

KASSERINE PASS BATTLES



Readings Volume I, Part 2



U.S. ARMY
CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

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1st Armored Division, Report of Operations,
Bahiret Foussana Valley, Tunisia, 19-25 February
1943

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Hq 1st Armd Div
In The Field
2300 hrs, 19 Feb 1943

FIELD ORDER
:)
NO. . . . 6)

MAPS: GS, GS 4180 - Sheets 28,39 - Scale: 1/200,000.
GS, GS 4227 - Sheets 10,13 - Scale: 1/200,000.

1. a. Enemy is concentrated in strength in the vicinity of FERIANA and THELEPTE with what is estimated to be not less than one armored division, (the 21st) understrength in tanks, (about 75 estimated). Strong patrol activity was reported during the night of 18-19 February at S-5842, S-6450, S-7350 and S-7852. One battalion of tanks was reported at S-7048 and another battalion (10th Panzer Division) was reported between KASSERINE and S-9573. Heavy two-way traffic on the GABES - FERIANA Road.

b. Our troops are holding the passes as shown below:

EL AR EL ABIOD (S-4460)
Lt. Col. Bowen, Comdg
3d Bn 26 Inf
Det 443 CA
B Co, 13 AR
C Co, 106 CA

DERNAIA (S-7356)
Gen Welvert, Comdg
1st Bn, 168 Inf
1 Ranger Bn
175 FA Bn
B Co, 19 Engr
1 Co, 692 CA
A Co, 105 CA
A & C Co, 213 CA
36 FA Bn (-Det)
3 Bns, French Inf

KASSERINE (S-9574)
Col. Stark, Comdg
19 Engr (-1 Co)
1st Bn, 26 Inf
33 FA Bn (-1 Btry)
1 Co, 13 AR
805 TD (-C Co)
Det 443 CA
D Co, 105 CA

2. The 1st Armd Div will act defensively to protect the town of TEBESSA and supply installations thereat against attack from the south and southwest, being prepared meanwhile to counterattack to the southeast to restore the DERNAIA position in the event that position is penetrated by hostile attack.

TROOPS

DIV RCN (HOY)
CO, 81 Rcn, Comdg
81 Rcn Bn (-A Co)
4 Guns, 443 CA

CC A (McQUILLIN)
CG, CC A Comdg
6 Inf (-2d & 3d bn)
1st Bn, 13 AR (-B Co)
3d Bn, 13 AR (-I Co)
91 FA Bn (-B Co)
68 FA Bn (-A Co)
701 TD Bn
A Co 16 Engr
16 Guns, 443 CA

CC B (REINETT)
CG, CC B, Comdg
13 AR (-1st & 3d bn)
2d bn, 6 Inf
27 FA Bn
601 TD (-C Co)
D Co, 16 Engr
16 Guns, 443 CA

DIV RESERVE
1 AR (-1st&2d Bns)
A Btry 68 FA
16 Engr (-A,C
& D Co)

DIV HQ
3 Guns, 443 CA

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Inclosure #1

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REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

a. The Division will use the bulk of its strength in the Division area prepared to avert hostile reconnaissance and delay in threatened areas. It will maintain a force of one company in the vicinity of Um Elin, establishing observation posts and necessary patrols to report enemy incursion in the area DJ MAJMA (S-1561) - DJ MAJMA (S-1553) - DJ MAJMA (S-1572), and to avert enemy penetration of the pass at S-1060. It will establish a guard on the minefield being laid in that pass, and will establish reconnaissance to the pass at DJ MAJMA (S-1512).

b. CC "A" will meet and repel any enemy attack from the west through the valley between DJ MAJMA and BABEL AL SID - DJ MAJMA. The enemy forces will be first engaged and defeated or delayed in the vicinity of the eastern exits of the valley. Infantry defensive positions will be reconnoitered but not occupied; a proportion of anti-tank and tank guns will be located, dug in and camouflaged to effect surprise flanking fire on an attacking hostile force. It is contemplated that if CC "A" is forced back by overwhelming enemy strength, it will be ordered to retire, while executing maximum delay, to the vicinity of Hill 1172 (S-3864). There it will block enemy progress and prepare to execute a pincer counterattack, in conjunction with CC "B", upon an enemy penetration North of Hill 1172.

CC "A" will also be prepared to participate with other elements of the Division in repelling an enemy attack in sectors other than its own.

CC "A" will emplace artillery to place fire in front of the minefields being laid at (or near) S-1060, S-1559 and at S-2352.

CC "A" will establish guards on the minefields at S-1559 and at S-2352.

c. CC "B" from the general vicinity of its present position will be prepared to execute on Division Order the following alternate missions:

(1) Counterattack, or reinforcement of the EL MA EL ABIOD position in case of threatened enemy penetration.

(2) Movement to position covered from ground observation in vicinity of Point S-4072 as Division Reserve in case of enemy attack from the West. From that position CC "B" will be prepared to execute a pincer counterattack (in conjunction with CC "A") against an enemy penetration from the West through the valley, meanwhile placing a force (to include Tank Destroyer guns) to block enemy passage North through the pass at S-3075.

(3) Counterattack to restore the DEWALA position in the case of enemy penetration.

CC "B" will in the meanwhile emplace an appropriate number of tanks to support the position of the 26 Inf in the passes South of EL MA EL ABIOD.

x. (1) Arab traffic into our lines (except through minefields) will be permitted. Arab traffic toward the enemy will not be permitted.

(2) Any passes (in addition to those at which minefields are now being emplaced) through the mountains which form our defensive line, will also be mined and covered by artillery fire. Reconnaissance to locate such passes will be effected by combat commands as follows:

CC "A": West of the TEBESSA - EL MA EL ABIOD Road.

CC "B": East of the TEBESSA - EL MA EL ABIOD Road and West of the TEBESSA - DJ MAJMA Road.

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4. See Administrative Order Number 5.

5. a. COMMAND POS:

- DIV HQ: S-4474.
- SI HQ: S-4463.
- CC "A": To be reported.
- CC "B": S-4665.

b. Instructions regarding use of a thrust line and a new set of reference points will be issued separately.

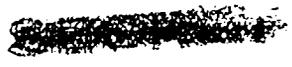
ORLANDO WARD
Commanding

A TRUE COPY:

Edwin L. Powell, Jr.
 EDWIN L. POWELL, JR.,
 Major, G.S.C.,
 Ass't. A. C. of S., G-3.

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HEADQUARTERS 1ST ARMORED DIVISION
A.P.O. 251 c/o Postmaster
New York City, N.Y.

20 February 1943.

OPERATIONAL INSTRUCTION)

NUMBER 5)

1. CC "A" will be prepared to carry out the Division mission in the valley between DJ BOU DJELLAL and BABET EL SID - DJ ANOUAL, that is, to act defensively to protect the town of TEBESSA and supply installations thereat against attack from the South and Southwest, being prepared meanwhile to counter-attack to the Southeast to restore the DERNALIA position in the event that position is penetrated by hostile attack. If suddenly attacked or if communications fail, appropriate action will be taken at once.

