

S E C R E T

AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH

TRANSLATION NO.VII/87

WAR DIARY OF THE GERMAN

AFRICA CORPS, JULY 1942

TRANSLATED BY

AIR MINISTRY, A.H.B.6

30TH JUNE, 1949

1 July 1942

The divisions are en route forward into the assembly areas. G.H.Q. directs that the commission must not fail to be carried through exactly to time. It is reported to Panzer Army Africa that the divisions will probably not arrive precisely in time.

There are still difficulties of terrain in the 21st Panzer Division area. Units of the 15th Panzer Division have moreover moved to the left near to the 21st Panzer Division. At times it appeared that the 21st Panzer Division had moved too far towards the west, but it turns out that false advance line positions were given.

0250: The time of attack cannot yet be foreseen.

0440: The 21st Panzer Division has won through the difficult stretch of ground and is now making good progress. It looks as if it will be able to attack at 0600 hrs. Reports from the 15th Panzer Division are not yet to hand, but G.H.Q. is aware that the first units of the division are moving in the direction of the launching line.

The last units of the 21st Panzer Division are still in contact with the enemy in the south, so that there are still enemy units to the west of the area reached by the German troops.

O.C. 15th Panzer Division has reported at the Corps battle headquarters that the division will probably be ready for the attack at 0600 hours.

0645: The 21st Panzer Division moved in and shortly afterwards the 15th Panzer Division as well. A little afterwards, the latter attacked an enemy base half right of the Division. The attack is making but slow headway with both divisions. The G.O.C. himself has driven up forward to the field of combat, in order to urge the attack forward. The defence from a major enemy base near and to the north of Deir el Shein is very strong. A dive-bomber attack which had been ordered was not carried out, as the 15th Panzer Division is going well forward now. The 21st Panzer Division is also making progress.

1200: The enemy is beginning to yield towards the east and south-east. The 21st Panzer Division is breaking into the strongpoint with their gunner regiment.

1400: The north-west part of the fortification has been taken by the 21st Panzer Division. The strongpoint is very large; many prisoners have been taken.

1523: The enemy is attacking the 21st Panzer Division from the south with tanks. Our own tanks are moving into action in a counter-attack.

G.H.Q. which has been up till now at the old position, is being brought forward to Deir el Abyad, where the Battle headquarters is finally to remain.

1630: The 21st Panzer Division is again in action in the stronghold. G.H.Q. orders the 15th Panzer Division to eliminate the enemy tanks in front of 21st Panzer Division, which must doubtless be in a position in the rear of the 15th Panzer Division.

1800: From the Panzer Army Africa reports it has been ascertained that X Army Corps is to the left and rear of the Africa Corps, that XX Army Corps is following the Africa Corps, and that the 90th Light Division has already thrust far ahead. The latter has however proved later to be false. Panzer Army Africa has altered its intention of advancing to the south-west from the area reached; it is ordering increased reconnaissances towards the east, since a later operation in this direction is planned.

Fighting is going on in the strongpoint. 40 tanks are breaking out towards the south-west before the 21st Panzer Division. To close the gap, parts of the battle echelon of the Africa Corps are being put into action between the divisions. They are succeeding in throwing back the enemy.

/ 1840:

1840: The 21st Panzer Division has taken the strongpoint and captured over 1200 prisoners as well as putting a large number of guns out of action. The division is setting up a hedgehog defence position and is intending to press further forward on the coming day. Liaison between 21st Panzer Division and the 15th Panzer Division is no longer in existence to the south in the Alam el Dihmaniya zone. Corps battle headquarters is at Deir el Abyad.

Panzer Army Africa directs that the area ordered must be firmly held. The Africa Corps is to get ready to attack towards the south and south-east.

Corresponding orders are issued to the divisions. The 15th Panzer Division also receives the order to block the El Himeimat - Alam Nayil track.

In spite of difficulties that have arisen, the Africa Corps has wrested great success from an enemy dug into strongpoints.

The activity of the enemy Air Force during this day has again been notably lively. Many bombing attacks were successful. The enemy is also attacking on into the night with night bombers. Activity of the Luftwaffe was very slight.

The supply situation with regard to ammunition and fuel is worsening. Replenishment is urgently needed.

2 July 1942

The tank situation with the Corps is bad again. There are only 37 vehicles ready for action.

In the night continuous bombing raids met with success and the supply columns were blown up; there was no improvement in the supply situation. There is no change in the activity of the divisions. An advance towards the south-east is intended after replenishment of fuel stocks. It is an urgent task for the 21st Panzer Division to clean up the strongpoint taken yesterday. The division has the impression that the enemy is building up a new front in the east after the loss of the strongpoint.

The forenoon passed quietly up till the commencement of several bombing raids. Panzer Army Africa communicates its fresh intention of attacking towards the east in order to make a thrust later in the direction of the coast. The corresponding orders are to be given verbally to the divisions.

1400: The divisions are to attack first of all 7 km. towards the east and then pivot towards the north, in order to enclose the enemy strongpoint at El Alamein. The 21st Panzer Division is important for the thrust to the north; it is to surround the sand dunes near Alam el Onsol; the 15th Panzer Division is to follow the 21st Panzer Division. Opening of attack 1500 hours.

1500: The divisions arrive punctually. G.H.Q. is making a change of position in a south-easterly direction; however it is soon brought to a halt on account of the great concentrations of vehicles; G.O.C. travels forward only with his operational Staff officers.

Panzer Army Africa order provides for a pivoting of the Africa Corps towards the west after the area to the south-east of Alamein has been won. Orders to the divisions are not required at first.

/Liaison

Liaison is soon established between the divisions after the launching of the attack. The enemy resistance is very heavy; the 15th Panzer Division, south of Alam el Dihmaniya has to face especially heavy artillery fire. Soon after, tanks come up on the right flank of the division, but they then retire towards the south. It appears that the movement was made in order to attack the 15th Panzer Division on the south flank. The flank of the division is in grave danger, as XX Army Corps is dependent on G.H.Q. ordering the Ariete Division to be brought forward.

The expected attack from the south is taking place.

The 21st Panzer Division is also in action north-east of El Ruweisat.

1640: The 15th Panzer Division is driven on to the defensive; the enemy is attempting to encircle it by a semicircular movement. The enemy tank attack in the south has been brought to a standstill. These tanks however soon renew the attack. The 15th Panzer Division considers support from the 21st Panzer Division necessary.

1730: With the 21st Panzer Division as well nothing decisive has happened as yet. The enemy seems to be removing his tanks again from in front of the 15th Panzer Division and to be preparing for an attack on the north wing.

1845: The 21st Panzer Division comes up to the attack once more. The 15th Panzer Division is still on the defensive owing to the superior enemy tank forces. The attack by the 21st Panzer Division is however not possible unless the 15th Panzer Division advances, as an enemy strongpoint is established on its right flank. At the approach of darkness the attack in spite of all efforts had not advanced more than 3 - 6 km.

During the whole of the day there were once again heavy air raids. Our own fighter defence was not nearly sufficient. Panzer Army Africa reports that in the coming night however night fighters will be brought into action.

The supply situation is again difficult; ammunition especially is short.

Extensive reconnaissance is ordered for the coming day, continuation of the attack concentrating about the 21st Panzer Division.

Even though the objective of the attack could not be reached because of strong enemy defences, nevertheless the Africa Corps has achieved considerable success and inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. Considering the strong superiority of the enemy this is to be valued especially highly. It must further be borne in mind that action has been going on for days by day and by night without ceasing, and signs of fatigue must begin to show in leaders and men.

The transfer forward of the Corps battle headquarters is not being carried through as planned, because of the unsuccessful attack and the large concentrations of vehicles; in the hours of the afternoon G.H.Q. went back to the old position. G.O.C. has been discussing details for tomorrow's attack with both divisions and only returned to Corps battle headquarters about midnight.

3 July 1942

In the night British air activity has again been very intense. The continual raids by day and night are hindering the troops seriously; our own fighter defence is not to be seen.

/ The

The tank situation is very bad again. The 21st Panzer Division has only 20 tanks, the 15th Panzer Division only 6, ready for action. Panzer Army Africa orders the continuing of the attack on 3 July at 0900 hours. Army artillery (4 batteries) is supporting the attack. Later operation by the Littorio on the left wing of the Africa Corps is intended. Reconnaissance Unit 3 is to follow the attack of the Africa Corps on the right wing and is to hold itself in readiness for a later overhauling movement towards the north-east.

0415: The corresponding orders, in particular for the movement of the 15th Panzer Division towards the left, come through to the divisions.

0700: The situation of the enemy in front of the divisions is unaltered; the enemy has retired a little in front of the 21st Panzer Division. The division has however not followed up the observed withdrawal of the enemy, as there was a danger of being cut off in consequence of the gap between it and the 15th Panzer Division.

0900: The divisions come up to the attack. The enemy still holds a threatening position on the south flank. Units of the Ariete Division are even going back. The 21st Panzer Division, whose left wing is going forward to El Ruweisat, requests the bringing up of the 15th Panzer Division; this has however been accomplished in the meantime. The attack by the 21st Panzer Division is making but slow headway. The enemy tanks, under cover of a slope, are awaiting the tanks of Panzer Regiments 8 and 5 which are going forward together. The guns have not yet gone into action because of the unclarified situation in the south-east. Enemy units are retiring before the 90th Light Division which is attacking from the left of the 21st Panzer Division. The C.-in C., who has stationed himself in the advanced battle headquarters of G.O.C., is again ordering the 90th Light Division to go into the attack. 15th Panzer Division is ordered to join up with the Ariete Division which is attacking to its right. It appears however that the Ariete has lost almost the whole of its artillery and tank strength during the enemy attack in the early morning.

1110: 20 tanks on the south flank of the 15th Panzer Division are going forward towards the north. G.O.C. orders the division to cover the right flank and join up on the left with the 21st Panzer Division. It will then be possible to form a continuous front, giving the defence of the right flank to the 21st Panzer Division, and so bring it forward. For the same reason the C. in C. also orders an artillery attack by the 15th Panzer Division against the enemy tank forces.

1200: The 15th Panzer Division is defending existing advances on the flank. The 21st Panzer Division is gaining a certain amount of ground. Panzer Army Africa is still pressing for the attack to be carried forward. Considering the superiority of the enemy, our own slender tank strength, the ammunition barrage and not least the fatigue of the troops, it will not be possible to reach the objective of the attack today. In the first instance all this depends on an advance by the 15th Panzer Division.

1300: The situation on the south flank of the 15th Panzer Division has improved; the enemy tank attack is at a standstill; 6 enemy tanks have been destroyed. The Italian tanks have not come up to the attack at all yet.

As a result of the strong enemy defence, the attack by the 21st Panzer Division is also at a standstill. The division is going into action again at 1600 hours, after reorganising, and requests that the Littorio Division which up to now has only followed the 21st Panzer Division should itself go into the attack.

G.O.C. has been summoned to the C. in C. It is under discussion whether a continuation of the attack promises success.

1600: Both divisions are going in to attack. If the tanks come forward now, the attack can still succeed. Panzer Regiment 5 is advancing to the south of El Ruweisat. Panzer Regiment 8 has soon caught up.

1745: Headway is being made. Alam Baoshaza is taken by artillery.

The attack is however at a standstill in the face of 50 enemy tanks with strong artillery. It is a great encouragement to the troops that dive-bombers should appear again just today and attack the enemy in front of them.

1850: The tanks of the 21st Panzer Division are advancing again. But the enemy has evidently made up his mind not to let them through; according to reports received there is another fresh attack to be expected from the south. The divisions are making no further advance; 1 km. north-east of point 69 - Alam Baoshaza - point 38 the attack has come to a standstill. The divisions are going over to the defensive.

2325: Panzer Army Africa order is transmitted; the divisions are to go over to the defensive. The day's objective has not been reached again today. Reasons are given above. Several bomber and fighter-bomber raids were successful again today.

The supply situation has become even worse; the most serious shortage is of ammunition.

4 July 1942

Considerable enemy flying activity again during the night.

0510: The 15th Panzer Division is being attacked by about 50 enemy tanks. The attack is however coming to a halt. Artillery is being brought to bear on the 21st Panzer Division, but no attack is following. G.H.Q. orders that the boundary line between the 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions should be the line 66-73 and its extension (east-west line); the boundary line between the 15th Panzer Division and the Trieste Division should be an east-west line running about 3 km. to the south. There is no contact with the Trieste Division.

0900: At the Corps battle headquarters a conference with the C. in C. is taking place; also taking part are G.O.C. X Army Corps, G.O.C. XX Army Corps, O.C. Littorio Division and the Operations Officer of the 90th Light Division.

After an explanation of the situation the C. in C. orders that Panzer Army Africa is to go over to the defensive in order to ease the difficult supply situation and to allow the non-motorised units to keep up, but this will not cause other attacks to be abandoned, since the 21st Panzer Division is to pull out at once and transfer to the area to the south of Alam el Dihmaniya, while the 15th Panzer Division is to be responsible for the defence of the whole Africa Corps sector. The subsequent relief of the 15th Panzer Division by the Brescia Division, and its transfer into the area to the west of the 21st Panzer Division is intended, so that the Africa Corps is available for new attacks. Next operation will probably be towards the south or south-east to wipe out the New Zealand Division.

