288 in the area east and west of El Daba,

Pavia Division and a German Reconnaissance Unit in the Mersa Matruh area and,

parent units of first line reinforcements battalions in the Sollum area.

4) Gialo Oasis is still in Italian hands. German and Italian aircraft attacked British vehicle concentrations south of Gialo.

112/42 - Top Secret

18 September, 1942

Subjects for Discussion with Marshal
Cavallero on 19 September, 1942

- 1) General strategic and tactical situation.
- 2) Situation at Gialo and Siwa.
- 3) Coastal defence up to and including Sollum taken over by Panzer Army.
- 4) The supply situation has improved slightly, but the rate of German supply is still inadequate. (Only 7,106 tons have been brought over so far this month, i.e. not even 50% of requirements). Owing to this, stocks cannot be built up.
- 5) Plans regarding employment of Pavia Division.
- 6) Why is Pistoia Division in Africa? What are intentions regarding this formation?
- 7) The Italian Corps have complained that troops with more than 2 years service in Africa are being returned to Italy before replacements have arrived. The strengths of the Brescia and Bologna Divisions have consequently fallen to a disastrous level - (see appendix).
- 8) Construction of the railway to the front. 6 - 700 tons of rails and sleepers will have to be brought over from Italy for this purpose.

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- 9) Interrogations of British POWs concerning statements made by Italian troops. A British sergeant is available for a further interrogation in the presence of General Mancinelli.

Appendix to Subjects for Discussion with
Marshal Cavallero on 19 September, 1942

| | <u>Brescia Division</u> | | <u>Bologna Division</u> | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| | <u>Establishment</u> | <u>Strength</u> | <u>Establishment</u> | <u>Strength</u> |
| NCOs and men | 6,590 | 3,820 | 6,145 | 3,428 |
| File Companies | 24 | 20 | 24 | 20 |
| Light Batteries | 17 | 9 | 15 | 9 |
| Anti-tank rifles | 72 | 26 | 72 | 60 |
| Heavy A.A. Guns | 12 | - | 12 | - |
| 7.5 cm field guns | 24 | 12 | 24 | 13 |
| 10.5 light field howitzers | 24 | 12 | 24 | 12 |

Panzer Army Africa Ia

Army Battle HQ
19 September, 1942
20.30 hours

To:- Army General Staff, Operations Department

Daily Report for 19 September, 1942

- 1) Enemy situation unchanged.
- 2) The day passed quietly all along the front.
- 3) Supply Situation:
 - a) Ammunition: slight improvement following arrival of anti-tank ammunition.
 - b) Fuel: fuel for 13 days at current rate of expenditure.
 - c) Food: acute situation owing to low rate of supply.

The general situation has not improved appreciably owing to the inadequate rate of supply. Only 1 ship and 2 submarines arrived with supplies during the period 8 - 18 September. 7,106 tons of supplies, i.e. 24% of Panzer Army's monthly requirement, arrived during the period 1 - 18 September.

- 4) General Stumme has arrived.

No. 2082 - Top Secret

(Translation of Italian Document)

Headquarters Pavia Division

No. 3069 - Secret

In the Field,
20 September, 1942

Subject:- Defence plan for the Mersa Matruh Area

To:- HQ Panzer Army and for the information of
Comando Supremo Liaison Staff in North Africa

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Herewith in the appendix the above-mentioned defence plan requested by Panzer Army Headquarters in signal 7414 - Secret.

The preparations set out in this plan have already been:-

- carried out in full regarding the defence of Mersa Matruh fortress;
- and are being carried out in the coastal sectors east and west of the fortress.

It will be possible to complete the organisation of defence in the latter areas as soon as the necessary personnel, equipment and material already requested from Comando Supremo Liaison Staff in North Africa by this headquarters (Signals 3060 of 18 September, 1942) are made available.

The Commander

General N. SCATTAGLIA

(Translation of Italian Document)

20 September, 1942

Headquarters Pavia Division

Defence Plan for Mersa Matruh Fortress

Maps: 1 : 100,000 of Ras el Kanays - Matruh and Sidi Barrani
(German coloured issue - 1941)

1 : 25,000 of Matruh (Italian)

1 : 12,000 of Mersa Matruh (British)

I Preliminary Remarks

In addition to the fortress, the Mersa Matruh defence area includes the following adjoining coastal sectors:

to the east as far as the Ras el Kanays ^{headland} (place included);

to the west as far as Sidi Barrani (town excluded).