2. The execution of the above mission requires the following.

a. Minefields in the mountain passes to be guarded and backed up by artillery fire.

b. Disposition for the counter-attack, or reinforcement of the EL MA EL ABIOD position in case of threatened enemy penetration.

c. Close liaison with the troops holding the DERNALIA position to determine the routes of approach and most profitable direction of counter-attack.

d. The preparation of plans for the attack on any enemy forces forced entrance into the valley by the Eastern exits.

e. Prepare plans for blocking the passes through the mountain range just South of TEBESSA by the use of mines and defensive action.

NOTE: Cross fire from tanks hidden in Arab homes, hay stacks, etc. or under or behind other cover and the clever use of supporting fires, mine fields, and hidden anti-tank guns will be used to trap at a disadvantage any enemy tanks entering the valley.

ORLANDO WARD
Major General, U. S. Army
Commanding.

A TRUE COPY

Edwin L. Powell, Jr.
EDWIN L. POWELL, JR.,
Major, G. S. C.,
Asst. A. G. of C., G-3.

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Inclosure No. 2

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REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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Hq 1st Armd Div
In the Field
0300 hrs, 23 Feb 1943

FIELD ORDER)

NO. . . . 7)

MAPS: GS,GS 4180 - Sheets 18,28,39 - Scale: 1/200,000.
GS,GS 4227 * Sheets 10,11,13,14 - Scale: 1/200,000.

1. a. See Intelligence Summary.
b. (1) Forces of the British 6th Armd Div and the 34th Inf Div held a position at SBIBA, and the passes at O-1905 and at T-1590; the pass Northwest of KASSERINE is the only one available to the enemy.
(2) Forces of the 1st Inf Div and French troops under General Welwart hold the DERNIA position and the pass South of EL MA EL ABIOD; part of the 1st Inf Div made a successful attack East from a point near S-7574 in the afternoon of February 22.
2. The 1st Armd Div (less detachments) with attached troops will hold the enemy South of the general line DJ HAINRA - THALA, covering the left flank of the II Corps and preventing a German move to the West.

TROOPS

<u>DIV RCN</u> CO, 81 Rcn, Comdg 81 Rcn Bn (-A Co)	<u>EC B (ROBINETT)</u> 13 AR (-1st Bn & Hq & I Co, 3d Bn) 2d Bn, 6 Inf 27 FA Bn 68 FA Bn 894 TD 601 TD (-C Co) D Co, 16 Engr 2d Bn, 16 Inf 3d Bn, 39 Inf 16 Guns, 443 AA	<u>26TH ARMD BRIG, (REINF)</u> (NICHOLSON) 26th Armd Brigade (British) 1 Co, 56th Cav 1 Co, 86th Chemical Mortar B & D Cos, 105th AA 34th FA Bn 60th FA Bn 84th FA Bn
<u>CC A (DIV RES) (McQUILLIN)</u> 6 Inf (-2 & 3 Bns) 1 Bn, 13 AR 3d Bn, 13th AR 91 FA (-B Btry) A Co, 16th Engr 701 TD 16 Guns, 443 AA	<u>DIV RES</u> 26 Inf (-2d & 3d Bns) 3d Bn, 6th Inf 16th Engr (-A,C, & D Cos) Prov. Bn, 1 AR	

NOTE: The dispositions indicated above will be checked for accuracy, and report of error made to Division Headquarters.

3. a. The 81 Rcn Bn will operate initially in the gap between DJ BOU EL HANEEHE and DJ EL ATROUS to cover the left flank of the Division, and will reconnoiter through the pass East of DJ EL ATROUS to establish contact with the enemy. The

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Inclosure No. 3

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81 Rcn Bn will shift its main forces into the latter pass, on Division order, if that pass is reported clear.

b. CC B will execute the Division mission within the zone:

West Boundary: REKKARIA (incl) - ridge top of DJ ES SIF to point 1116 road-trail junction at S-8379 (incl)

East Boundary: DJ EZ ZABA (N-9914) - DJ DOULES (T-0566).

c. The 26th Armd Brig (reinf) will execute the Division mission within the zone:

West Boundary: Railroad line (actual) RAIDRA - KASSERINE (incl)

East Boundary: DJ EZ ZABA (N-9914) - DJ DOULEB (T-0588).

d. CC A will remain in Division Reserve in general area East of HAIDRA. It will institute route reconnaissance to enable it to reinforce the positions either of CC B or the 26th Armd Brigade, if that action be ordered. It will maintain all elements of the command in positions permitting them to be moved East or West. It will anticipate and formulate plans for a counterattack through the THALA or DJ HAINRA position.

e. The 16th Engr Bn (-det) will continue necessary maintenance on the road HAIDRA - DJ HAINRA, and will conduct route reconnaissance within the zone; DJ HAINRA - THALA - TADJEROUINE - KALAAAT ES SENAM - EL MERIDJ - MORSOTT - TEBESSA.

f. Other elements of the Division Reserve will remain in present areas East of HAIDRA, reorganizing and awaiting orders.

x. (1) All elements of the Division will fully inform personnel of the existing situation, to permit intelligent action by all ranks. Action will be tenacious, and harassing. Through aggressive action, night and day, the enemy armor and personnel will be waylaid, or approached by stealth, and destroyed. Great emphasis will be placed on the use of sticky bombs and "Molotov Cocktails" to inflict the maximum losses upon the enemy. Our armor must be so utilized as to inflict damaging losses yet maintain itself at effective fighting strength. It must be given adequate artillery support.

x. (2) A strong counter offensive (on Division order) to destroy the enemy North of the bottleneck of the KASSERINE pass must be kept in mind.

4. See Administrative Order Number 5.

5. Command Post:

I Armd Div : N-6109

CC A : to be reported

CC B : S-6684

26 Armd Brigade: THALA

81 Rcn Bn : to be reported

ORLANDO WARD
Commanding.

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Major, G. S. C.,
Asst. A. C. of S., G-3.

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HEADQUARTERS 1ST ARMORED DIVISION
A.P.O. 251 c/o Postmaster
New York City, N.Y.

23 February 1943.

OPERATIONAL INSTRUCTION)

NUMBER. 6)

1. CC "A" will be prepared to execute with a striking force, consisting of purely combat elements of Hq CC "A", 3d Bn, 13 AR (-2 Cos), 1st Bn, 13 AR, 701 TD Bn, 1st Bn, 6 Inf and 91 FA Bn, each of the following missions upon receipt of the message "Execute Plan A" or "Execute Plan B".

2. PLAN "A";

A counterattack by CC "A" to supplement the efforts of the 26th Armd Brig at THALA. Approach should be made rapidly via the quickest route, and (according to a hasty reconnaissance) must bottleneck through THALA. Further reconnaissance and liaison with the 26 Armd Brig will be made to determine best route and direction. Brig Nicholson will take over command of both forces in the event of such commitment of CC "A".

3. PLAN "B";

A counterattack by CC "A" to supplement the efforts of CC "B" in the vicinity of DJ HAINRA. The approach should be made rapidly via the quickest route. Reconnaissance and liaison with CG, CC "B" will be made to determine best route and direction of attack. This action, if ordered, will be coordinated by CG, 1 AD.

4. The enemy situation may require that a reenforcement of a defensive line (placing tanks in hull down firing positions) be effected, rather than a counterattack. Such action will be additionally contemplated by commanders concerned.

ORLANDO WARD
Major General, U.S. Army
Commanding.

APPROVED

Edwin L. Powell, Jr.