1012: The corresponding order is given from G.O.C. to Colonel Crasemann by telephone. The division must take over the sector point 69 - Alam Baoshaza - point 38. Contact on the right with the Trieste, on the left with the 90th Light Division. It is also responsible for the covering of the neighbouring wings. Strong defences are to be brought forward. As communication with the 21st Panzer Division is broken, the Operations Officer of the 15th Panzer Division is to convey this order to the 21st Panzer Division. 2 advanced

/ detachments

detachments are to be formed from the 21st Panzer Division. One is to attack the enemy situated in front of the Brescia Division near El Mireir, attacking from the east via point 66, the second is to advance towards Alam Nayil. Both advanced detachments are to move up at once; the rest of the division is to move up at 1500 hours at the latest. The orders will also be given again by radio.

1030: The tank battle in the 15th Panzer Division area is at a standstill. The division's ammunition situation is still very grave; there are still 10 rounds available for each battery. For defence towards the south-east the battle echelon of the Africa Corps is moved forward about 4 km. towards the south-east. Warning from the 15th Panzer Division that it will not be able to hold the sector alone will have to be ignored. The division once more receives the express order to begin taking over at once.

1300: Again there is a strong tank attack from the east on the 15th Panzer Division. The G.O.C. is again on the field of combat and orders that one battalion of Motorised Infantry Regiment 104 should if necessary be held back. The enemy, as is only to be expected, has observed the withdrawal of the 15th Panzer Division and is applying very strong pressure. The new sector of the 15th Panzer Division is being subjected to very heavy gunfire. However the 21st Panzer Division is succeeding in pulling out without outstanding losses.

1415: The C. in C. informs the Operations Officer that tonight there will be carried out a movement of the 15th Panzer Division to exchange with the Brescia Division. 21st Panzer Division is to take over the sector of the Brescia Division, whose left wing is somewhere near point 58 to the north-east of El Mireir, until the arrival of the 15th Panzer Division. The C. in C. wishes to speak at once to the G.O.C. about this regrouping. Because of the critical position of the 15th Panzer Division, however, it is out of the question for G.O.C. to leave the field of combat just now.

Reconnaissance by the 21st Panzer Division establishes the existence of a strong enemy post to the north of Alam Nayil, which can be taken only by assault. Panzer Army Africa is being informed of this.

1500: The position of the 15th Panzer Division remains as grave as ever. G.O.C. therefore orders that Panzer Regiment 5 remain in the old area to start with. Even when the order was being issued however the regiment had already retired. The forward line of the 15th Panzer Division had to be taken back about 2 km. in face of the strong enemy attacks. There are no forces to reinforce 15th Panzer Division at the disposal either of Panzer Army Africa or the Africa Corps, apart from the 21st Panzer Division, as the battle echelon of the Africa Corps is being used in order to close the gap between the right wing of the 21st Panzer Division to the south-west of Alam el Dihmaniya and the left wing of the Brescia Division near point 58. Only a flak battery can be assigned to the 15th Panzer Division. On the basis of the report given to Panzer Army Africa about the situation in front of the advanced detachment of the 21st Panzer Division, the 21st Panzer Division is ordered not to attack. It will be its duty to block the path. The situation of the 15th Panzer Division is unchanged. About 40 tanks have broken through, and overcome units of Motorised Infantry Regiment 115. As Panzer Regiment 5 was already in its new positions, the G.O.C. has abandoned the idea of transferring it back into the area of the 15th Panzer Division, as it seems that the situation has eased. From intercepted enemy wireless messages it can be confirmed that he intends to attack from the south. So it is important that the 21st Panzer Division should soon reach its area and also that tanks should be at its disposal there.

/ 1800:

- 1800: The 21st Panzer Division reports that it is in position with some units in the northern part of the area. The Pavia Division is likewise still in action there with the front towards the south. Considerable concentrations of vehicles have thus arisen; relief can be gained only by an expansion of depth in the front. The division is informed that the battle echelon of the Africa Corps is being sent into action on the eastern wing of the Brescia Division.
- 1900: In the 15th Panzer Division area things have become quiet again. The number of enemy tanks before the front has however increased. The division's orders for the coming day remain the same. According to a report from the 21st Panzer Division, there is contact between the 15th Panzer Division and the Trieste Division in action to its right.
- 2035: The bulk of the 21st Panzer Division is in the northern part of the area as ordered. The danger from the south is held. As the battle group which was to have mopped up the enemy in front of the Brescia Division could not be sent into action during the day, this battle group is ordered to withdraw.
- The divisions are directed that battle emplacements etc. are to be constructed for the defence now ordered.
- 2215: Before the front of the 15th Panzer Division there is movement even in the darkness. The noise of tanks is also to be heard. The division is expecting an attack and requests the bringing up of guns and the support of units of the Army artillery. The Africa Corps is unable to help.
- In spite of considerable enemy attacks the front has been held. The fighting strength of the troops diminishes however more and more quickly every day. A withdrawal of units in order to give them a few days' rest is not possible in the critical situation of the moment.
- The enemy is again developing intense activity in the air by day and in the night.
- 36 tanks are ready for action with the Africa Corps.
- The supply situation with regard to ammunition becomes even worse, although some small supplies came through in the course of the afternoon.
- Battle headquarters is again near Deir el Abyad.
- In the course of the day a liaison officer has been sent over to the Brescia Division, so that the G.O.C. can always be quickly informed of the situation.

5 July 1942

- In the night there has been an enemy breakthrough in the area of the Brescia Division on the Quattara Track. The position was soon restored when the Koenen Company was sent in; this unit is subordinate to the Kiehl Combat Staffel in action to the north of it, and is placed at the disposal of the Africa Corps for mopping up operations.
- 0700: Panzer Army Africa orders immediate relief of the Pavia Division by the 21st Panzer Division. The Pavia is to occupy and build up two strongpoints at points 73 and 63 behind the present front of the 15th Panzer Division. The strongpoint at 63 is to be built up in such a way that it will also be effective on the north side. For the improvement of the bases and for the mining, the engineer battalions of both divisions are being engaged. Details are being discussed by telephone by the Operations Officers of the divisions.

/ 0920:

0920: The Pavia Division has been relieved without difficulty, but is not moving into its new area in spite of 21st Panzer Division's insistence.

The G.O.C. drives to the 21st Panzer Division and to the Lindemann battle echelon.

1055: It is intended to withdraw a motorised infantry battalion from the 15th Panzer Division so that a reserve force will be available in the event of a fresh enemy attack on the Brescia Division sector. After the recent heavy fighting, however, Motorised Infantry Regiment 115 consists of only 2 companies. Operational strengths have dropped sharply during the last few days, and no Africa Corps unit exceeds 50% of its established operational strength.

The Luftwaffe is very active again today. To cap everything the Italians bomb our troops again.

1220: The Pavia Division is still in its former area. The enemy situation remains unchanged. The 15th Panzer Division is under very heavy artillery fire.

1600: As the gap between the 21st Panzer Division and the Brescia Division has been closed, the Africa Corps battle echelon will be sent in on the right wing of the Brescia Division in the area of point 58 to establish contact with the Littorio Division, which is holding a sector in the area north-east of Munqar Wahla. In addition, Reconnaissance Unit 33 and units of the Kiehl battle echelon are situated on the left wing of the Littorio Division.

1825: The Africa Corps battle echelon has reached the area ordered and is ready to restore the situation in the event of an enemy attack.

1945: Between the 15th Panzer Division and the 90th Light Division there is still a gap which up till now has only been covered by artillery fire. The 15th Panzer Division receives the order to close this gap. Heavy gunfire is still being brought to bear on the division.

No further changes have occurred in the Africa Corps action. The divisions are notified that effective defence demands the construction of fortifications, without consideration for the probable duration of the operation.

Extensive mining is ordered to increase the strength of the defence.

In order to fill the positions where troops are lacking, reinforcements are being flown over from Italy to Tobruk. Transport from there must be effected by troop-carrying vehicles. For this purpose each division is to supply 25 lorries which will be continuously used in the immediate future by Panzer Army Africa on the Tobruk - El Daba stretch.

Each division moreover is to supply 50 lorries for the Luftwaffe; this consignment will cause considerable hardship, as the troop-carrying vehicles are already in large measure employed in bringing up supplies, mines and personnel reinforcements. Individual units are only to a limited extent mobile. In addition the Africa Corps must make Infantry Regiment 392 mobile to a certain extent. On these grounds Panzer Army Africa is postponing the carrying out of the order till later.

6 July 1942

Until bombing attacks and heavy gunfire began the night was passing quietly. The tank situation is improving gradually. In the past few days as well our casualties have been far less than the losses inflicted on the enemy.

/ The

The Chief of the General Staff of the Africa Corps is deputising for the Chief of the General Staff of Panzer Army Africa who is ill. His deputy is the Operations Officer.

In the forenoon nothing of note to report until some intense enemy flying activity and lively gunfire.

1200: 15th Panzer Division is made responsible for moving the Pavia Division into the newly ordered strongpoints. The division is notified that it is to remain engaged in the forward line up till the time when the Pavia Division is fully ready for action.

In order to disperse the large concentrations of vehicles, Panzer Army Africa orders that all vehicles which can be dispensed with should be moved into the area to the west of Deir el Abyad. The divisions receive orders for moving the vehicles; more detailed allocation of the area is to be made by the leader of the battle echelon of the Africa Corps, which is in action to the south of them.

In order to raise the fighting strength of the battle echelon, one battery of the 15th Panzer Division is placed at its disposal. According to the opinion of the Africa Corps, an enemy thrust to the west of the Quattara Track from the south towards the north is to be expected.

1420: Panzer Army Africa orders by telephone: The Brescia Division is to relieve XX Army Corps to the east of Alam el Dihmaniya in the night of 6/7 July, XX Army Corps is to be moved back on both sides of the water pipe track. The 21st Panzer Division is also to take over the Brescia Division sector. This order is transmitted by telephone to the 21st Panzer Division, and follows as a telephone message later. The later report from the Operations Officer of the 21st Panzer Division that the divisions sector of the Division is very wide, does not in any way alter the order given. The division had assumed to start with, that the battle echelon of the Africa Corps would be placed under them for the occupation of the sector. This misunderstanding is being explained. The battle echelon remains engaged in the old area and further is directly subordinate to the Africa Corps. Liaison exists in common among the several troop sections in action on the left wing of the Brescia Division. There is therefore a continuous front. It must be granted it has the serious disadvantage that it juts out in a sharp angle towards the south-east, south of El Ruweisat.

The enemy puts out feelers in the afternoon with about 15 tanks against point 40 on the left wing of the 15th Panzer Division. The division is still encountering heavy gunfire. However no attack has followed yet.

1800: The gunfire is still going on. Now the Corps battle headquarters is also under heavy fire from a southerly direction. Single motor vehicles are damaged.

Nothing of note to report up till the approach of darkness, and also until midnight.

The mining operations at the strongpoints in the Pavia Division area have been begun. Since the enemy is specially afraid of our 8.8 cm. AA guns, Panzer Army Africa has ordered the installation of dummy guns. This work has been begun.

The divisions receive an order to submit a sketch of the operation.

The inquiry whether at least 20 lorries cannot be assigned for the Luftwaffe is answered in the negative by both divisions. The reasons are the same as already given in the report.

/ 7 July 1942

7 July 1942

In the night heavy gunfire again and intense enemy flying activity. The relief of the Brescia Division is not fully carried through, as some units of the Brescia Division are still in the old area.

The tank situation is showing a further improvement.

The building of strongpoint 63 is completed, strongpoint 73 is not yet fully completed. The work is being continued.

0900: In the early morning there has been especially heavy gunfire directed on the 15th Panzer Division. The fire is now concentrated on the right wing of the Baade Group, against which a tank attack is being launched under cover of smoke shells. One tank succeeds in breaking through. The attack is however beaten off; 3 enemy tanks are shot up.

In the course of the day several orders are issued, partly based on directives from Panzer Army Africa. Use of radio is to be limited as far as possible in order to prevent radio direction finding; each man is to take with him permanently 15 sandbags out of the captured supplies. Totally unserviceable vehicles are to be placed in the decoy minefields to deceive the enemy.

1400: Panzer Army Africa orders that the Trieste Division is to extend its right wing as far as the left wing of the 21st Panzer Division. The distribution of men between the two divisions is now very thin, so that the possibility of infiltration by the enemy arises. It is reported by Panzer Army Africa that the Brescia Division relieving the Trieste Division receives the order to form a mine barrier before its position, to begin with on both sides of the Quattara Track. Engineer Battalion 200, without one company which up to now has been subordinated to the 15th Panzer Division to build the line of strongpoints, is again subordinated to the 21st Panzer Division. The mines are to be brought up by troop-carrying vehicles.

There is no particular change in the activity of the Africa Corps. There are continuous enemy air attacks; the fighter-bomber attacks are especially unpleasant. Heavy gunfire is still being directed against the 15th Panzer Division. All is quiet with the 21st Panzer Division.

The construction of the strongpoints in the Pavia Division area goes on, and the setting of the dummy gun emplacements is making progress as well.

As has already been mentioned a number of times, the fighting strength of the Africa Corps has recently deteriorated considerably.

In the next few days, Infantry Regiment 382 will be operating in the Africa Corps sector. It will be brought up in troop-carrying vehicles.