The Commander of Pavia Division is responsible for the defence of Mersa Matruh fortress and, in addition to the units of the division, all other Italian and German formations in this area will be at his disposal for this purpose.

Battle Headquarters: In Mersa Matruh.

Gruppe Hain has been ordered to defend the Sidi Barrani - Sollum coastal sector.

II Tasks for Defence Forces

- 1) To prevent enemy forces approaching by sea or by land from penetrating into the fortress defence belt or into Mersa Matruh harbour;
- 2) To prevent enemy seaborne forces from landing on the coastal sectors mentioned in paragraph I.

RESTRICTEDIII General Defence OrganisationAllocation of Forces

The defence area has been divided into the following sectors:

1) Eastern Defence Sector

Commander: Officer commanding 28th Infantry Regiment based in Mersa Matruh.

The sector includes:

Eastern and South-Eastern Sectors of the Mersa Matruh defence belt from the sea to line of longitude marked 723.
2nd Battalion 28th Infantry Regiment constitutes defence force.

Sector Commander: C.O. 2nd Battalion 28th Infantry Regiment.

Coastal sector east of Mersa Matruh

from defence belt (excluded) to Ras el Kanays headland (included). 1st Battalion 28th Infantry Regiment constitutes the defence force.

Sector Commander: C.O. 1st Battalion 28th Infantry Regiment based on Sidi Haneish.

2) Mersa Matruh Port Defence Sector

Commander: Senior Staff Officer of Naval Headquarters in Mersa Matruh.

The sector includes:

Harbour entrance and basin;
the coastal sector within the fortress defence belt, and to the east and west of the harbour entrance.

The sector defence force comprises:

E-boats ("MAS"), submarine-chasers and barges of 1st North African Flotilla;
One infantry company (7th Company 350th North African Infantry Regiment).

3) Western Defence Sector

Commander: C.O. 27th Infantry Regiment.

The sector includes:

Western and south-western sectors of the Mersa Matruh fortress defence belt from the sea to line of longitude marked 723.
1st Battalion 27th Infantry Regiment constitutes the defence force.

Sector Commander: C.O. 1st Battalion 27th Infantry Regiment.

Coastal sector west of Mersa Matruh from the fortress defence belt (excluded) to Sidi Barrani (excluded).
2nd Battalion 27th Infantry Regiment constitutes the defence force.

Sector Commander: C.O. 2nd Battalion 27th Infantry Regiment based in Alam el Abd (south of Marsa Issi Ibrahim)

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The battalion sectors are subdivided into company sectors under company commanders.

In the coastal sectors each company has:

3 Advanced platoons in a varying number of fire positions to defend the most important coastal areas.

1 platoon of riflemen in reserve at the disposal of the company commander.

In the sectors of the Mersa Matruh fortress defence belt there are :

block points covering the most important approach roads, observation and guard posts along the rest of the fortress defence belt, and firing positions for the defence of the airfield.

IV. Operational Instructions and Special Tasks for the Defence Forces

1) Defence of the coast must be assured by the following measures:

careful surveillance will be maintained, particularly during the night and at points especially suitable for landing purposes,

fire will be opened immediately on vessels attempting to approach the coast or on enemy troops attempting to come ashore from such vessels,

all enemy operations will be reported immediately (type and size of enemy force, landing area etc.),

supporting forces and reserves will be brought up quickly to attack the enemy while he is still engaged in landing; the enemy forces will be captured or thrown back into the sea.

2) Surveillance and defence along the coast will be carried out by Coastal Observation Posts (C.O.P.), Garrison Troops (G.T.) and Mobile Troops (M.T.) which will be formed from advanced platoons.

Tasks:

C.O.P.: "will report any enemy activity along their coastal sectors (and out at sea) so far as observation is possible".

For this purpose every C.O.P. has been equipped with binoculars, compass, message pad, Verrey pistols (with appropriate signal keys). Personnel will be instructed in the recognition of enemy ships and aircraft.

G.T.: "will open heavy and effective surprise fire on the enemy while he is still at sea or engaged in landing".

G.T.s may consist of one or more firing positions. If in favourable observation positions, they will also be able to take over the duties of C.O.P.s.

M.T.: "will supplement surveillance and defence forces in areas between G.T.s, particularly at night.