EDWIN L. POWELL, JR.,
Major, U. S. A.,
Asst. A. C. of S., G-3.

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REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Field Order: Dictated by General Harmon, 1640 hrs., February 24, 1943.

Howze Plan will be executed 0630 hrs., tomorrow, 25 February, 1943. The limit of artillery fire to the left for the 1st Armored Division and to the right for the 6th Armored Division will be the wadi that goes through Kasserine Pass. Artillery fire to the left of the wadi only on call from the 6th Armored Division. The 1st Armored Division will send an artillery liaison officer with radio to THALA AF once to report to the Commanding General, 6th Armored Division. Attack must be made on time. High ground over-looking the Pass will be the objective of both Divisions. Corps artillery will furnish supporting fires to be coordinated by Force Commander and artillery officer, II Corps. Air support will be furnished by Corps. When position is captured the high ground over-looking the Pass will be organized for defense by the combat team from the 1st Infantry Division making the attack. The attack will be made primarily by infantry and supporting artillery. The artillery of the 9th Division under Gen. Irwin is attached to the 6th Armored Division for the attack. These battalions will be in the British sector under their control but supporting fire for the American force may be called for through the artillery liaison officer with the 6th Armored Division. Reconnaissance after the Pass is captured and the mines cleared will be pushed by the 1st Armored Division to Kasserine then south to Feriana. Reconnaissance from 6th Armored Division will be pushed through Kasserine north to Sbiba.

Howze
e/s

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E. H. HARMON
Maj. Gen., U.S.A.

25 February 1943.

FIELD ORDER,
NUMBER 2)

REF: 1:200,000.

1. a. See G-2 estimate.
b. See boundary.
2. See overlay.
3. a. 9th Div.

(1) Assemble BCU CHEBKA AREA. Defend sector EL MA EL ABIOD - KASSERINE PASS (both inclusive).

(2) Relieve elements 1st Div. (except 10th RCT), Constantine Div., 168th CT and 1st Ranger Bn.

(3) Relieve 10th RCT upon arrival 3d RCT 9th Div.

b. 1st Arm'd Div.

(1) When KASSERINE PASS is captured and secured, assemble north EL MA EL ABIOD in Corps Reserve.

(2) Maintain contact Derby Yeomanry and 9th Div.

(3) Release elements 39th Inf. to 9th Div. in BCU CHEBKA AREA.

c. 34th Div.

(1) Defend sector indicated on overlay.

(2) Relieve 18th CT upon arrival 168th CT.

(3) Maintain contact XIX Corps.

d. 168th RCT.

Assemble and reorganize vicinity AINE BEIDA as relieved.

e. 1st Derby Yeomanry. See overlay.

f. 1st TD Group. Dispose units as follows:

89th TD Bn - Back up KASSERINE PASS.

805th TD Bn--AINE BEIDA for reorganization.

601st TD Bn--reserve.

701st TD Bn--remain attached 1st Arm'd Div.

g. 751st Tk Bn. Upon arrival, 751st Tk Bn to be attached 34th Div.

Inclosure #5

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Combat Command B, 1st Armored Division, Operations Report, Bahiret Foussana Valley, 20-25 February 1943

HEADQUARTERS COMBAT COMMAND "B"

APO 251 - U. S. Army

OPERATIONS REPORT

BAHIRET FOUSSANA VALLEY

In the Field
1 March 1943

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20 February 1943 to 25 February 1943

1. 20 February 1943: At about 1030 hrs the Commanding General received from the 1st Armored Division orders that he was to move his command without delay to THALA by way of TEBESSA - HAIDRA, where he would assume command of all troops defending the KASSERINE Pass. At this time many officers of all units and of the C/C "B" staff were reconnoitering terrain to be traversed in case the command were to act in accordance with plans issued by the CG, 1st A.D. The command moved at 1300, preceded by the CG party.

At about 1600 hrs the CG met Gen Fredendall about 4 miles south of THALA on the THALA - KASSERINE road. He was there informed that the enemy had broken through the KASSERINE Pass and was pushing to the north on THALA, west toward TEBESSA. Our forces were in retreat up both avenues. C/C B was ordered to move southeast from HAIDRA, secure the passes of Dj el HAINRA, assume command of all U.S. troops southwest of OUED EL HATAB in the FOUSSANA Valley, stop advance of the enemy into that sector, drive him out of the valley and restore our position in the KASSERINE pass.

That part of the command which had passed HAIDRA counter-marched and went into assembly areas about 1 mile southeast of HAIDRA. Unit C.O.'s were called to the CP which had been established at 1725 hrs just south of HAIDRA, advised of the new situation and ordered into assembly positions shown on overlay #1. Units closed in these areas by 2400 hrs. 1 heavy section of the 601st TD Bn was attached to the 27th FA Bn. The Reconnaissance Co, and the remaining heavy guns of the 601st TD Bn were attached to the 2nd Bn, 13th AR.

The C.O., 601st TD Bn, was charged with establishing a straggler line along the north - south road just east of Dj el HAINRA and all available staff officers of the command were ordered out to contact, assemble and help reorganize units retreating from the KASSERINE Pass.

At 2300 hrs, CG and S-3 left the CP to meet Brig Nicholson, British 6th Armd Div, under whose command C/C B was to operate.

2. 21 February 1943. The CG and the S-3 met Brig McNabb, the BGS of 1st Army, and the CG, 26th Armd Brig, in the THALA Post Office at 0200 hrs. In the absence of the commander, Brig Nicholson, it was agreed by parties to the conference that 26th Armd Brig, moving south from THALA and C/C B, moving southeast from vicinity Dj el HAINRA, would advance toward the KASSERINE Pass if possible with infantry elements, but would not commit the armor in either sector. Brig McNabb stated that II Corps would be informed that it must coordinate the action. The conference was concluded and the CG departed for the CP just south of HAIDRA.

By 0600 hrs, the 601st TD Bn, less detachments, had commenced feeding re-grouped stragglers just west of the Pass at S-7088. Units which were being reassembled at this time included the 3rd Bn, 39th Inf, the 1st Bn, 26 CT, the 894th TD Bn (almost entirely intact), very small groups of the 19th Engrs Bn, and the 33rd FA Bn. Personnel of the 805th TD Bn, supposedly in the area, were never contacted.

At 1500 hrs, the C.O. of the 894th TD Bn, with the 3rd Bn, 39th Inf, Co D, 16th Engrs attached, was charged with defense of the passes at S-6784,

Red Jacket, 1st Div

601-CCB-0.3

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S-7088 and S-7384. These passes were completely organized for defense by 2400 hrs, except that the northern-most pass had not been mined due to a shortage of mines and wire, then on order.

At 1530, the 2nd Bn, 13th AR (plus detachments) which had then picked up the remainder of "I" Company, 13th AR, was attacked by approximately 40 enemy tanks, followed by lorried infantry. This attack was repulsed with a loss to the enemy of 10 tanks and 10 other vehicles and an unknown number of infantry. We had no losses. The 27th FA Bn, which was supporting the tank battalion, was dive-bombed at 1630 hrs by 10 Stukas and suffered 9 casualties; 1 H/T destroyed. The enemy retired at about 1800 hrs.

At about 1600 hrs 68th Armd FA arrived in the area just west of the pass at S-7088 to operate under this command.