Panzer Army Africa reports that Reconnaissance Battalion 33 in the line Quaret Abu Saq - El Kharita has stopped an encircling attempt by superior enemy forces.

The G.O.C. has been with both divisions and has discussed with the C.O.s details of the operation and also the details of the general defence directives.

8 July 1942

0015: The 15th Panzer Division reports that the enemy made a breakthrough on the right wing of the division towards 2345 hours. The strongpoint situated there has been taken; the situation could be restored only if the divisional reserve was sent in. It was reported later that in this breakthrough five 5 cm. anti-tank guns were put out of action by the enemy.

/ 0345:

0345: G.H.Q. fears that at break of day a renewed enemy attack is to follow at the point of penetration. The 21st Panzer Division is therefore ordered to move half of its tanks in such a way, that they stand ready as from dawn behind the left wing of the 15th Panzer Division for an engagement in a south-easterly direction.

0500: The 21st Panzer Division reports that this order has been carried out. Under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Mildebrath 19 tanks are in readiness to the south of point 63.

The night passes quietly for the 21st Panzer Division. No losses were sustained in a heavy bombing raid.

0745: The C. in C. comes to the Corps battle headquarters. A discussion is taking place on the enemy's undertaking by night against the 15th Panzer Division. Further, doubts on the question of mining are cleared up; the strongpoints of the Pavia Division are not, as was originally ordered by Panzer Army Africa, to be mined round about. The C. in C. insists that a continuous mine-field is to be made. For the mining, troops other than engineers are also to be employed.

In the immediate future increased reinforcements will be brought up to bring units up to strength again soon.

As already ordered by the C. in C. by telephone, Colonel Menny is taking over the command of the 15th Panzer Division with effect from now.

0830: The G.O.C. is discussing with Colonel Crasemann the question of mining and of bringing up reinforcements. It is intended to withdraw the bulk of the division behind the Pavia Division in the night, while leaving units to protect the mining. The G.O.C. also directs that the vehicles are to be widely dispersed and that in order to avoid mishaps like those encountered in the past night, officers must at all costs go on guard at night.

The same points are also discussed with the 21st Panzer Division by telephone.

Transport of the reinforcements must again be effected by troop-carrying vehicles, as relatively few can be brought up by the supply columns.

Infantry Regiment 382 arriving in the next few days will be placed, less one battalion, under the 21st Panzer Division; the one battalion is going to the 15th Panzer Division. The divisions will have to arrange transport and supplies.

The G.O.C. is going to the 15th Panzer Division.

1445: The 21st Panzer Division surprisingly reports that the enemy strongpoint on the Quattara Track to the south-west of El Mireir has been taken. A dive-bomber attack ordered for that area must be cancelled at once. Hill 73 at Buweibat el Raml is also free of the enemy. The 21st Panzer Division is sending observers forward.

The expected enemy attack on the 15th Panzer Division has up to now not come off. The gunfire is weaker than on the previous days. The tank battalion of the 21st Panzer Division is nevertheless left to the south of point 63, so that it is ready there if necessary, if there is an attack in the neighbourhood of the 21st Panzer and Brescia Divisions.

1740: The order is issued to the 15th Panzer Division for a withdrawal behind the Pavia Division as was already discussed in the forenoon.

1830: 73 enemy tanks take up position against the strongpoint. They are however not attacking yet. The evening also passes quietly for the 15th Panzer Division.

Flying activity somewhat less than in the previous days.

- 2150: The 21st Panzer Division reports that a patrol has announced that the enemy strongpoint at Qaret el Abd is apparently evacuated. Several serviceable vehicles must have been left behind undestroyed. On enquiry the division receives the order to leave an armed reconnaissance unit in the strongpoint; it is to be withdrawn only in the event of a strong enemy attack. This order is amplified shortly afterwards to the effect that at least one company with artillery observers is to occupy the strongpoint.
- 2215: It is still quiet in the 15th Panzer Division area. The division is ordered to hold the panzer regiment ready as an operational reserve. The division reports that during the night the units protecting the mining before the northern strongpoint have been withdrawn, as the mining operations are completed there.
- 2255: The 21st Panzer Division receives by telephone the order to occupy Qaret el Abd with an armed patrol.

A survey of the present fighting strengths is submitted to Panzer Army Africa. As a result of the increased demands on vehicles, single units in each division are immobilised. It is fortunate that a supply of tanks can be counted on. As it cannot be forecast at present how the situation will develop with regard to the tanks to be repaired, the newly incoming tanks will be divided equally among the divisions.

9 July 1942

With the 15th Panzer Division the night passes quietly until the start of gunfire which is directed against the division with varying intensity.

- 0610: The C. in C. rings up the G.O.C. to be informed on the position. In spite of the reports to Panzer Army Africa the previous evening, the C. in C. has only just learned from G.O.C. that the strongpoint Bab el Quattara has apparently been evacuated. He considers it very important to advance at once in order to occupy the strongpoint completely. This advance could however not be ordered by the Africa Corps, as the plans hitherto have been to defend the present south front and to strengthen it by mining. Further Army intentions were not known to the Africa Corps, except that on the previous evening the Army (Operations Officer) approved the sending out of an armed patrol.
- 0620: As a result of the conference with the C. in C., the order is issued to the 21st Panzer Division to push forward to the strongpoint with an advance battalion. The engineer company still remaining with the 15th Panzer Division is again placed under the division. In addition, Panzer Army Africa gives the information that Reconnaissance Unit 3 is engaged at Ghebel Kalak and the Littorio Division in the area to the south of Deir el Quattara. In the meantime the 21st Panzer Division reports that the patrol in action against the strongpoint has withdrawn towards the north in the face of the superior enemy forces.
- The G.O.C. is going to the 21st Panzer Division in order to settle details concerning the engagement of the advance battalion, etc.
- 0900: The C. in C. appears at the Corps battle headquarters and complains that the enemy strongpoint has not yet been occupied. On the grounds of the report by the Operations Officer that Bab el Quattara is still occupied by the enemy, the C. in C. orders an attack by the 21st Panzer Division at 1000 hours. Panzer Army Africa artillery will support the attack to

/ start

start with, with a mortar battery, later with the Boeckmann Battery (3 batteries of captured guns). The command is given personally by the C. in C. by telephone to O.C. 21st Panzer Division. It is later confirmed through the Operations Officer of the Africa Corps. According to air reconnaissance there are only small enemy groups south of the division. The order as it has been up till now has been altered, and the Littorio Division is now attacking Qaret el Abd from the west; it is however to withdraw a little towards the south.

1000: The 21st Panzer Division reports that it has moved up. The G.O.C. comes back to the battle headquarters. A conference on further plans is taking place. The mining activities on the south front are to be discontinued at once. The orders given already by word of mouth are corroborated in a telephone message to the 21st Panzer Division. The Lindemann battle group is to join the attack and reach point 80 on the Quattara Track. To the right of it the Kiehl battle echelon is going forward towards the south.

1015: The 21st Panzer Division reports that point 101 on the Quattara Track is strongly held by the enemy. The fortification is likewise still occupied by the enemy.

1100: The division is also to carry out intensive reconnaissance from the north-east with artillery observers against Bab el Quattara. It also receives the order to report on the reasons why the fortification has not been occupied.

The Kiehl battle echelon has thrust towards the south; there are only enemy patrols before it.

At this time a tank attack from the south-east is developing against the 15th Panzer Division. Later, tanks go forward from the east; it does not however lead up to a heavy attack.

1130: Hill 101 on the Quattara Track is still held by the enemy. Motorised Infantry Regiment 104 is holding itself in readiness for an attack there. Qaret el Abd is attacked from the north by II/Motorised Infantry Regiment 104; III/Motorised Infantry Regiment 104 is attacking from there eastwards. The Panzer Regiment has moved close to I/Motorised Infantry Regiment 104. The companies of Infantry Regiment 382 which arrived on the previous day are still engaged to the south-west of Alam el Dihmaniya.

Dive-bombers are sent into action against the enemy on Hill 101. The Littorio Division is also going forward against the enemy situated in this position.

1345: The Lindemann battle echelon has reached point 80 with its most advanced sections, and is under gunfire from the south-east.

1405: The 21st Panzer Division received the order to pivot towards the east after reaching Bab el Quattara and the area to the south. To the right of it the Maroks Group of the 90th Light Division is going forward; to the left and rear of this division is following the Lindemann battle echelon. The 21st Panzer Division received the order to clear the Quattara Track of mines.

1600: The operational report of Panzer Army Africa brings no change. For the purpose of uniform command of the attack, the Lindemann battle echelon, which is in advance on Deir el Khawabir, is placed under the 21st Panzer Division.

1625: The fortification at Bab el Quattara is taken. To the south of it there are still enemy groups which are being attacked by the Maroks Group. The reconnaissance units in the south have thrust far towards the east into the area 4 km. south-west of Manaqir el Dabar. Dive-bombers are again being sent into action against the enemy between them, the Maroks Group and the 21st Panzer Division to the north of Ghebel Kalakh.

/ 1850:

1850: Panzer Army Africa orders the attack to be launched. It is to be started by daybreak. Objective of attack for the 21st Panzer Division is the area north-east of Deep Well. Commencement of attack 0530 hours. Right of the 21st Panzer Division the Littorio Division is to attack, to the right of this the Marcks Group.

The G.O.C. has remained longer with the 21st Panzer Division and does not return to the Corps battle headquarters until after the approach of darkness.

2030: The Army, as it apparently takes for granted a general withdrawal of the enemy, is planning to go over to the offensive again. The divisions are accordingly to hold themselves in readiness.

Enemy flying activity has been less today than in the past days.

Panzer Army Africa announces that each division can count on receiving 5 heavy field howitzers on self-propelled mountings. The divisions are instructed to prepare the sites for the batteries.

10 July 1942

In the night especially heavy gunfire is to be heard from a northerly direction. Veterans of World War 1 claim that it surpasses even the heavy barrage of the Western Front. It is later known that a deep penetration has been made on the coast road.

With the 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions there is nothing of note to report. The minefields before the 15th Panzer Division have been completed. On inquiry to Panzer Army Africa it is however decided that the division again has the responsibility for the defence of the Pavia Division's sector.

0530: The G.O.C. goes to the 21st Panzer Division which is moving up to the attack according to plan.

0800: The C. in C. comes to the Corps battle headquarters and orders that a battle group consisting of tanks, guns, artillery and anti-tank units is to be assembled and to start on the way en route to Hill 21 to the west of the Quattara Track. The order is given by telephone to the 15th Panzer Division which at present is the only unit concerned. The commander of the battle group, Captain Kirsten, receives precise instructions on the operation from the C. in C. The battle group is directly subordinated to Panzer Army Africa. The breakthrough has in the meanwhile come to a halt; the Army is however counting on a further push from the enemy and is pressing for speed.

0950: The battle group presses forward in order to reach the target area. In the 21st Panzer Division area, the artillery has advanced some km. up to the hill of point 104; Panzer Regiment 5 has advanced through as far as Alam Nayil. The enemy is still established in that part, and so the panzer regiment has come to a halt. Nothing is known concerning the situation with neighbouring units.

1030: Panzer Army Africa orders the units to go over to the defensive after reaching the objective of attack north-east of Deep Well. An east front is to be formed to extend the east front already in existence. In order to bring forward the attack for the purpose of reaching the objective of attack, it is urgent that the 90th Light Division should advance. The division is at a standstill to the south of Ghebel Kalakh owing to lack of fuel. The Littorio Division on the other hand has retired before an enemy counter-thrust. The exact situation with it is not clear. There are no indications that the enemy is strengthening his south front as a result of the attack.

- 1200: The 21st Panzer Division is at a standstill again. The continuation of the attack jointly with the 90th Light Division is planned for 1600 hours. The Ewert battle group is drawn up in such a manner that it can advance in a general direction point 112 - Raqabet el Retem.
- 1530: The 21st Panzer Division has moved up to the attack again, and also the 90th Light Division. The defence is still very strong. The 90th Light Division is making better progress and has arrived at the same hill where the 21st Panzer Division is still at a standstill in face of the enemy to the south-east of Alam Nayil. The enemy is apparently receiving reinforcements; the 21st Panzer Division reports unloading of infantry near Deep Well. It is later confirmed that there is a strong enemy base here. The G.O.C. returns from the field of combat in the evening, after speaking personally with O.C. 90th Light Division at his battle headquarters on the further conduct of the battle, etc. As a result of his discussion by telephone, 21st Panzer Division is ordered to go over to the defensive. One battalion with a light battery is to be left near Bab el Quattara, to be ready for action at the shortest notice. Panzer Regiment 5 is to hold itself ready to cover the gap between the 21st Panzer Division near Alam Nayil and the Brescia Division east of Alam Dihmaniya. The 15th Panzer Division is also to hold the Panzer Regiment ready for a similar operation.

The situation of the enemy facing the 15th Panzer Division has not altered in the course of the day. Gunfire has again been directed against the division.

Today there have again been no bombing raids; the enemy has sent out only armed air reconnaissance.

As a result of the events of the past days, Panzer Army Africa orders that the troops must be ready for defence from 04.00 hours.

G.H.Q. orders that in spite of the existing lack of vehicles (because of supply journeys etc.), transport must be constantly available to transfer quickly large consignments of all weapons.