An M.T. will consist of a patrol equipped with (a) light machine gun(s) and a quantity of hand grenades.

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All C.O.P.s and G.T.s are numbered and are known by letters.

- 3) Company reinforcements - consisting primarily of infantry platoons - must be ready at all times to move quickly to the coastal sectors threatened by the enemy. For this purpose every company will have two light trucks at its disposal.

Tasks for reinforcements: "reinforcements will launch an immediate and concentrated counter-attack on enemy forces which have landed with the objective of taking them prisoner, throwing them back into the sea or at least pinning them down on the beach until further reinforcements or reserves are brought up".

- 4) The locations of the C.O.P.s, G.T.s and M.T.s are given in detail on the enclosed 1 : 100,000 map.

Locations planned for the eastern coastal sector will be completely manned as soon as 2nd Battalion 28th Infantry Regiment (present strength 2 companies) is brought up to full strength.

- 5) The block points set up along approach roads to the fortress in the Mersa Matruh defence belt will be used as control points and for defence purposes. Special instructions have been issued to each of these posts.

- 6) The following formations are at the disposal of this Headquarters for operations in the Mersa Matruh defence area:

580th Reconnaissance Unit (German) accommodated in the Ras Alam el Rum area (temporarily available),

A mixed group drawn from the regiments of the division (2 infantry companies, one 7.5 artillery battery, 1 light A.A. (2 cm) section).

- 7) In an emergency all Italian and German units located in the fortress defence area and not dealt with in this draft can be used for defensive operations according to the tactical capabilities of each individual unit (type, strength, armament).

In principle:

formations located inside the fortress area will be under the command of this Headquarters,

formations located in coastal sectors will be under the command of their own Regimental or Battalion Commanders.

V. Artillery

The following artillery units are in position within the Mersa Matruh fortress area:

- a) with normal task of close defensive fire and defensive fire on the fortress land front:

2nd Abteilung 26th Artillery Regiment (10.0 cm howitzers - 3 Batterien)

3rd Abteilung 26th Artillery Regiment (7.5 cm guns - 1 Batterie)

4th Abteilung 26th Artillery Regiment (7.5 cm guns - 1 Batterie)

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The above batteries will operate against shipping or landing forces in the harbour area up to the limit of their range.

b) with normal task of anti-aircraft defence:

Italian artillery units:

- 1 Abteilung 7.5 cm A.A. (2 Batterien - 7 guns) - may also operate against shipping or landing forces;
- 1 section 3.7 cm A.A. (3 guns - 14. Milmart - 14th Naval Artillery Unit)
- 532nd Batterie 2.0 cm A.A. (3 sections - 6 guns)
- 77th Batterie 2.0 cm A.A. (4 sections - 8 guns) may also be used for anti-tank defence
- 1 section 2.0 cm A.A. (2 guns) of Headquarters Pavia Division - may also be used for anti-tank defence
- 1 2.0 cm gun (14. Milmart)
- 1 Batterie 1.27 cm guns (9 guns)
- 1 section 1.32 cm guns (2 guns)
- 1 1.32 cm double-barrelled gun (14. Milmart)

German Artillery Units:

- 1 8.8 cm Batterie (4 guns)
- 3 sections 4.0 cm Bofors (9 guns)
- 3 sections 2.0 cm A.A. (9 guns), one section belonging to 8.8 cm Batterie
- 2 sections 2.0 cm four-barrelled cannon guns (4 guns)

With following search equipment:

- 1 Würzburg
- 6 60 cm searchlights

c) with normal task of operating against shipping and landing forces:

Italian Artillery Units:

- 3rd Batterie 10.2 cm guns - Milmart - fixed positions (4 guns)
- 14th Batterie 7.6 cm guns - Milmart - (5 guns)

Both these units may also be used for anti-tank defence.

German Artillery Units:

- 1 Batterie 15.5 cm (3 guns)
- 1 section 8.8 cm A.A. (2 guns)

All of the above-mentioned artillery units are directly subordinate to the Divisional Artillery Commander (Colonel Deidda).

As soon as 26th Artillery Regiment has been brought up to full strength, the two 7.5 cm Abteilungen will be used for operations against landings, one in the eastern coastal sector and the other in the western coastal sector of Mersa Matruh. A number of positions have already been prepared and will allow the Abteilungen to be deployed at the most important points along the coast.