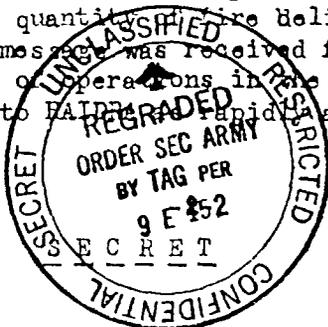
Sometime during the afternoon, the CG was informed by II Corps that the 2nd Bn of the 16th Inf, then in the area S-7274, was under his command. It was then learned that the 33rd and the 7th FA Bns were near that Bn and in support of it, but it was never clear under whose command these FA Bns would operate.

At about 1400 hrs, the 2nd Bn, 6th Inf, was ordered to work its way south along the eastern slopes of Dj el HAINRA to the vicinity of the pass at S-7475 with the view to later covering the right flank of the 2nd Bn, 13th AR in subsequent advances down the valley. At 1800 hrs the 2nd Bn, 16th Inf was ordered to displace to the SE to cover the passes at S-7473 and S-8070 and to patrol to the east toward the pass. At 2400 hrs the command was disposed as shown on overlay #2. Co G, 13th AR, joined the command late in the afternoon.

3. 22 February 1943. 2nd Bn 13th AR reported enemy burning vehicles and apparently planning to withdraw 0050 hrs. The 2nd Bn, 6th Inf and 2nd Bn, 16th Inf were ordered to patrol actively to their front. No contact was gained with the enemy. At 0655 hrs the 2nd Bn 6th Inf and the 2nd Bn, 16th Inf with the 33rd FA Bn in front of it were attacked by an estimated force of 1 Bn of tanks and 1 Regt of Inf supported by arty up to 155mm ca. Enemy tanks did not close, but attacked by fire only. 1 Btry of the 33rd FA Bn was captured, penetration was made between the 2 Inf Bns and the left of the 2nd Bn, 6th Inf was threatened when the CG sent Co "G", 13th AR, to support the latter Bn. The 2nd Bn of the 13th AR was not employed since it was facing a tank force approximately equal to it in size. By 1200 hrs the enemy attack seemed to have slowed down considerably and by 1400 hrs it had been so stopped that the 2nd Bn, 6th Inf, was able to counterattack, restore its position and recapture the equipment of Btry C of the 33rd FA Bn.

Commencing at 0700 hrs the 2nd Bn, 13th AR, was taken under fire by a continuous but ineffective enemy artillery. During the counterattack of the 2nd Bn, 6th Inf, the 2nd Bn, 13th AR was able to disorganize and capture enemy infantry which were driven toward its position. Over 200 prisoners were taken. Throughout the day, the 27th FA, although not in direct support of the 2nd Bn, 6th Inf, fired over 2000 rounds on targets of opportunity which presented themselves in front of the Inf Bn. The repulse of the enemy was in great part due to the accuracy and quantity of fire delivered by the 27th FA.

At about 0930 hrs message was received from the 1st AD stating that that unit was taking charge of operations in the THALA - KASSERINE - HAIDRA area and that its CP was moving to HAIDRA as rapidly as possible. Its right boundary was



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given as an East - West line through DJ EL SIF to cross-roads at S-8079. At mid-afternoon, the 1st Bn., of the 16th CT without our knowledge moved into passes at S-6884 and S-7088 with orders from CG, 1st Inf. Div. to defend them. Accordingly 3rd Bn., 39th Inf. was ordered to move to defend the passes at S-7393 and S-7695. Occupation of the passes was completed by both Bns by 2400 hrs. Co "D" 16th Engrs, completed mining of pass at S-7393 at 1800 hrs. Dispositions of troops are as shown on overlay #3.

4. 23 February 1943. 2nd Bn, 13th AR moved at daybreak to occupy positions in wadi at S-7582. At 1100 hrs one Co of tanks made a reconnaissance in force to the vicinity of S-7880. No enemy encountered. At 1700 hrs the Bn completed an ordered move to a position in the vicinity of S-8378. The 27th and 68th Armd FA Bns moved up behind it. No enemy yet encountered. Rcn Co reconnoitered as far east as vertical 85 - no enemy contact.

At 0935 the 2nd Bn, 6th Inf, assembled in the vicinity of S-7180. The 16th CT was advised to fill the gap thus created on its front. At this point no satisfactory communication had as yet been established with the 2nd Bn, 16th CT, which was under our command in the sector of the 1st Inf Div. Just after dark, the 2nd Bn of the 13th AR dropped back about 1 mile to bivouac for the night.

During this night the RAF bombed KASSERINE intermittently.

The 16th CT came under our command at 2200 hrs.

At about 1100 the 894th TD Bn was ordered to assemble in rear of the pass at S-7088 and to send light patrols to the north to the area south and west of THALA. The balance of the Bn when assembled was to move to the right flank of the 2nd Bn, 13th AR and push rcn toward the KASSERINE Pass along the northern slopes of Dj CHAMBI.

Reports had been received starting before dawn that the enemy occupied THALA or that the 6 A.D. was defending along a northeast - southwest line about four miles south of THALA, thereby encountering our left flank.

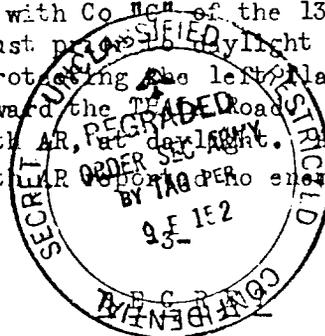
For dispositions of the command as of 2400 hrs, see overlay #4.

The results of our operations this date: None.

5. At about 0300 hrs, CG, 1st AD, arrived at our CP and informed the CG that the command had the mission of driving the enemy from the valley, destroying as much of him as possible and re-capturing the KASSERINE Pass. The attack was to be coordinated with the 26th Armd Brig, moving south from THALA by Maj Gen Harmon, Deputy Commander of the II Corps. The enemy had apparently withdrawn from before THALA, and our left seemed secure.

The CG, C/C B, submitted a plan for the capture of the Pass which was later adopted by the Deputy Commander. The plan provided for infantry to work onto both shoulders of the Pass from the north and west, the infantry to be closely followed by a tank - artillery team -- C/C B moving from the west, 6 AD from the north.

The 2nd Bn, 13th AR, with one Company of Infantry attached, closely supported by the 27th and 68th FA Bns moved forward towards the KASSERINE Pass at daylight. The 601st TD Bn (less Co "C") with Co "G" of the 13th AR attached, moved to the north side of QUED EL HATAB just prior to daylight and from the vicinity of S-8078 moved forward at dawn, protecting the left flank of the 2nd Bn, 13th Ar and sending reconnaissance toward the THALA Road. The 894th TD Bn was on the right flank of the 2nd Bn, 13th AR, at daylight. At 1000 hrs, the Rcn Co of the 894th TD Bn and of the 13th AR reported no enemy contact at a point one



mile west of the KASSERINE Pass. At 1400 hrs 2nd Bn, 13th AR, received artillery fire in the vicinity of S-8776. At that time, orders were issued for units to advance to positions as shown on overlay #5. The 2nd Bn, 6th Armd Inf was to secure a line of departure for the 16th CT as shown on that overlay. Commencing at dark, the 16th CT began movement to position as shown on that overlay, and by 2400 hrs, all troops were in position as shown on overlay #5.