The lorries sent out for the transport of the reinforcements from Tobruk are still being used by the Army for continuous supply; they are no longer at the disposal of the divisions.

11 July 1942

Gunfire and bombing attacks in the night.

- 0545: About 30 enemy tanks attack Panzer Regiment 5 to the north-west of Alam Nayil. The attack is beaten off after a rather long engagement. No attack is made on the 15th Panzer Division.
- 0600: The C. in C. rings up the G.O.C. and orders the 21st Panzer Division to be relieved. In the north the situation remains as serious. For any attack that might arise against that area the division is to hold itself in readiness in the area to the north of El Mireir. The 90th Light Division takes over the whole sector; it is placed under the Africa Corps, and Reconnaissance Unit 33 and the Littorio Division are subordinated to the 90th Light Division.
- 0625: The G.O.C. gives the corresponding command to the Operations Officer of the 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions. The command is communicated by wireless to the 90th Light Division, as at the moment there is no telephone communication in existence. The division is to take over the El Taqa - Bab el Quattara sector. El Taqa, Chebel Kalakh, Bab el Quattara are each to be occupied by a battle group. The last is to be held at all costs, as it is a corner stone of the position; German troops are also to be engaged there alongside the Littorio Division. The line now reached is to remain occupied in order to deceive the enemy; there is to be intense patrol activity as well. El Taqa is occupied by Reconnaissance Unit 33.

The 90th Light Division makes it known that only Infantry Regiment 200 is available for Bab el Quattara. This is however still in action alongside the Trento Division; a relief there does not come into the question. It is therefore later ordered that the Menton special unit is to transfer into the fortification.

0900: Staff of Panzer Regiment 5 is to be left with a battalion in its present operational area up till the end of the movement. It is again made clear that Bab el Quattara must not be evacuated until the arrival of the relieving German troops. Advance battalions are to be set en route for the new area as soon as possible.

The Lindemann battle echelon remains in action and is placed under the 15th Panzer Division, as is a battalion of Infantry Regiment 382. The sound-ranging battery of Construction Battalion 11, engaged in the southern sector, is remaining with the 90th Light Division.

The 90th Light Division is very weak in artillery; the Littorio Division however has at its disposal one battery of the Panzer Army Africa artillery.

0930: The tank battle in the Panzer Regiment 5 area has flared up again. The enemy tanks attempt an outflanking movement. The attack is beaten off, but it is not going to be possible to withdraw units of the panzer regiment in daylight, as the enemy observes every movement closely and immediately takes counter-measures.

1030: The C. in C. discusses the situation with the G.O.C. It is very tense in the north. The withdrawal of units of the 21st Panzer Division must at all costs be speeded up.

The G.O.C. proposes to send forward Reconnaissance Unit 33 in the direction of Manaqir el Daba; the C. in C. sanctions this decision; the unit receives the order to press forward again and reconnoitre towards east and north-east. It reports enemy to the north of Manaqir el Daba and 5 km. to the south-west of Deir el Munassib.

1100: The first units of the 21st Panzer Division arrive in the new assembly area. O.C. Motorised Infantry Regiment 104 reports to the G.O.C. On the C. in C.'s order the movement to the north is not yet to begin.

All is quiet with the 15th Panzer Division until the artillery opens up.

The 90th Light Division intends to leave Infantry Regiment 361 forward as a whole. This decision is not ratified. In order to have a unified forward front the division is ordered to withdraw the regiment at the latest by dark. The isolated strongpoints are to be mined and the enemy mining of the Quattara fortification has to be reconnoitred.

The Africa Corps knows nothing about the activity of the Kirsten Group, which is directly subordinate to Panzer Army Africa. Nothing essential is to be gleaned from a report by the battle group. The 90th Light Division reports that the El Taqa fortification really lies 10 km. further towards the west than has hitherto been assumed. The Army has ordered a new mine barrier between Bab el Quattara and the right wing of the Brescia Division. For the purpose of a unified operation, both engineer battalions are placed directly under the Africa Corps.

1200: O.C. 90th Light Division is again coming for the purpose of a conference with the G.O.C. All details of the operation are again discussed with him.

1400: Reconnaissance Unit 33 has again reached its old position.

/ The

The Africa Corps is in agreement with the proposal by the 90th Light Division that the unit should also block the gaps in the southern flank.

1520: The Menton Special Unit has arrived in the Quattara fortification, so that the last motorised infantry battalion of the 21st Panzer Division can be relieved. The 90th Light Division has had no real contact with the enemy during the afternoon. Enemy groups groping forward yielded in the face of gunfire. So that the gunfire in the southern sector may be completely effective, the Albers Army Artillery Battery is requested, on the suggestion of the 90th Light Division, to send an observer forward to the division.

1730: As yet nothing of importance to report from the 15th Panzer Division. The division received the order to advance until 12 July in the Deir Um Khawabir - right wing of the Brescia Division - point 63 - east part of Mireir area. It is to establish liaison with the 90th Light Division and so to group itself that it is able to lend support to the defence of the Pavia and Brescia Divisions as well as to outflank any enemy thrust towards the west which may arise. Boundary line with the 90th Light Division is the east-west line through the line of attack 917.

1840: The C. in C. is planning to attack the enemy strongpoint of El Alamein with the 21st Panzer Division across the Trento Division area on 13 July. The 21st Panzer Division receives this order; reconnaissance to be carried out from 12 July. Owing to the strong enemy thrust in front of Panzer Regiment 5, the latter is to remain in its previous area on 12 July. Panzer Engineer Battalion 200 is again subordinated.

1900 hours is ordered as zero hour for the switch-over of command 21st Panzer Division - 90th Light Division.

1915: The liaison officer with the Brescia Division reports unloading of infantry before the front, bombardment by artillery. Shortly afterwards follows an attack on the Brescia Division; Panzer Regiment 5 is again attacked on a broad front. Both attacks have been repulsed and losses inflicted on the enemy.

The possibility of an enemy attack during the reorganisation has again to be reckoned with.

The lanes in the mine barrier to be built are to be precisely laid down by the Africa Corps, since on an earlier occasion lanes laid without proper planning had to be transferred later.

Heavyflak is ordered by Panzer Army Africa for the 21st Panzer Division for the attack on El Alamein.

The Army is counting on a renewed attack in the north for the coming day; the 21st Panzer Division has therefore to be ready for a counter-attack from 0430 hours.

As the previous supply route lies within the range of the enemy guns, a new route is arranged.

The manpower situation has improved only slightly in the past days. G.H.Q. makes it clear that in these critical days, each man's place is at the front.

The tank situation has remained more or less the same.

The supply situation today for the first time permitted the bombardment of enemy batteries by the 21st Panzer Division. The enemy gunfire has been as on the previous days.

There were again several enemy fighter-bomber raids.

12 July 1942

0055: The bulk of the 21st Panzer Division has arrived in the area to the north of El Mireir. II/Panzer Grenadier Regiment 104 and Panzer Regiment 5 are still in the old operational area 3 km. to the south-west of Alam Dihmaniya.

Apart from the usual gunfire and night bombing raids the night passes quietly.

0740: Panzer Army Africa announces that the Ariete Division is placed under the Africa Corps for the operation to the north of Bab el Quattara.

2 flak batteries are placed at the disposal of the 21st Panzer Division for the attack on El Alamein. The attack is supported by the mass of the Army artillery.

0800: The 21st Panzer Division is informed accordingly.

0930: Quiet reigns in front of the 90th Light Division. Vehicle concentrations are observed in the area around Deep Well; before Reconnaissance Unit 33 there is a screen of patrol cars with isolated tanks and 1 battery.

0950: O.C. Ariete Division is given instructions by the G.O.C. at the Corps battle headquarters. The division is allotted the sector northern edge Quattara fortification - Deir Umm Khawabir. The O.C. Ariete Division points out that, to start with, only 2 Bersaglieri companies, 11 tanks and 1 battery are available.

15th Panzer Division and 90th Light Division are briefed on the operation.

1315: The enemy gropes forward against Reconnaissance Unit 33; he has been forced back by gunfire.

Before Panzer Regiment 5 enemy armoured forces; it cannot be discovered what their plans for attack are.

The afternoon passes without anything of note to report.

1710: The withdrawal of Panzer Regiment 5 and the battle echelon is ordered. The Ariete Division is in the process of taking over in their position.

All is still quiet in the evening.

The C. in C. has insisted that there are too many reserve troops piling up in the area behind the lines. The divisions are directed to move up all refitting depots into the area to the west of the Quattara Track.

The tanks which have come out of the workshops have been used by Panzer Army Africa to seal off the enemy breakthrough. They are now again at the disposal of the Africa Corps and are to be brought forward.

The shortage of equipment in the supply zone has not even yet been surmounted. On the broad motor ways there are still difficulties in bringing supplies which have been requested promptly to the front.

13 July 1942

The night passes quietly.

The tank situation remains approximately the same.

0535: Panzer Army Africa orders that while the 21st Panzer Division is preparing for the attack, and during the attack itself, enemy batteries to the north-east of the Pavia Division will be held down.

/ 0610:

0610: The above order is passed on to the division by telephone, and will follow later as a radio message.

0825: In accordance with Panzer Army Africa orders an Africa Corps reserve group will be held in readiness north of Corps battle headquarters as from 1300 hours for a possible operation at El Alamein. The Kirsten Group is available for operations again.

1000: C. in C. reports that no more units of Infantry Regiment 382 may be expected. The regiment will be put into the northern sector of the front.

The morning passes quietly. The divisions are still under artillery fire, which becomes heavy at times.

1200: The 21st Panzer Division attacks and soon reaches the edge of the heights, but is then held up by heavy artillery fire.

1300: A strong fighter-bomber attack is made on Corps battle headquarters.

Panzer Army Africa orders units of the 90th Light Division to carry out a feint attack at 1800 hours. Units taking part in this operation will remain in areas they reach during the hours of darkness. On the suggestion of O.C. 90th Light Division, the attack will be carried out by units at Ghebel Kalakh and to the south. The attack will be launched at 1800 hours, but Reconnaissance Unit 33, operating on the right wing, will go forward at 1630 hours to help the attack by the main force.

1640: Reconnaissance Unit 33 attacks.

1800: The remainder of the 90th Light Division units designated for the operation go forward. There is no contact with the enemy at present. The attack then runs into heavy fire by 3 batteries. Reconnaissance Unit 33 advances to Naqb Rasa. In the meantime, the 21st Panzer Division attacks again, but without success. A fresh attack has been ordered at 1900 hours.

1905: The 15th Panzer Division is ordered to eliminate the effect of enemy batteries on the south-eastern flank of the 21st Panzer Division. If necessary, artillery will change position for this operation. The 15th Panzer Division has so far not observed withdrawals to the north or north-east by enemy forces. Visibility is bad owing to a sandstorm.

Panzer Army Africa orders units to break off the battle if the 21st Panzer Division attack is unsuccessful. In this case the division will withdraw after midnight, leaving rearguards, and prepare for a fresh attack in the area west of Sanyiet el Miteiriya. The division is under Africa Corps command again.

2000: The 21st Panzer Division attack at 1900 hours was unsuccessful. The division receives orders from the Army to withdraw and reach the new area.

The 90th Light Division has made some progress and reached the approximate line Manaqir el Daba - 115. The division is of the impression that the object of deceiving the enemy was achieved.

In spite of the 21st Panzer Division's failure it is still probable that the offensive will be resumed. G.H.Q. therefore repeats its instructions that minefields etc. are to be accurately charted.

14 July 1942

0300: Reconnaissance Unit 33 is attacked by armoured reconnaissance cars and self-propelled guns.

/ 0530:

0530: I/Infantry Regiment 155 is also attacked. Both attacks are repulsed, the enemy suffering losses. Apart from this nothing of importance has occurred on the 90th Light Division front. The 15th Panzer Division is under the usual bombardment. Enemy aircraft were very active again during the night.

0600: The C. in C. arrives at Africa Corps battle headquarters and issues the following orders:

The 21st Panzer Division will remain under Army Corps command to restore the situation in the north. A feint attack will be launched along the whole of the southern front at 0830 hours. Units of the 15th Panzer Division will also take part in this operation and will transfer accordingly.

G.O.C. points out that these units cannot be in position by 0830 hours.

0610: The order regarding operations by the Baade Group is passed on to Colonel Menny by telephone. It will be issued to the 90th Light Division later as a radio message, and a written copy will also be made.

Units of the 90th Light Division at Ghebel Kalakh and to the south will attack in an easterly direction. The Baade Group will advance along the Quattara desert track, by-pass Ghebel Kalakh, and take Deep Well, which will also be the objective of Special Unit 288 advancing from Bab el Quattara. The 15th Panzer Division will hold down enemy forces by an armoured attack with limited objectives. X Army Corps artillery will support the attack. The concentrated attack on Deep Well will take place at 1400 hours after a Luftwaffe attack in strength.

0830: O.C. X Army Corps receives detailed instructions from the G.O.C.

Enemy forces opposite the southern wing have made a slight withdrawal since yesterday.

An enemy group is attacked by dive-bombers.

The Baade Group attack is delayed as units have not re-fuelled. To prevent further loss of time the group is instructed not to wait for the flak battery which is to be sent through it to the 90th Light Division. The Albers Army Artillery Unit will continue to support the 90th Light Division.