During the late afternoon, Provisional Inf, detachments organized from the 894th TD by its C.O., had worked its way SW of Dj EL AGAB towards Dj CHAMBI, where it came under mortar and machine gun fire. It is believed that the fire this detachment returned had driven the rear elements of the enemy off the SW shoulder of the KASSERINE Pass, by 2000 hrs. This was not known until the following day, because of lack of communication with that detachment.

6. 25 February 1943. Following a 10 - minutes artillery preparation, the 16th CT attacked at 0630 to seize and secure the SW shoulder of the KASSERINE Pass. No enemy was contacted. By 1030 hrs the 2nd Bn, 13th AR, reached NW mouth of the Pass and Co "D", 16th Engrs, moved forward to begin removing mines at that time. Mines in the pass were removed by 1400 and the road cleared to KASSERINE by 1800. Recon Co, 13th AR, reached KASSERINE at 1800. The 894th TD Bn, with the 2nd Bn, 6th Inf attached, outposted the 16th CT with small elements of each arm in the vicinity of KASSERINE. The 16th CT commenced Recon of the NE shoulder of the pass at about 1700 hrs in order to begin relieving the Guards' Brigade, from their positions at daylight of the 26th February.

7. In conclusion, it is felt that the attack (which was eventually launched in the air) could have met the enemy successfully had more infantry been assigned to C/C B sooner and had its left flank been secured by more vigorous action by the 6 AD south of TEALA. Tanks and artillery with little infantry cannot maintain contact in close terrain, especially at night.

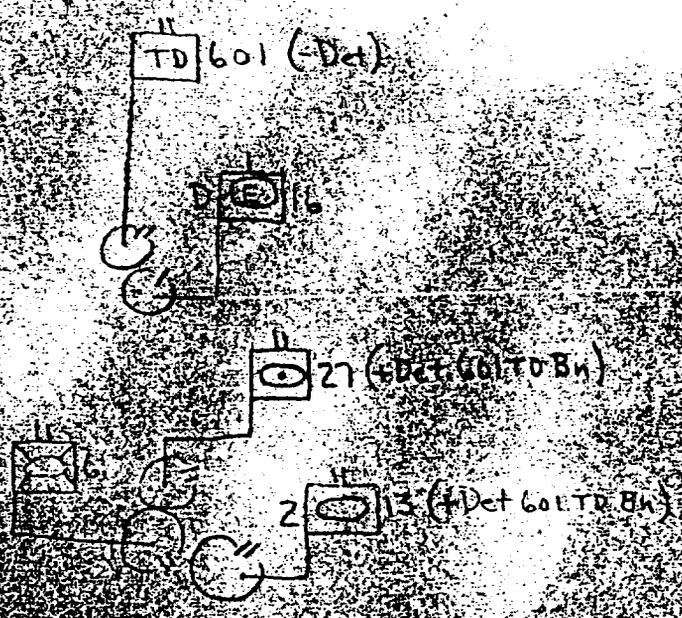
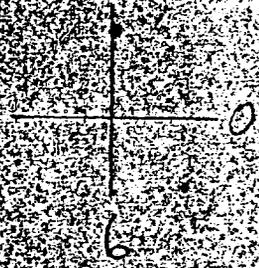
P. M. ROBINETT,
Brig Gen, Cmbt Command "B",
Commanding.

OFFICIAL:

E. Russell, jr.
EDWIN A. RUSSELL, jr.,
Lt. Col, Cav.,
S-3.



17

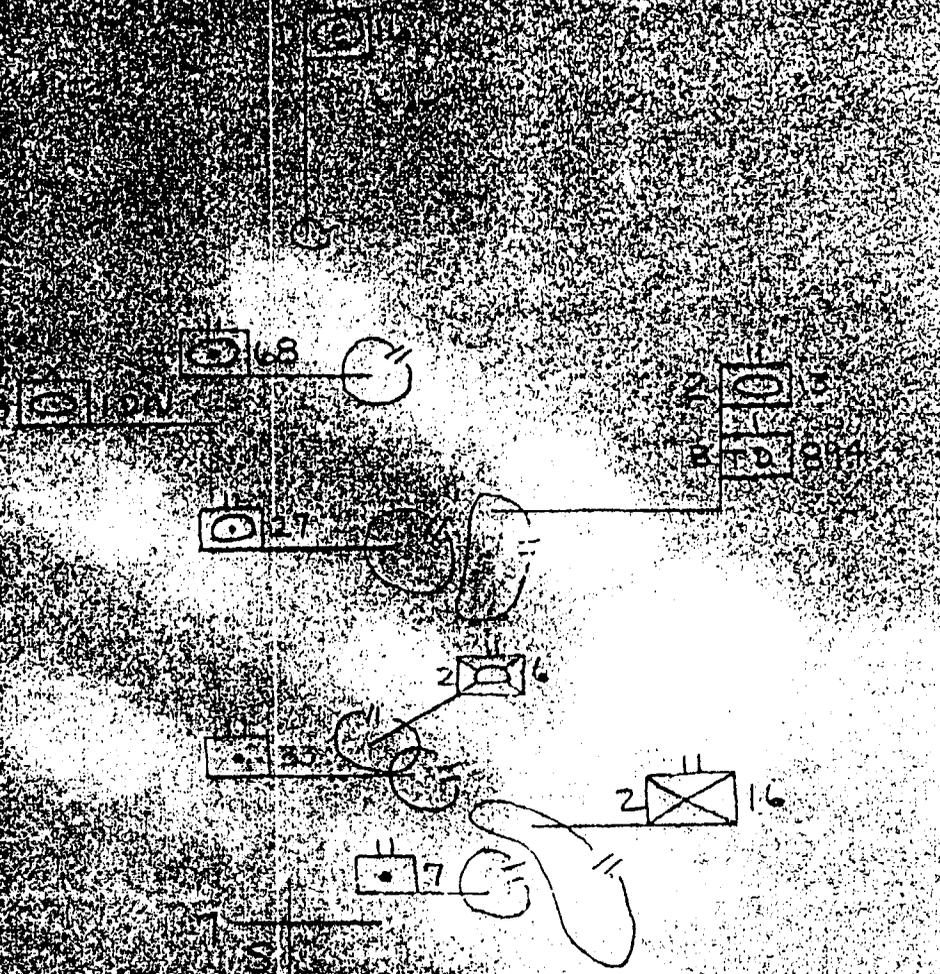


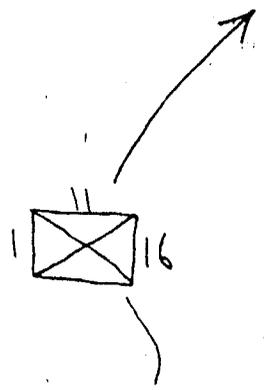
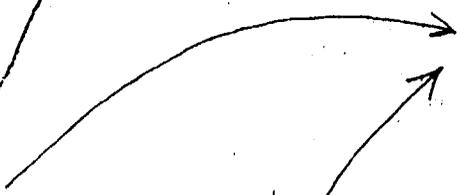
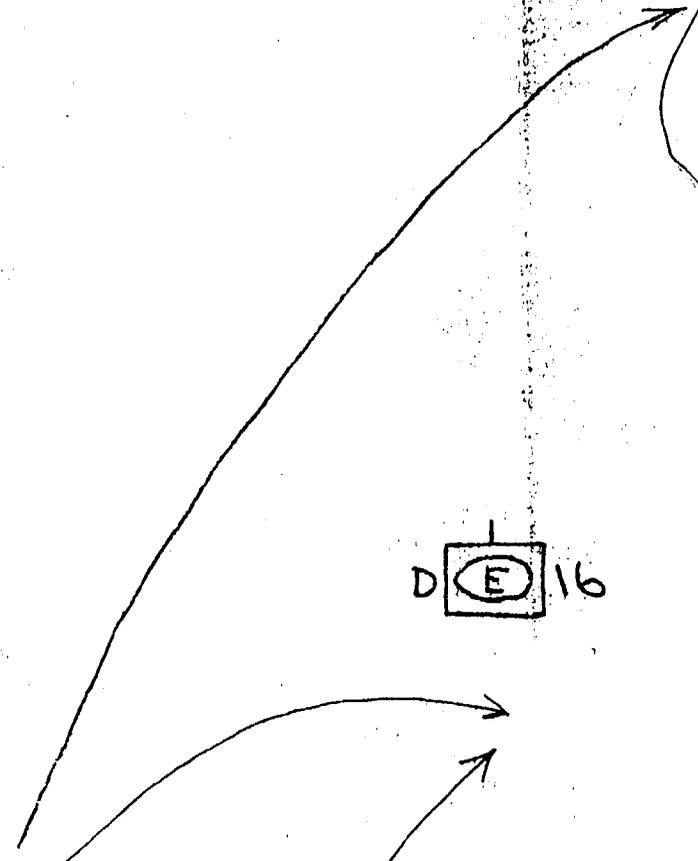
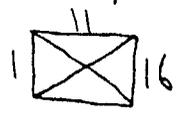
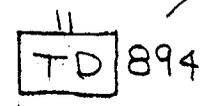
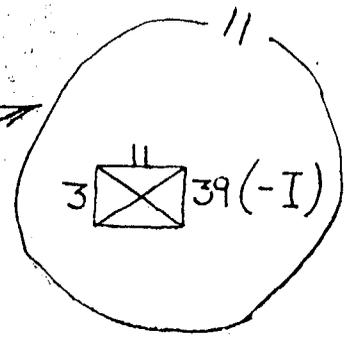
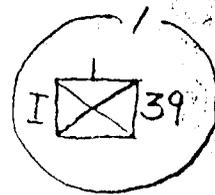
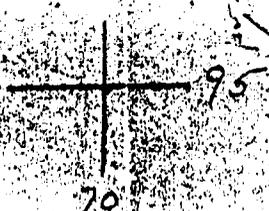
OVERLAY #1

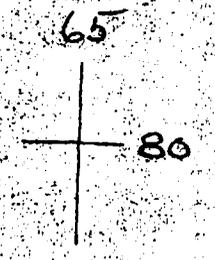
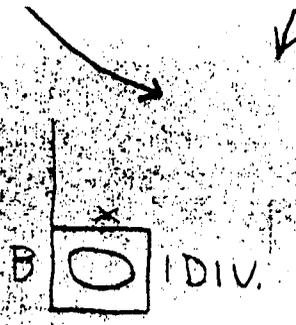
Disposition of Troops (A/B)
 As of 2400 hrs, 20 FEB 75
 Map - TUNISIA - 1/200,000
 Sheet 10

ROBINETT
 COMD

OVER
2400 hrs 2 FEB 45
TUNING AND 2000
SHEET 10





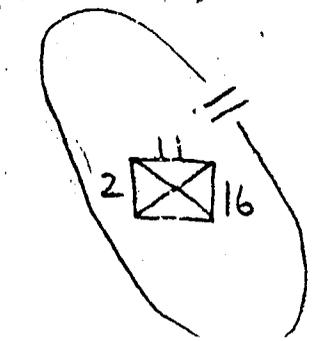
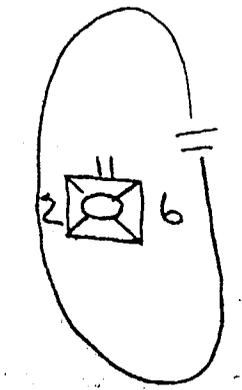
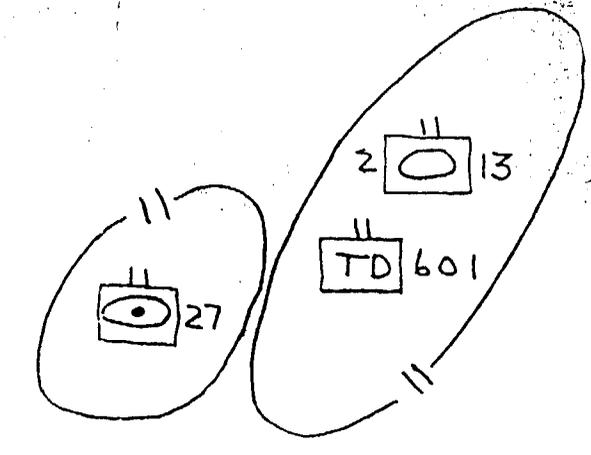


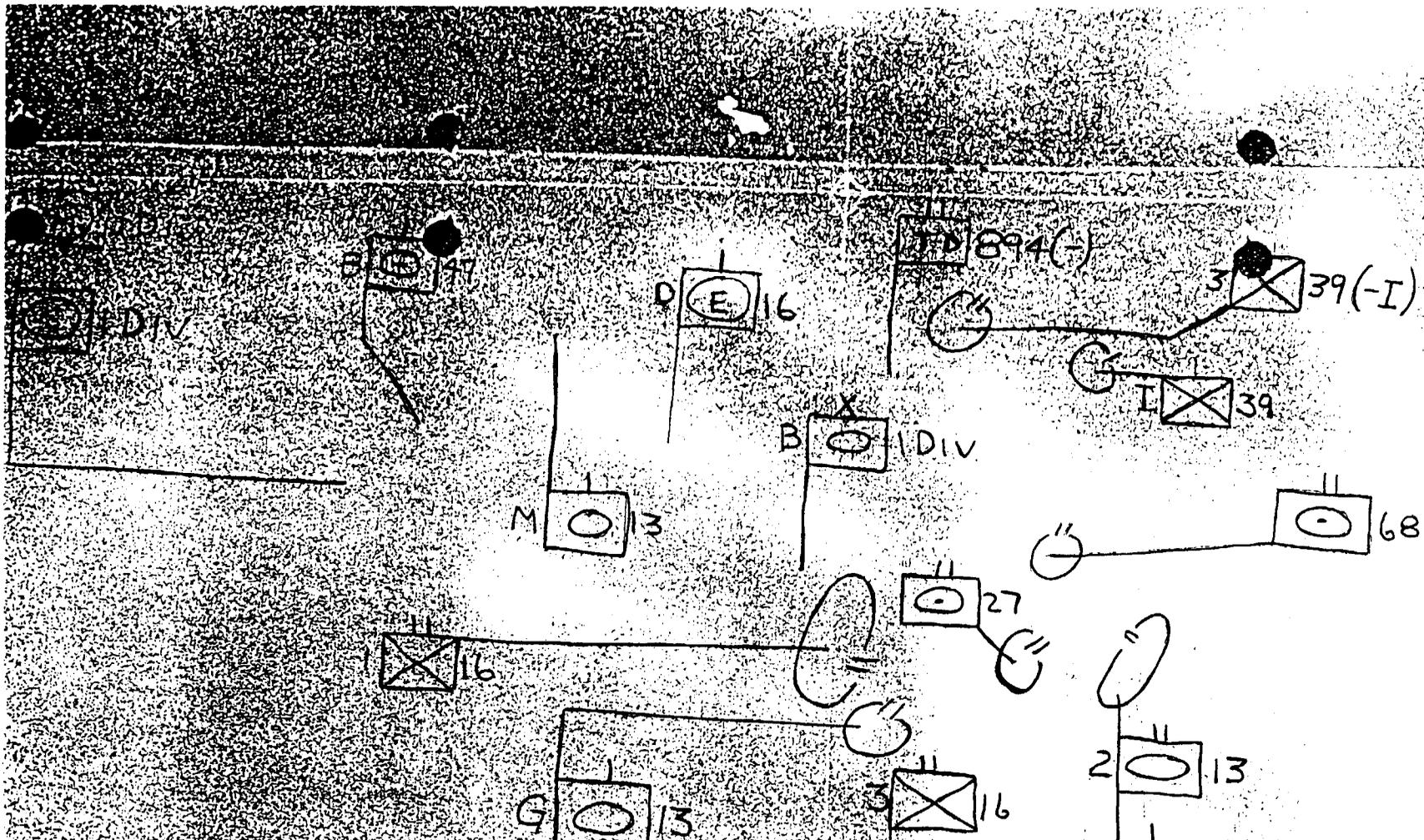
OVERLAY #3

Disposition of Troops c/c "B"
 As of 2400 HRS., 22 FEB 43
 Map - TUNISIA - 1/50,000
 Sheets 75 + 83

Russell
 S-3

ROBINETT
 Comdg



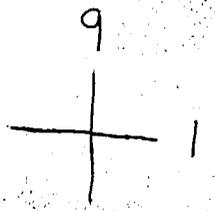


OVERLAY #4

Disposition of Troops c/c "B"
 AS OF 2400 hrs, 23 FEB 43
 MAP - TUNISIA - 1/200,000
 SHEETS 10+13

Russell
 S-3

ROBINETT
 comdg



20

A Factual Summary of the Combat Operations of
the 1st Infantry Division in North Africa and Sic-
ily During World War II (Extract)

6. Lessons learned from the ORAN Operation

Immediately following the French surrender at ORAN, intensive efforts were made, by the Division, to correct the deficiencies noted in that operation.

The use of night maneuver and night combat. A severe setback had been suffered by the 18th Infantry Regiment, during its initial attack against ST. CLOUD, on 8-9 Nov. Their initial attacks had bogged down, and considerable casualties had been incurred. This impasse was due to a lack of accurate preliminary reconnaissance and a lack of maneuverability by the assault battalions. However, this grave deficiency was corrected by the 18th Infantry Regiment, on the battle-field, on the night of 9-10 Nov., '42, by the following measures:

The 1st Battalion was held to contain the enemy forces at ST. CLOUD.

The 2nd and 3rd Battalions were withdrawn to bypass ST. CLOUD under cover of darkness; and by night maneuver were directed on to their assigned locations, for the assault on ORAN, early on 10 November.

After seeing the results of this particular night maneuver, the 1st Infantry Division had become completely sold on the results that might be attained, by the skilful use of night maneuver and night attacks.

This night maneuver at ORAN was the fore-runner of many boldly executed night attacks, launched later, during the hard fought campaigns against the Germans in TUNISIA and later in SICILY. The German Panzer Divisions learned to fear the dreaded night attacks of the 1st Infantry Division, which invariably resulted in maximum damage to the enemy, and quick tactical success for the 1st Division.

II. THE INITIAL COMBAT OPERATIONS IN TUNISIA

1. Detachment of 1st Division Units to TUNISIA.

Hardly had the 1st Division regrouped and reorganized, after the surrender of the French forces at ORAN, on 10 Nov., '42, when various units of the Division were hastily detached into TUNISIA. This was done, as an emergency measure, on orders of the Allied High Command, to bolster the Allied defenses against the rapid German build-up on the Eastern front. These early troop movements were as follows:

The 3rd Battalion, 26th Infantry, Lt. Col. John W. Bowen, Comdg., left by transport planes and gliders, on 15 Nov., '42, to outpost the southern approaches to the ATLAS Mountains, in the GAFSA area in Southern TUNISIA.

The 18th Infantry Regiment, Col. Frank Greer, Comdg., the 32nd Field Artillery Battalion, and the 5th Field Artillery Battalion left later in November '42, to reinforce the British V Corps, then fighting against heavy odds in Northern TUNISIA.

The 26th Infantry Regiment, Col. Alec. Stark, Comdg., (less the 3rd Battalion - already detached) together with the 33rd Field Artillery Battalion, left early in Jan. '43, to join the American II Corps, in Southern TUNISIA.

The detachment of these 1st Division Units, to various Allied Task Forces, then operating under American, British and French command, in Eastern TUNISIA, was a matter of grave concern to 1st Division

Headquarters, still located back in ORAN. It was reported that the Division Commander of the 1st Infantry Division had inquired at the Allied Force General Headquarters, at ALGIERS, as to "Whether or not this was a private War? Or, could any Son-of-a-gun get into it?"

Finally on 18 Jan. '43, the remainder of the 1st Infantry Division, together with Division Headquarters, was ordered into general reserve in Central TUNISIA. Later on 27 Jan. '43, the 1st Infantry Division (less its detached elements) took over a combined American-French Sector, in the OUSELLTIA VALLEY, in Central TUNISIA.

III. THE ROLE OF THE 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION IN THE DEFENSE AGAINST THE GERMAN BREAK-THROUGH AT THE KASSERINE PASS (See Battle Map #2)

To visualize the role of the 1st Infantry Division, in its operations against the German break-through, at the KASSERINE PASS, will require a brief explanation of these items, in connection therewith.

The distribution of Allied Forces in Eastern TUNISIA.

The location of units of the 1st Infantry Division (on all fronts).

The defensive set-up of the American II Corps, in Southern TUNISIA.

The German recapture of the FAID PASS, early in Feb., '43.

The German break-through at FAID PASS, 14 Feb., '43.

The German break-through at the KASSERINE PASS, 21 Feb., '43.

The later Allied counter-attack.

1. The Distribution of Allied Troops in Eastern TUNISIA, as of 1 Feb., '43.

The Northern Tunisian Sector was basically a British Sector, under the British V Corps (Gen. Allfrey, Comdg.). It had been reinforced, in Nov. and Dec. of '42, by detached units from the American 1st Infantry Division and the American 1st Armored Division.

The Central Tunisian Sector was basically a French Sector, under the French XIX Corps (Gen. Koeltz, Comdg.). This Sector had been reinforced from time to time, by American Units from the 1st Infantry Division, the 1st Armored Division and from the 34th Infantry Division.

On 27 Jan. '43, elements of the 1st Infantry Division (under 1st Division command) took over the critical OUSELLTIA VALLEY Sector, under the French XIX Corps, in Central TUNISIA. The 1st Infantry Division was then temporarily reinforced by a French Groupment (including 6 French Infantry battalions).