0945: The 90th Light Division has attacked. The Baade Group is moving up.

1200: The enemy forces opposite the 90th Light Division seem to have withdrawn some distance. Deep Well, which was supposed to be unoccupied according to aerial reconnaissance, is garrisoned by strong enemy forces, according to a 90th Light Division report. The north wing is held up; 90th Light Division orders that the attack is to be resumed with all available forces at 1400 hours. The Quattara depression is again reported unoccupied by enemy forces.

1400: The dive-bomber attack on Deep Well cannot be carried out. At present units are still some distance away from this position.

15th Panzer Division tanks carry out the feint attack, making some progress during the afternoon, but have to be withdrawn again later.

1630: During the course of the afternoon the attack makes better progress. The left wing of the 90th Light Division and the Baade Group are lagging somewhat. The latter, reporting from the area south of point 100, states that there are vehicle concentrations around Deep Well. The 90th Light Division requests dive-bomber attacks on vehicle concentrations in the area 8 km. north-east of Qaret el Himeiat.

The C. in C., who was at Africa Corps battle headquarters during the afternoon, is very pleased with the progress of the attack so far. The G.O.C. has gone to Bab el Quattara to observe the course of the attack from there.

Enemy withdrawals opposite the 15th Panzer Division cannot be observed. There are still enemy armoured units opposite the Brescia Division and Panzer Regiment 8. In order to prevent an enemy advance on the extended flank of the 90th Light Division the division is ordered to mine the slopes and to carry out continuous reconnaissance of possible descent points.

1730: The Baade Group cannot make a frontal advance. The unit will attempt to encircle Deep Well from the north-west. Strong enemy forces are again reported in Deep Well.

1915: The Baade Group's advance is still slow, and is held up by minefields. No reports have been received from the Littorio Division. It was not known until later that it reached the area north of Deir Alinda towards 1800 hours. By dusk the 90th Light Division had reached the following line:

1 km. east of Qarct el Himeiat - 153 - 125 - 103 - 115 - south of point 99 - 101 - 93 - 81.

The G.O.C. returned to battle headquarters in the evening.

2230: As units formerly occupying the Quattara defence works have been brought forward, the lane through the minefields in this area is unguarded. 15th Panzer Division is therefore ordered to assume this duty.

Panzer Regiment 8 will be moved into the area around point 76 (4 km. north-west of Alam Nayil) to afford some protection to the flank of the Bab el Quattara defence works and to establish contact between the 15th Panzer and Ariete Divisions.

After the C. in C. has received reports on the situation, the 90th Light Division receives orders to attack at 0530 hours tomorrow morning to take Deep Well, using the Menton Group and the subordinated Baade Group. Afterwards the Baade Group will be held in readiness to turn north-eastwards.

2300: The noise of a violent battle has been heard in the east for some time. The 15th Panzer Division now reports that an attack against the Brescia Division is in progress and that the enemy has made a penetration on the left wing. The divisional staff of the Brescia Division knows nothing of this penetration.

2330: The Staff of the Brescia Division has only just received a report of the penetration. Panzer Army Africa is informed, and the Africa Corps will restore the situation.

2400: The 15th Panzer Division, which has been ordered to restore the situation, reports that the enemy is pivoting towards the rear of the Pavia Division, which has its front facing east. Panzer Regiment 8 is forming a defensive front to prevent the enemy pushing further forward. It seems as if a strong enemy reconnaissance force had broken through and is now looking for a way back to its own lines. Later this assumption is proved wrong.

15 July 1942

In view of reports so far received, G.H.Q. is of the opinion that this is only a strong reconnaissance force which has made a local breakthrough. General outlook remains unchanged at present. Orders for the battle on the southern front are therefore still in force and will be supplemented.

/ 0100:

- 0100: Intelligence describes the situation to Army Intelligence. It is pointed out that a correct estimate of the situation is not possible, and that the Africa Corps has no counter-attack reserves at its disposal at present. The bulk of 15th Panzer Division infantry is with the 90th Light Division, and the whole of the 21st Panzer Division is still in the north.
- 0115: The Chief of Army General Staff again issues orders that the situation must be restored. The Intelligence question as to whether the Baade Group can be withdrawn for this purpose during the morning receives a negative answer. A decision will be reached later, and available forces must suffice.
- 0150: A detailed discussion takes place between G.O.C. and Colonel Menny. The division will consider whether the battalion of Infantry Regiment 382 and the Africa Corps battle echelon can be sent in to counter-attack.
- 0420: 15th Panzer division reports that the Pavia Division strongpoints are still occupied. This report originates from the liaison officer with X Army Corps. At present the 15th Panzer Division line runs roughly from point 71 to trig. point 63. Divisional artillery is in position west of this line and can be withdrawn in time without loss of equipment.
- It now appears that a considerable penetration has been made, and that the Brescia Division's defensive front no longer exists.
- 0545: It is essential that the Baade and Menton Groups advance to relieve pressure on the Brescia Division. However, it appears soon afterwards that the situation cannot be restored with the forces available. Enemy forces approximately a battalion strong have established themselves in Deir el Shein.
- 0600: Panzer Army Africa orders the 21st Panzer Division to hold a group in readiness for operations with the Africa Corps.
- All units of the 15th Panzer Division are engaged in a defensive battle, and enemy tanks are making a fresh attack from the south-east. The battle echelon is sent in against this enemy force from the south-west. The attack is successfully halted.
- 0740: A reconnaissance unit under the command of Lt. Schrötter is being sent out so that information on the course of the battle may be obtained more quickly. He reports that trig. point 63 is occupied by the enemy. The 90th Light Division receives orders to send Reconnaissance Unit 33 north immediately, and for the Baade Group to turn north.
- 0830: The enemy has now pushed forward to an area directly south of Ruweisat. The divisional staff of the Brescia Division must change position. There is no contact with the liaison officer attached to the division. After some time it has only just been learnt that Lt. Colonel Mittag was severely wounded in close combat, and that Sturm, a civilian specialist, was killed.
- Reconnaissance Unit 33 attacks very quickly. Inquiries establish that the Baade Group cannot have received the 90th Light Division order owing to some oversight.
- 0900: The Schrötter reconnaissance unit also reports enemy forces south-west of trig. point 63. Army reports that according to an intercepted signal, enemy forces are withdrawing to the breakthrough area. In reality, however, the situation appears to be quite different.
- 1100: No new reports on the enemy have been received. The Baade Group is placed under the direct command of the Africa Corps. At the moment this unit is at Deir el Anqa. As there are enemy forces north of the

unit, it will go through Bab el Quattara, and for this reason it is uncertain whether it will arrive in time. The situation is critical. The outcome of the day's operations depends on the punctual arrival of units brought in for the counter-attack. A further deterioration in the situation was caused by strongpoint garrisons of the Brescia Division abandoning their positions. Threats with weapons were unavailing.

1230: The Baade Group finally arrives and the area south-east of El Mireir is designated as its objective. The situation remains unchanged at Hill 63.

The Pavia Division is also retiring westwards. The critical nature of the situation increases. The 90th Light Division will use all available forces for counter-attack in the north.

1350: During G.O.C.'s report to the C. in C. (by telephone) permission was granted for the withdrawal of the 90th Light Division advanced line to Ghebel Kalakh, in the event of strong enemy pressure. Panzer Army Africa has also despatched the whole of the 21st Panzer Division southwards.

The Baade Group has reached Quattara. Colonel Baade comes to Africa Corps battle headquarters in person and is informed on the situation and future operations by G.O.C. The Baade Group will advance along the approximate line of the former Brescia Division strongpoint front. Units of the 15th Panzer Division, flanked by units of the 21st Panzer Division, will advance on the left of the group, while Reconnaissance Unit 33 will advance on El Ruweisat itself. In addition, Reconnaissance Unit 3 has been sent in from the north-west. At present the unit is in the vicinity of point 39 and is striking south-east.

Reconnaissance Unit 33 will be sent a written copy of the order.

1435: Colonel Menny is informed of the operation to restore the situation. The 15th Panzer Division will provide artillery support for all units taking part.

1500: The first units of the Bruer Group of the 21st Panzer Division arrive in the battle headquarters area. The group consists of a rifle battalion with approximately 100 men, 6 machine guns and 6 5 cm. anti-tank guns. The other units, including artillery, will not arrive until later. With the exception of 3 field guns, one company of Anti-tank Battalion 39 is placed under the command of the Bruer Group. This company had hitherto been held back as the last reserve in the area of Corps battle headquarters. The Bruer Group will be sent in directly south of El Ruweisat.

Reconnaissance Unit 33 has reached an area west of trig. point 63. Hill 63 is still in enemy hands. An attack will be launched. An attack on point 63 by 2 infantry companies of the 15th Panzer Division was held up in face of some 40 - 50 enemy tanks. According to a Panzer Army Africa report, Reconnaissance Unit 33 has reached the northernmost Pavia Division strongpoint, which is still holding out. Army places assault guns of XX Army Corps under Africa Corps command, and these will be sent up to the Baade Group.

1615: The Bruer Group launches its attack. The Baade Group is still in Quattara.

1630: Reconnaissance Unit 33 has captured trig. point 63, taking a number of prisoners.

1730: Hill 53 has also been taken. The list of material captured and losses inflicted on the enemy by Reconnaissance Unit 33 is increasing.

The enemy force north of El Ruweisat must now be encircled. The Bruer Group is therefore ordered to wheel on point 64. On the right, the Baade Group will also change direction. However, a fresh crisis has arisen. The Bruer Group infantrymen are streaming back, apparently in face of an enemy armoured attack.

/ In

In addition, the Baade Group has not attacked for some unknown reason, and is hedging and making suggestions for a mobile reserve. The unit receives urgent orders to attack as ordered. It appears later that the group carried out contrary orders issued by the 15th Panzer Division, to which it is not subordinated.

- 1810: The 90th Light Division, on whose sector nothing important has happened, is ordered to withdraw to the line Ghebel Kalakh - Bab el Quattara. A screen of reconnaissance and advanced units will be left behind. It is again stressed that the Quattara defence works must be held. Liaison officers of the Littorio Division and XX Army Corps are informed accordingly. The Littorio and Ariete Divisions will withdraw to their former positions.
- 1845: The Bruer Group is south of point 53 and will soon link up with Reconnaissance Unit 33. There are enemy tanks south-east of the Group, and Hill 63 is still held by strong enemy forces. A counter-thrust is launched against Reconnaissance Unit 33 by enemy tanks, but this is repulsed. The Baade Group is held up and is only south-west of trig. point 63.
- 1930: The enemy tanks which broke through have at last fallen back to the east. It is useless to continue the battle in the dark as units are mixed up. G.H.Q. therefore orders defensive positions to be taken up during the night. The attack will be resumed tomorrow morning at 0430 hours.
- 2040: The Bruer Group reports that it broke off the attack on its own initiative owing to lack of contact on the left.

The Baade Group is taking up defensive positions on the water pipe track, and has contact with other units on both flanks.

The 21st Panzer Division is moving up, and the divisional staff is already 1 km. west of trig. point 63.

The 90th Light Division is again expressly ordered to keep the mine belt north-east of Bab el Quattara under observation. XX Army Corps receives similar orders. The 15th Panzer Division is ordered to cover the eastern flank and rear of units advancing northwards to encircle the enemy.

No further developments of importance occur during the evening. The critical situations of the day have been overcome by using last reserves. Units have again achieved great successes and caused the enemy heavy losses. Reconnaissance Unit 33 was particularly successful.

It is thought that the situation, which became so critical through no fault of Africa Corps troops, will be fully restored tomorrow.

The Luftwaffe carried out operations in strength after brisk enemy air activity.

16 July 1942

No important developments occurred during the night. The withdrawal of the 90th Light Division, which was still in progress at daybreak, was completed without enemy interference.

- 0430: The 15th Panzer Division, the Bruer Group and Reconnaissance Unit 33 are attacking towards the east. The same enemy units are situated opposite them as during yesterday evening.

/ 0550:

0550: The Bruer Group's attack is held up. Reconnaissance Unit 33 was also held up shortly afterwards. The Baade Group reports enemy flanking movements on both sides.

0700: The Italian assault guns hitherto subordinated to the Baade Group are once more under the command of XX Army Corps.

The attack is still held up. In the meantime the 21st Panzer Division has taken over command of the Bruer Group. The division requests the 15th Panzer Division to advance more quickly and so eliminate the threat to its flank.

0725: Colonel Baade explains to the G.O.C. why Motorised Infantry Regiment 115 did not attack at 0430 as ordered. Enemy tanks were in front and it was therefore impossible for the men to move forward in lorries. In addition, Colonel Baade intends to withdraw one battalion.

The G.O.C. objects to these measures and orders the Baade Group to leave the battalion at the front and to attack immediately. For this purpose the regiment will come under the command of the 15th Panzer Division again.

An attack by Reconnaissance Unit 33, which was launched in the north to gain information, has also broken down again.

The 90th Light Division reports vehicle concentrations east of the Quattara defence works, and an enemy attack is expected in this area. The G.O.C. consequently telephoned to issue the following orders to the division:

Artillery Unit Zech will withdraw into the strongpoint immediately. The strongpoint must be held at all costs, and a battalion of Infantry Regiment 364 will be transferred for this purpose.

Battle group Briehl must be sent north immediately as the situation in that area has again become critical. The division's objection that it would then be very weak in view of the width of the sector makes no difference to the order.

As the situation in the north appears very serious owing to a deep enemy penetration, 1 battalion of Motorised Infantry Regiment 104 with regimental staff will also be despatched to this area and will come under the direct command of the C. in C.

0830: 21/A.A. Battalion 612 has been subordinated to the Africa Corps to defend the Deir el Shein fortifications. The company is ordered to place its guns so that the whole of the eastern edge of the mine belt is covered. In addition, 2 battalions of the Bersaglieri Regiment will be sent to Deir el Shein.

The 21st Panzer Division and Reconnaissance Unit 33 attack is now slowly gaining ground. The 15th Panzer Division appears to be held up. According to a report received from the division, its flanks are being subjected to considerable fire. Reconnaissance Unit 33 has taken point 63 on the water pipe track. The 21st Panzer Division is approximately abreast of Reconnaissance Unit 33. However, the C. in C. will divert this unit for operations on the northern front shortly after Hill 63 has been captured.

0930: The 90th Light Division will be placed under the direct command of Panzer Army Africa.

The advanced detachment of battle group Briehl is moving northwards.

After the withdrawal of Reconnaissance Unit 33, Hill 63 is temporarily unoccupied.

The 15th Panzer Division is moving closer to the 21st Panzer Division, as it is making no progress on the right. It appears that there are no enemy forces north of El Ruweisat, and the 15th Panzer Division order to turn northwards is cancelled.

- 1200: The attack has still made no progress worth mentioning, although the overall situation demands that former positions be reached quickly to relieve the pressure on the northern front.
- 1305: The G.O.C. orders the attack to stop. It will be resumed at 1800 hours after a large-scale attack by the Luftwaffe. The 15th Panzer Division requests permission to continue its attack, which is making progress at the moment, until it comes abreast of the 21st Panzer Division. The request is approved and the division links up with the 21st Panzer Division.

The C. in C. spent the whole of the morning at Corps battle headquarters. The G.O.C. was at the front and spent most of the time with the 15th Panzer Division. He returned towards midday.

- 1320: The enemy Air Force is very active again today. A strong fighter-bomber attack was made on Corps battle headquarters, damaging several vehicles, including that of the G.O.C. The C. in C. had been in this vehicle until the air attack commenced. Shortly before midday a further attack was made in the Corps battle headquarters area.
- 1500: During an air attack several bombs again hit battle headquarters without causing any damage.

During the past few days the R.A.F. has not concentrated on single targets, but has dropped bombs over wide areas, probably because of the extensive dispersal of vehicles

- 1545: The order to attack, which has already been discussed with the divisions, is issued as a telephone message. Zero hour is at 1825 hours. It is intended to relieve strongpoints of the Pavia Division, which according to the Army are still holding out, retake the former defence line and push the enemy back into the minefield. The 21st Panzer Division will advance towards El Ruweisat and directly south of it with the 15th Panzer Division on its right.

Enemy forces are not counter-attacking during the afternoon.

- 1825: The divisions attack. The G.O.C. is at the front again. The 21st Panzer Division has the impression that the enemy expected the evening attack. The attack is not gaining much ground, and the 15th Panzer Division has to divert some units to protect its southern flank.
- 2130: In consideration of the importance of relieving the Pavia Division strongpoints, the divisions are ordered to continue the attack during the hours of darkness. Perhaps in this way it will be possible to advance.

No more reports are received before midnight.

17 July 1942

The order to push forward to the former defence line will be carried out at dawn, in so far as this has not already been accomplished.

- 0100: Colonel Menny reports that the night attack is proving very difficult, and that 12 tanks have been lost so far. The advanced line cannot be clearly established in the dark and the Luftwaffe cannot be given exact information for its attack in the morning.

/ 0150

- 0150: After discussion with the C. in C., the divisions are ordered to hold positions they have reached. Further enemy breakthrough attempts are expected, and each division will therefore hold a reserve group in readiness for Panzer Army Africa.
- 0500: Heavy artillery fire can be heard again from the north. Army reports that a penetration has been made on the Trento Division sector. The enemy then pivoted and is advancing south-westwards along the Quattara track. Enemy forces are said to be at Deir el Dipp already. G.H.Q. transmits an Army order to the Briel Group at El Mireir to advance immediately along the Quattara track.

2/A.A. Unit 512 in Deir el Shein is ordered to cover the north-west. Divisional reserve groups and other units which can be spared will be brought up to G.H.Q. immediately.

- 0700: A reconnaissance unit under the command of Lt. Schrötter is sent out to report on the situation. He reports that Hill 31, Saniyet el Miteiriya, is occupied by the enemy, and that the Briel Group is preparing for an attack at point 33. Hill 31 will soon be taken; the enemy is retiring to the east and north-east; the greatest danger is past.

Reconnaissance Unit 33 is advancing against the enemy flank east of Deir el Shein. The unit must pull further forward to ensure reaching the flank of retiring enemy forces.

- 0930: The situation has become clearer, the panzer detachment of the 21st Panzer Division will no longer be required.

Nothing of importance occurred on the front of the two divisions, no enemy counter-attacks were carried out; the divisions are under heavy bombardment.

- 1000: The Baade Group attacking towards the north is ordered to push northwards past the Briel Group and pursue the enemy.

In a telephone conversation between the C. in C. and the G.O.C. it was said that the situation in the north appears to be cleared up. It is now a matter of closing the penetration gap as quickly as possible.

The C. in C. issues the following information on plans in general:

The Trento and 90th Light Divisions will occupy the left wing up to but not including Deir el Shein. X Army Corps will be in contact with them on their right, up to Alam el Dihmaniya. XX Army Corps will take over the sector as far as Bab el Quattara, south of which only reconnaissance units will be used. The Africa Corps will be withdrawn for use in mobile operations. The C. in C. orders a new mine belt to be laid from Alam el Dihmaniya to point 53. 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions will be withdrawn behind this belt tomorrow night. Hill 63 on the water pipe track will be occupied, consolidated and mined as an advanced strongpoint. Deir el Shein strongpoint will be occupied by 2 battalions of the Bersaglieri Regiment. Occupation of the northern wing strongpoint of the Pavia Division will continue; occupying forces will break through tonight.

- 1020: Orders concerning mining and occupation of point 63 are passed on to the divisions by telephone.

- 1120: The commander of the 15th Panzer Division reports that a strong armoured attack is in progress on the left wing of the division. The division is also under heavy artillery fire. For this reason work on minefields is not possible.

- 1155: The commander of the 21st Panzer Division informs the G.O.C. that apart from artillery fire, everything is quiet.

/ The

The enemy is continuing to fall back in the north. Battle group Briel has reached point 14 2 km, south-east of Hill 21, which is occupied by Italian troops. The area west of the road is clear of the enemy, the Baade Group is attacking in the direction of Bir el Magtua where, in the opinion of G.H.Q., there can be no more enemy forces, if the report on the position of the Briel Group is correct. The Baade Group is ordered to resume the attack beside the Briel Group and retake the former defence line of the Trento division.

Reconnaissance Unit 33 has not pushed east, the planned flank attack cannot be carried out.

1330: Enemy infantry is attacking on the left wing of the 21st Panzer Division. The attack is held by artillery fire.

1520: An order is again issued regarding occupation of the old Trento Division line. Battle group Briel and I/Infantry Regiment 361, which has just been brought up, will eventually occupy the position. The Baade Group will remain in the position until reinforcements can be brought through continuously. Reconnaissance Unit 3 will defend a gap which is still open.

1610: On Army's instructions, orders for Infantry Regiment 200 concerning tomorrow night's withdrawal will be made out and passed on by the 21st Panzer Division to the regiment, which is in action north of the Pavia Division.

As Infantry Regiment 361 is to be sent up to positions adjoining Infantry Regiment 200 in the new defensive front, the Baade Group is ordered to send up I/Infantry Regiment 361 on the right wing. On Army's order, Reconnaissance Unit 3 will be withdrawn. Colonel Baade probably considers this hazardous owing to an enemy thrust towards Hill 21.

1730: An enemy attack which is slowly gaining ground is in progress against the Hülsen Group (Battle echelon Lindemann, units of Motorised Infantry Regiment 115, 1 battalion of Infantry Regiment 382), which is occupying the front on the southern wing of the 15th Panzer Division.

1825: Chief of Army General Staff is informed that there are no reserves available at present in the event of an enemy breakthrough. G.H.Q. therefore requests that the Baade Group or the Ewert Group be withdrawn.

1835: Panzer Army Africa agrees to withdraw the Baade Group at dusk and transfer it to the Quattara track south of El Mireir. Army will also withdraw the Ewert Group (Motorised Infantry Regiment 104) and send it north of El Mireir. However, this unit is not likely to be moved tonight.

The Baade Group receives orders to withdraw. As from 2030 hours the Briel Group and I/Infantry Regiment 361 will come under direct Army command.

1910: Army orders that 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions are to fall back behind the planned mine belt during the night. Orders are issued to the divisions by telephone. The enemy has not resumed his attack on the 15th Panzer Division front, but is now attacking the left wing of the 21st Panzer Division. However, this attack can also be repulsed.

2100: Withdrawal of the Baade Group is in progress.

As G.H.Q. expects a night attack north of Quattara, XX Army Corps is requested to provide defensive fire.

Nothing of importance occurred during the evening; usual enemy air activity after dark.

O.C. 21st Panzer Division has been wounded twice.

/ 18 July 1942

18 July 1942

- 0300: The Baade Group has reached the area ordered.
- Nothing of importance occurred during the night. An effort is being made to complete the mine belt.
- 0715: Corps battle headquarters is being transferred to Deir el Qatani.
- The G.O.C. will visit the Hülsen and Baade Groups.
- 0800: The Ewert Group has been relieved and is proceeding to the Africa Corps sector. In the north the enemy has made a fresh penetration, but this will soon be blocked.
- The C. in C. is staying at Africa Corps battle headquarters for some time.
- 1600: Until now everything has been quiet on the divisions' fronts. At present the enemy is attacking strongpoint 63, and II/Motorised Infantry Regiment 104, in action in this area, must be withdrawn. However, the division intends to retake the strongpoint in a counter-attack this evening. In the meantime I/104 and 13/104 have reached the Aba el Mukheisin area, and will be placed under the direct command of G.H.Q. as Corps reserves.
- It appears that 2/A.A. Battalion 612 has not taken up suitable defensive positions, and the company will again receive distinct written orders.
- 2030: The planned counter-attack on Hill 63 was successful and the position is once again in German hands.
- The enemy situation has hardly changed, although it is possible that small enemy forces on the 15th Panzer Division front have been moved northwards.
- The tank situation continues to be very serious. The 15th Panzer Division has 9 and the 21st Panzer Division 19 serviceable tanks.
- G.H.Q. requests Panzer Army Africa to send up missing units of II/Infantry Regiment 382 which have probably been put into action with the regiment on the northern front.
- Colonel Crasemann will resume command of the 15th Panzer Division in place of Colonel Menny, who has fallen sick.

19 July 1942

- A New Zealand reconnaissance unit attempted to infiltrate into the Hülsen Group sector by calling out in German, "Don't shoot, we are wounded", but the trick was discovered in time. Apart from this, nothing of importance has occurred.
- 0955: The Chief of General Staff reports that according to aerial reconnaissance, enemy tanks are assembling east of point 63. He again emphasises that strongpoint 63 must remain in German hands. The Africa Corps will also be made responsible for holding the Deir el Sheim defence works. The Italian units in action there will not be subordinated.
- Corresponding orders are issued to the 21st Panzer Division. By request, 13/Motorised Infantry Regiment 104 will be placed at the division's disposal again, and a battery must be held in readiness for an operation in I/Motorised Infantry Regiment's sector.

1225: I/Motorised Infantry Regiment 104 will also be placed under the command of the division again. A move nearer the front is also approved. However, the battalion must always be ready for transfer to the south and may only be sent into action with Africa Corps' permission.

The afternoon is passing quietly, as was the case yesterday. The enemy is carrying out lively reconnaissance operations. 2/A.A. Battalion 612 occupying the defence works at Deir el Shein will come under the command of the 21st Panzer Division.

The 15th Panzer Division complains that there is no contact with the 21st Panzer Division on the left. As the 15th Panzer Division cannot spread out owing to the length of its front, the 21st Panzer Division will be responsible for the link-up.

2015: Enemy artillery fire increased in the evening. The 15th Panzer Division reports a penetration on the Ariete Division front at the point of contact with the Lindemann battle echelon. The battle echelon has already been sent in to counter-attack. The Baade Group will also attack so that the situation may be cleared up quickly before the enemy can exploit this success. The Baade Group will come under the command of the 15th Panzer Division for this operation, but will again be subordinated to G.H.Q. when the situation has been restored. Colonel Baade receives instructions to advance eastwards past the Ariete Division, and then push northwards along the water pipe track.

A 15th Panzer Division report on the penetration states that units of the Ariete Division dropped their weapons and ran.

2400: According to a 15th Panzer Division report the situation has been restored. The penetration area will be closed by a reinforced company with battle echelon units.

Enemy air operations were carried out only during the morning.

Panzer Army Africa orders that tanks are to be surrounded by sand bags and stone walls to protect them from damage in air attacks.

20 July 1942

0315: The Baade Group has pushed forward along the desert track to an area west of Alam el Dihmaniya. The situation has therefore been absolutely restored. In accordance with orders the division submits a report on abandonment of weapons on the Ariete Division front.

With the exception of artillery fire the night passed quietly. No enemy air operations were carried out.

The morning and afternoon also pass quietly. The divisions are still under artillery fire; air activity is slight. The enemy is carrying out particularly strong ground reconnaissance operations against strongpoint 63.

1550: Owing to the emergency measures of the past few days, units on the 15th Panzer Division front have become mixed up. The division receives instructions to take care of necessary exchanges.

To prevent a repetition of last night's incidents, the C.O.C. suggests to O.C. XX Army Corps that a supporting line of tanks and 2 cm. guns be set up behind the corps' front. This would serve mainly to protect the contact point between the two corps. However, XX Army Corps rejected this proposal, as it did not suit the Italian character to fight in stationary tanks.

The Baade Group is ordered to carry out reconnaissance for future operations. It is planned to move the Group into the point 73 area on 21 July and to subordinate units of the battle echelon.

With reference to instructions issued yesterday, Panzer Army Africa orders that blast bays be built for tanks and that dummy tanks and 8.8 cm. guns be constructed.

The tank situation has improved. The 15th Panzer Division has 19, and the 21st Panzer Division 25 serviceable tanks.

Replacements are coming up to the front continually, but one unit has been put out of action already. Inadequate training is generally complained of, and also lack of battle experience. In particular, troops lack experienced leaders; the 15th Panzer Division's situation regarding commanders is very bad at present.

21 July 1942

Heavy bombing attacks were made again during the night.

Colonel Bruer has taken over command of the 21st Panzer Division.

No changes in the enemy situation are ascertained during the morning; single vehicles are observed at the front as on previous days.

A.A. Battalion 612, which has brought up the remainder of its companies, has 24 guns in position at Deir el Shein.

The staff of the Hülsen Group is being disbanded.

- 1900: A heavy attack on strongpoint 63 has developed from the east and north. By request of the 21st Panzer Division, I/Motorised Infantry Regiment 104, hitherto corps reserve, will be placed at the division's disposal.
- 1952: O.C. 15th Panzer Division also reports at attack on the Hülsen Group, the attacking forces presumably consisting of 2 battalions with tanks. German artillery ammunition stocks are low, and it is therefore very difficult to fight the enemy off. The noise of the battle, which can be heard at Corps battle headquarters from a south-easterly direction, is very violent and persistent. In the north the battle seems to be dying down, and the noise is growing more faint.
- 2050: 15th Panzer Division reports that the enemy has broken through on the Warrelmann Group sector, reached artillery positions, and is attacking them with machine-gun fire. One battery has been forced to fall back. The division requests that the Baade Group be placed at its disposal. This is not possible at the moment, as the divisional reserve consisting of 2 companies is not in action yet, and G.H.Q. cannot estimate whether the Baade Group will be more urgently needed on another sector.
- 2108: 21st Panzer Division reports that the Reissmann battalion has repulsed the enemy attack on Hill 63. At present all is quiet on the divisional front.
- 2115: Colonel Baade reports that a penetration has been made on the left wing of the Hülsen Group, and has not yet been blocked. 1 company with the Lindemann battle echelon has been sent in on the water pipe track to counter-attack to the north-east. Soon afterwards 21st Panzer Division Operations Officer reports that enemy forces in some strength have apparently broken through. Enemy forces in company strength are in front of Panzer Regiment 5. The 21st Panzer Division is therefore ordered to restore the situation on the 15th Panzer Division front with the help of I/Motorised Infantry Regiment 104 and the panzer regiment.

2200: The enemy is making a fresh attack on a broad front on the Hülßen Group sector.

Judging from the noise of the battle, the Lindemann Group seems to be engaging enemy forces which have penetrated the German lines. There is no communication with the latter unit.

Shortly afterwards the liaison officer with XX Army Corps reports that enemy units have infiltrated on that sector. 1 motorised infantry company has counter-attacked with tanks of the Ariete Division.

Continuous heavy bombing attacks are being carried out. Enemy air activity tonight exceeds anything hitherto experienced. Telephone communications are frequently broken, and there is no contact with the divisions.

22 July 1942

0030: Contact with the divisions has only just been re-established. As far as can be estimated in the dark, the situation is as follows:

15th Panzer Division still has no contact with the Lindemann battle echelon and the companies advancing eastwards along the desert track. The remnants of II/Infantry Regiment 382 are holding out around the battalion battle headquarters. To the north and south of battalion battle headquarters there are wide gaps in the front. The Warrelmann Group has been overrun on the northern wing. It is not known what is left of the battalion. On the left wing of the division Panzer Regiment 8 has been sent in to counter-attack. The enemy is apparently removing mines.

On 21st Panzer Division front the Reissmann battalion has repulsed three attacks on Hill 63, and requests reinforcements. At 0015 hours I/Motorised Infantry regiment 104 launched an attack from the area of point 46 on the western edge of Deir el Shein in the direction of the Warrelmann battalion in order to close the breach in that area. 1 company was diverted to reinforce the Reissmann battalion, and another took over artillery defence.

The G.O.C. decides to hold back the 21st Panzer Division counter-attack owing to the confused situation. No move will be made to restore the situation before dawn. The 21st Panzer Division will form up at 0415 hours and attack the flank of enemy forces which have penetrated German positions in a north-south direction, whilst the 15th Panzer Division, to which the Ba Group will be subordinated, will advance north-eastwards along the water pipe track.

0100: The G.O.C. discusses details of plans and the execution of orders with divisional commanders.

15th Panzer Division still has no contact with the Lindemann battle echelon. In the meantime nothing of importance has occurred on the 21st Panzer Division front.

0145: 15th Panzer Division is now in contact with Warrelmann, who reported that the situation is restored and that the battalion has suffered very heavy losses. Later it will be confirmed whether the Lindemann battle echelon has succeeded in closing the breach on the northern wing of the Hülßen Group. The battle echelon has distinguished itself and has courageously repulsed repeated enemy attacks. Bombing attacks continue without respite. In the next few days signals interception may discover that the enemy had planned to destroy artillery with these bombing attacks.

0415: 21st Panzer Division attacks as ordered. The panzer regiment soon runs into and completely surprises an enemy vehicle concentration, which is already west of the former defence line.

/ 0545:

0545: Hill 63 is still in German hands. German troops held their ground in hard defensive battles, and also took a number of prisoners.

Chief of Army General Staff reports that strong vehicle concentrations have been observed in area 74 - 75 opposite the southern front of the Africa Corps, and that a close watch must therefore be kept on the southern wing. Dive-bombers have been sent to attack the concentrations.

Panzer Regiment 5 has mopped up the hollow south of point 58, destroying several tanks, self-propelled guns etc., and taking several hundred prisoners. The unit is at present advancing along the water pipe track.

0700: 15th Panzer Division reports that it has regained former positions all along the front. The division is under heavy artillery fire. Colonel Baade reports that single tanks are feeling their way forward on the southern front. The mine belt in front of II/Infantry Regiment 382 is still in enemy hands. The Baade Group receives orders to push these enemy forces back to prevent dismantling of the minefield.

0720: It appears that the crisis is past. However, enemy tanks are attacking again in the 15th Panzer Division front. Shortly afterwards 21st Panzer Division also reports a fresh enemy tank attack, which is proceeding along heights south of El Ruweisat, passing point 63.

0740: 21st Panzer Division reports that enemy tanks have broken through south of trig. point 63. Italian forces in this area surrendered. The Reissmann Battalion is attacking from the east and tanks are in action again to retake the height.

Telephone communications with the 21st Panzer Division have broken down again.

G.H.Q. is sending an Intelligence Officer to Deir el Abiat to establish whether the enemy armoured attack is being held.

0910: Captain Laubinger reports that the enemy tanks, which had pushed forward to the Quattara track in the meantime, had been held by Panzer Regiment 5, and were now retiring eastwards in face of a counter-attack by this unit. 11 enemy tanks have been destroyed.

Panzer Army Africa reports that the Briel Group and 1 battalion of the 90th Light Division have been sent to the Africa Corps, and instructs that the situation must be restored at all costs.

G.H.Q. requests dive-bomber attacks on the enemy formation in area 74 - 75. At all events, a new crisis on the southern wing arising from an attack by these forces must be avoided.

0945: The Panzer Regiment 5 counter-attack is succeeding beyond all expectation. The enemy is almost in full retreat eastwards, and 25 tanks have been destroyed so far.

1030: The advance continues. Trig. point 63 has been retaken. 21st Panzer Division is advancing eastwards to regain Hill 63. The number of enemy tanks destroyed has increased to 30.

In view of the G.O.C.'s description of the situation, the C. in C. suggests that Panzer Regiment 5 discontinue its advance and prepare to attack southwards against the enemy thrust expected from area 74 - 75. Hill 63 will be abandoned.

1100: Operations Officer of 21st Panzer Division reports that the number of tanks destroyed has further increased. Out of an attacking force of 100 enemy tanks 40 have been destroyed so far for the loss of 3 German tanks. II and III/Motorised Infantry Regiment 104 have been overrun by enemy tanks. Losses cannot be estimated yet.

In a telephone conversation between the G.O.C. and Colonel Crasemann the G.O.C. decides that the Baade Group will remain under 15th Panzer Division command. This unit and Panzer Regiment 8 will establish a reserve strong-point at point 73 south of Bullet el Tor.

The old front line has been regained everywhere, but units have become mixed. 21st Panzer Division units are in action in the 15th Panzer Division sector and vice versa. Reorganisation will not be possible until after dusk.

At present the enemy is remaining quiet, and it seems as if he is preparing for a fresh attack.

1440: The Chief of Army General Staff gives details of a plan to attack the enemy group in area 74 - 75 at 1745 hours, using 2 battalions of the 90th Light Division and the tanks of the Ariete and Littorio Divisions operating from the Quattara defence works. The necessary artillery preparations will be made.

Shortly after this call 15th Panzer Division reports a fresh enemy armoured attack on the Warrelmann battalion sector.

1550: Enemy tanks have broken through again and are advancing north-westwards. It appears that trig. point 63 is once more in enemy hands. 21st Panzer Division wishes to attack at 1700 hours. 2 companies of Panzer Regiment 5 have been sent in against enemy tanks which broke through on the 15th Panzer Division front. The penetration is successfully blocked and enemy tanks thrown back, again suffering losses. It appears that trig. point 63 is still in German hands.

1610: Panzer Army Africa reports that vehicle concentrations can no longer be observed in area 74 - 75, and that the enemy is transferring all his forces northwards. In view of this development the 90th Light Division attack in area 74 - 75 is cancelled. On the other hand further attacks on Ruweisat must be expected. The Africa Corps will be made responsible for holding Deir el Shein.

Vehicle concentrations at point 64 and to the south are attacked by dive-bombers. No more enemy attacks are carried out during the afternoon and evening. The enemy Air Force has been very active throughout the day, and enemy artillery fire has also been very heavy.

1930: It is absolutely essential that the minefield be reached before dark so that further clearing may be prevented. The deep armoured penetration would not have been possible at all if the enemy had not been able to carry out undisturbed mine-clearing during the night.

The C. in C. again stresses the seriousness of the situation if the enemy succeeds in making a breakthrough in depth. The Africa Corps will only be withdrawn into the area Alam el Bilusiyat - El Wishks - north-east point 37 - west of point 43 in extreme emergency. XX Army Corps will be on the right and the 90th Light Division on the left. An order will be issued informing XX Army Corps of this plan, and the G.O.C. will instruct the 15th and 21st Divisions.

The situation continues quiet in the evening, and there are no indications of a fresh enemy attack.

The Africa Corps has passed through critical hours. Battle-weary and exhausted troops performed superhuman feats to restore the situation in scorching heat. Great successes can be recorded, including the destruction of 103 tanks and the capture of 45 officers and over 700 men.

/ Enemy

Enemy air activity continues through the night. Continuous night attacks are being carried out again, some with phosphorus bombs. G.H.Q. itself is attacked, but only superficial damage is caused to vehicles.

The battles have shown how important it is for units not to give ground, but even let themselves be encircled if necessary, so long as they hold their positions. Orders on this subject will be issued to divisions again.

23 July 1942

The enemy Air Force was particularly active during the night. In the morning fragments of German bombs were found at G.H.Q. and in the 15th Panzer Division sector. On investigation it appeared that German night bombers were in action and attacked their own troops.

As British aircraft fly very low, ground defence will also operate at night in future. The Africa Corps requests recognition signals. Continuous reports have hitherto not been given through Panzer Army Africa.

0910: The C. in C. reports that 2 enemy battalions east of Deir el Shein are preparing for an attack on the defence works, and emphasises that the position must be held at all costs. The Africa Corps will be responsible for this task.

0915: 21st Panzer Division reports that enemy infantry forces are attacking Hill 63 and Deir el Shein. However, the attack is held up by artillery fire. In the opinion of the division the purpose of the enemy attack was to recover tanks.

All is quiet on the 15th Panzer Division front.

The G.O.C. telephones to commend both divisional commanders for yesterday's effort.

Nothing of importance occurs during the day. 21st Panzer Division is ordered to establish contact with the 15th Panzer Division.

The C. in C. also commends the Africa Corps for the victorious defensive battle of 22 July. The number of tanks destroyed has increased by a further 15. German tanks were mainly responsible for this victory. As a unit on active service in Africa was recently mentioned in Wehrmacht dispatches, G.H.Q. also intends to propose a mention. Divisions are ordered to report the total number of tanks destroyed since 26 May.

The enemy situation remains unchanged in the evening. No vehicle concentrations have been observed which indicate an enemy attack. Air activity was on a smaller scale. Lanes in minefields cleared by the British have been closed up again. By order of Panzer Army Africa a concentrated mine-belt will be laid surrounding the following area:

Point 78 - Deir Umm Khawabir - west of Alam el Dihmaniya - El Mireir - $2\frac{1}{2}$ km. west of 78 Deir Umm Khawabir.

24 July 1942

For the first time in a long period no night bombers were in action during the night. With the exception of a reconnaissance operation against Hill 73 the night passed quietly. The tank situation is slowly improving again. 15th Panzer Division has 19 serviceable tanks, 21st Panzer Division 23.

In the course of the morning vehicle concentrations are observed east of Deir Umm Khawabir, but no attack was carried out.

1030: The C. in C. arrives at Corps battle headquarters. After a discussion on the situation, orders are given for the withdrawal of the bulk of 15th Panzer Division into the area north of the mine-belt tomorrow night, leaving only weak forces on the present front.

On the southern sector only small defence units will be stationed along the advanced mine-belt, and these will retire in the event of an enemy attack. If enemy forces penetrate into the mine-belt they will be out to pieces there.

1430: The G.O.C. discusses this order with O.C. 15th Panzer Division on the telephone. In addition, he orders 1 battalion to be held in readiness for mobile operations.

G.H.Q. reports that the laying of smoke screens by artillery indicates an enemy attack. Artillery must open up immediately as a counter-measure. In the evening Panzer Army Africa also reports that the enemy will probably resume his attacks, and that a constant state of defensive preparedness will be maintained.

The following is submitted to Army for mention in Wehrmacht despatches:

Since 26 May the 15th Panzer Division has destroyed 650 tanks and armoured vehicles and 21st Panzer Division 658.

The rest of the day passes quietly; enemy artillery fire is weaker, and enemy air activity on a remarkably small scale. Enemy vehicle concentrations are reported in the area of point 74 and at El Ruweisat.

25 July 1942

Re-grouping of the 15th Panzer Division, carried out during the night, was delayed by bombing attacks.

The tank situation has hardly improved.

0720: Panzer Army Africa reports that 1 battalion of the Bologna Division will be sent up to the Africa Corps during the morning. This battalion will be deployed on the northern edge of the mine-belt. A further 2 battalions for deployment on the western edge of the mine-belt will arrive during the next few days. Although carrying out operations with the Africa Corps, the battalions will remain under X Army Corps command.

0940: An order is issued regarding deployment of the battalion. The 15th Panzer Division is responsible for instructing the unit.

1100: The G.O.C. requests the liaison officer of X Army Corps to arrange for the battalion to be brought up to the front quickly. Captain von Kettler draws attention to the limited fighting capacity of the battalions.

1612: 15th Panzer Division reports that 3 companies have arrived and are being handed over.

The day passes quietly with artillery activity on both sides. Enemy forces are consolidating their positions. No changes have been observed in the general enemy situation. Air activity is slight.

A boundary line running from point 49 - point 58 - heights to point 58 will be established between the divisions.

Panzer Army Africa instructs that H.Q. units will also dig themselves in for defence.

/ 26 July 1942

26 July 1942

The night passed quietly with only slight air activity.

0910: Army issues orders for the relief of the remnants of II/Infantry Regiment 382 tomorrow night. They will return to the regiment.

Nothing of importance occurred during the day; artillery was active on both sides.

Air activity is slight. A sandstorm is in progress.

2020: Colonel Menton reports 20 - 25 enemy tanks east of the Quattara defence works. 15th Panzer Division is ordered to provide artillery defence in the event of an enemy attack.

2130: The enemy tank formation attacks, but is repulsed without difficulty.

Late in the evening heavy artillery fire can be heard in the north. On inquiry, it is learnt that the Pavia and Trento Divisions, in action north of Deir el Shein, are under fire.

27 July 1942

Enemy harassing fire and air activity during the night; the bombardment in the north continues.

II/Infantry Regiment 382 has been relieved.

0300: On inquiry by Panzer Army Africa, G.H.Q. confirms that enemy forces have penetrated the German lines at Saniyet el Miteiriya. Battle group Briel and Reconnaissance Unit 33 have been sent in to restore the situation.

0600: Army reports that the penetration is apparently larger than was supposed. The Africa Corps will hold a battle group in readiness for possible operation in the area.

0615: 15th Panzer Division receives orders to hold in readiness a reserve group under the command of Lt./Col. Mildebrath, consisting of 1 rifle battalion (I/Motorised Infantry Regiment 115), 1 light artillery unit (less one battery) 1 heavy flak battery and 1 panzer unit.

0630: The C. in C. informs the G.O.C. of the situation. The Africa Corps receives orders to restore the situation at Saniyet el Miteiriya.

The G.O.C. orders O.C. 15th Panzer Division to send battle group Mildebrath to Deir el Dipp, where it will pivot in the direction of point 37. A second penetration at Saniyet el Miteiriya will be sealed off by battle group Briel. The Chief of Army General Staff telephones to the Mildebrath Group to form up as quickly as possible. 15th Panzer Division is instructed that the Mildebrath Group could probably move more quickly by bringing units up to Deir el Dipp separately.

0650: The panzer unit of the Mildebrath Group has attacked. According to a 21st Panzer Division reconnaissance unit report, enemy forces in the north are already retiring eastwards.

0820: The panzer unit is south-west of Deir el Dipp; the area is under heavy artillery fire. There is nothing to be seen of the enemy; the unit is turning eastwards.

/ 0915:

- 0915: According to a reconnaissance unit report, Saniyet el Miteiriya is once more in German hands. The battle group has therefore been ordered to take point 37. This measure is approved by Panzer Army Africa.
- 0925: Army changes instructions and orders the Mildebrath Group to attack Saniyet el Miteiriya. The group reports a force of some 20 enemy tanks 2 km. north-west of Saniyet el Miteiriya. The group itself is advancing north-east. The enemy tanks are under Army artillery bombardment from the north.
- 1045: The Mildebrath Group reports that it has taken the Italian strongpoint, and that the enemy tanks are retiring north-eastwards. The group is ordered to overpower the enemy armoured force and then take up defensive positions east of point 37.
- 1140: Enemy tanks are advancing on the right wing of the Mildebrath Group, but no fighting results.
- 1250: The Mildebrath Group has reached the line 1 km. north of point 37 - north-east of Saniyet el Miteiriya, i.e. the former strongpoint line. I/Motorised Infantry Regiment 115, which has been held up so far, is advancing slowly. There are more tanks in front of the Mildebrath Group and there must be others north-west of Saniyet el Miteiriya. Lt. Colonel Mildebrath is therefore ordered to destroy this enemy force. 3 enemy tanks have been destroyed so far.
- 1400: In the meantime the strongpoint north-east of Saniyet el Miteiriya has been re-occupied by an Italian company. The Mildebrath Group is in contact with Infantry Regiment 200 on the right and the Briel Group on the left. There should be no more enemy tanks behind the German front.
- The order to take up defensive positions east of point 37 is repeated.
- 1645: The Mildebrath Group reports that it is covering point 37 from the east. Large concentrations of vehicles and tanks can be observed 3 - 4 km. to the east.
- 1815: Lt. Colonel Mildebrath receives orders direct from the C. in C. to destroy enemy tanks which have penetrated into the breach. There must therefore still be some enemy armoured forces inside the German lines. G.H.Q. instructs artillery and flak also engage the tanks. The group is informed of a new minefield south of Deir el Dipp.

Nothing of importance has occurred on the 15th and 21st Panzer Division fronts.

As further enemy attacks can be expected at any time, especially during the next 24 hours, orders are issued to hold panzer regiments in readiness for any contingency. The 21st Panzer Division will support the Brescia and Pavia Divisions in defensive operations.

The Mildebrath Group receives detailed instructions regarding the use of its units and their situation during the night.

During the afternoon the C. in C. spent some time with General Warlimont at Africa Corps battle headquarters.

28 July 1942

The night passed quietly. Enemy forces opposite the Mildebrath Group retired 2 - 3 km. eastwards. A total of 7 tanks were destroyed by the Mildebrath Group yesterday.

- 0940: Panzer Army Africa orders the Mildebrath Group to withdraw for action on another sector; the breach will be closed by artillery barrage.

1000: The above order is issued to the Mildebrath Group. Riflemen will not be able to retire before dusk.

The G.O.C. goes to investigate the situation in the 15th Panzer Division sector.

During the journey G.H.Q. Intelligence Officer, Staff Captain Laubinger, and the G.O.C.'s signals officer, Lt. Heinze, are killed by artillery fire.

Nothing of importance has occurred on the divisional fronts. Enemy artillery fire varies in strength, and enemy air activity is limited to armed reconnaissance.

2040: The G.O.C. asks the X Army Corps liaison officer whether units of the Brescia Division can be transferred to the northern part of Deir el Shein. Apart from 4 2 cm. guns, there is no garrison there. In addition, the Bologna Division battalion on the northern edge of the mine-belt has retired too far. The G.O.C. requests that this matter be dealt with.

2230: Battle group Mildebrath withdrew from its positions without losses and is now at the Corps' disposal north-west of Deir el Dipp.

During the past few days it has been noticed that when special reserve groups have been required quickly no operations staff was available. Both divisions have therefore been instructed to hold a staff in readiness.

The tank situation has improved considerably of late, and 108 tanks are serviceable again.

29 July 1942

The night passed quietly; enemy forces east of battle group Mildebrath made a further withdrawal.

0930: The attention of the Chief of Army General Staff is drawn to the inadequate garrison of the northern part of Deir el Shein. In addition, it is asked whether the staff of the 15th Rifle Brigade can be held in readiness as an operations staff for reserve groups.

The day passes quietly with artillery fire on both sides and slight enemy air activity.

2005: In a telephone conversation between the C. in C. and the G.O.C., the C. in C. stresses that further enemy attacks are to be expected. A strong reserve group must be made ready. For this reason the 21st Panzer Division will be withdrawn during the night and its sector taken over by the 15th Panzer Division.

2015: The G.O.C. passes the order on to both divisional commanders by telephone. The 21st Panzer Division will withdraw during the night and remain in readiness as a reserve group in the area around Deir el Abyad. Divisional artillery will support 15th Panzer Division defence. III/Motorised Infantry Regiment 104 and A.A. Battalion 612 will remain under 15th Panzer Division command. Panzer Regiment 8 minus the Mildebrath Group and 1 battalion will come under the command of the 21st Panzer Division. The Mildebrath Group remains unchanged with the exception of the artillery unit staff and 1 light battery which will return to the 15th Panzer Division. Orders will be issued later in writing or as a radio message.

The C. in C. again stresses the necessity to hold positions at all costs. G.H.Q. will issue various orders on the surveillance of mine lanes etc.

/ 30 July 1942

30 July 1942

The night passed quietly. 15th Panzer Division has taken over the whole of the Africa Corps sector, and the 21st Panzer Division is assembled in the area around Deir el Abyad. Artillery will regroup during the morning.

Artillery was active on both sides during the whole day. Enemy artillery is concentrating on rear areas. During the morning and afternoon part of Corps battle headquarters was under weak artillery fire. Enemy air activity is slight. No changes have been observed in the enemy situation.

31 July 1942

Nothing of importance occurred during the night.

0930: Grenadier Halm of Panzer Grenadier Regiment 104, who destroyed 7 enemy tanks on 22 July, was awarded the Ritterkreuz by the C. in C. at Corps battle headquarters.

Afterwards a discussion on future plans took place. All motorised units are to be withdrawn and prepared for an offensive. Defence positions will be garrisoned by infantry. Further mine-belts must be laid to effect the greatest possible economy in forces.

1030: The G.O.C. discusses further measures with divisional commanders. The 15th Panzer Division will carry out mining operations after more detailed instructions from the G.O.C. Engineer Battalion 200 will come under 15th Panzer Division command for this purpose.

The day passes without any important developments. Artillery is active on both sides, enemy fire being heavier at times. German artillery is concentrating on enemy artillery. No changes in the enemy situation have been observed.

1 August 1942

The night passed quietly, with the exception of a reconnaissance operation on the 15th Panzer Division sector, which was repulsed.

Artillery was active on both sides during the day. The R.A.F. carried out several fighter-bomber attacks.

No changes in the enemy situation have been observed.

In order to limit journeys into Army rear areas, instructions have been issued that passes will be required for all journeys to the rear as follows:- As far as El Daba for battalions, Mersa Matruh for regiments, and beyond Mersa Matruh for divisions.

The tank situation continues to improve; the 15th Panzer Division has 66 serviceable tanks and the 21st Panzer Division 65.

2 August 1942

Nothing of importance occurred during the night.

The 21st Panzer Division is ordered to carry out reconnaissance operations in the southern sector (El Taqa and Ghebel Kalakh) as a defensive measure against a possible enemy attack.

/ Operations