The Southern Tunisian Sector was basically an American Sector, under the American II Corps (Gen. Fredenall, Comdg.). The troops, in this sector, had been gradually built up into a heterogeneous group of Special Task Forces, as listed below:

American Units

26th Infantry Regiment (less the 2nd Battalion), of the 1st Infantry Division.

33rd Field Artillery Battalion, of the 1st Infantry Division.

168th Infantry Regiment, of the 34th Infantry Division.

The 1st Ranger Battalion (a specially trained unit of high combat value).

Combat Commands "A" and "C", of the 1st Armored Division.

The 19th Combat Engineer Battalion (a newly organized engineer unit).

Various Corps Artillery units.

French Units

The French Constantine Division (Gen. Welvert, Comdg.) Made up of brave, willing soldiers, but under strength and ill equipped.

British Units

The Derbyshire Yeomanry Reconnaissance Squadron (a well trained reconnaissance squadron - Detached from the British 6th Armored Division).

NOTE: Other American and British Units attached later.

2. The Location of all Units of the 1st Infantry Division.

Although the units of the 1st Infantry Division were deployed on a wide front (under British, French and American command - in Northern, Central and Southern TUNISIA) at the time of the German break-through, at FAID PASS, it will be noted that eventually all units of the 1st Infantry Division were later committed in Southern TUNISIA, against the German break-through forces. The actual location of these 1st Division units, at the time of the German break-through, at FAID, on 14 Feb., '43, was as follows:

1st Infantry Division Units in Northern TUNISIA. (then attached to the British V Corps)

18th Infantry Regiment

32nd Field Artillery Battalion

1st Infantry Division Units in Central TUNISIA. (then attached to the French XIX Corps)

1st Infantry Division Headquarters

1st Infantry Division Special Troops

16th Infantry Regiment

2nd Battalion only (of 26th Infantry Regiment)

32nd Field Artillery Battalion

5th Field Artillery Battalion (released from British V Corps - 7 Feb., '43.

1st Combat Engineer Battalion

1st Infantry Division Units in Southern TUNISIA (then attached to the American II Corps)

26th Infantry Regiment (less the 2nd Battalion)

33rd Field Artillery Battalion

3. Defensive Set-up of the American II Corps, in Southern TUNISIA.

Importance of the FAID PASS

The Southern Tunisian Sector, assigned to the American II Corps, included a stretch of wild desert country, covering a frontage of 200 miles. It was interspersed with a series of precipitous mountain ridges, extending from Northeast to Southwest. The FAID PASS (located in the north central portion of Southern TUNISIA) provided the most practicable route of approach, through the south end of the GRAND DORSAL Mountain Range. Control of this Pass was vitally important.

For the Allies, their control of the Pass would deny the movement of German mechanized forces into the western areas, of Southern TUNISIA.

For the Germans, their control of the Pass would provide the most feasible, direct route of approach for their mechanized forces, in their future plans for offensive action, which were based on securing more maneuver space to the west. Additional maneuver space would be needed later by the German Africa Corps, then withdrawing in the East, towards TUNISIA, before the advancing British 8th Army.

Early Operations in the FAID PASS

The tactical importance of the FAID PASS had been apparent, since Dec., '42, to the commanders of the Allied Task Forces, who first operated in Southern TUNISIA. These early Task Force units included:

The 3rd Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, of the 1st Infantry Division, (Lt. Col. John Bowen, Comdg.). This battalion was then based on GAFSA, with instructions to outpost the GAFSA-SENED area, and to reconnoiter east and northeast thereof.

Elements of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment (Lt. Col. Edson D. Raff, Comdg.).

One Company of Tank Destroyer (commanded by Capt. Gilbert Ellman).

Detached Infantry - Artillery elements from the French Constantine Division, (Gen. Welvert, Comdg.).

The strategic value of the FAID PASS seemed obvious to Raff and Bowen. So, while acting on their own initiative in that area, they decided to take the place, for self-protection. With a makeshift Task Force, made up from these units noted above, they took the Pass in a surprise night attack, early in Dec. '42.

Lt. Col. Raff then arranged with Gen. Welvert to garrison the Pass with elements of the French Constantine Division; as it was necessary for Lt. Col. Bowen to return with his Battalion to the GAFSA-FERIANA area.

Had the Allied High Command seen fit, at that time, to organize a strong defending force for the FAID PASS, with adequate artillery and anti-tank support, a great deal of their later difficulties,

at the time of the German break-through, might have been avoided.

4. Readjustment of American Forces, in Southern TUNISIA, prior to 14 Feb., '43.

Commencing in Jan. '43, the American units were gradually reinforced in Southern TUNISIA.

The remainder of the 26th Infantry Regimental Combat Team (less the 2nd Battalion, then in Central TUNISIA), and with the 33rd Field Artillery Battalion attached, arrived in that area late in Jan. '43. It was placed initially in a reserve position near SBETLA (about 32 miles west of FAID PASS). At this time, the 3rd Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, was still in GAFSA.

Combat Command "A", of the 1st Armored Division, came into the area and occupied a position in the SIDI BOU ZID area, west of the FAID PASS, in Jan. '43.

During this period, the 168th Infantry Regiment, of the 34th Infantry Division, was in position on the high ground, northwest of the FAID PASS.

5. Corps Status of the Southern Tunisian Sector.

Major General Fredenall arrived about 10 Jan., '43, established the American II Corps CP at TEBESSA, and assumed command of the II Corps Sector, in Southern TUNISIA.

During this interval, the G-2, of the American II Corps, predicted an all-out German attack against the FAID PASS. And, Gen. Fredenall requested reinforcements and an opportunity to regroup the American forces, in this sector, under better cohesion and control.

But the British 1st Army Headquarters (under which the American II Corps operated) insisted that the expected German main attack would be launched farther north, in the PICHON area, where it had come before. Meanwhile, the actual garrison, of the FAID PASS, still consisted only of the same elements of the French Constantine Division, which had taken over the defense of the Pass, early in December, '42, after the Pass had first been captured by the American Task Force. These French Troops were ill equipped to stop a determined German mechanized attack.

6. Recapture of the FAID PASS, by the Germans, early in Feb. '43.

Following their recent feints further North, the German Panzers took a sharp crack at the Allied south flank, in an all-out attack against the FAID PASS, early in Feb. '43. This was in exact accordance with the G-2 Intelligence Estimate, previously submitted by the G-2, of the American II Corps.

Smashing into the Pass with infantry, artillery and tanks, and a few 88's, the Germans were finally able to snatch the Pass from the French garrison (elements of the French Constantine Division). But this was not accomplished until at least half of the gallant but ill-equipped French troops were either killed or wounded.

An American counter-attack was launched early the next morning, following the German capture of the Pass, by the 26th Infantry Regimental Combat Team (less two battalions) and Combat Command "A", of the 1st Armored Division. But the counter-attack was not successful. The Germans, having been reinforced, were able to hold on, and retained complete control of the FAID PASS.

7. The German Break-Through Attack, at FAID PASS - 14 Feb., '43.

The Initial German Attack

The German break-through forces had apparently been strongly reinforced, following their capture of the FAID PASS, early in Feb. '43. And, on 14 Feb., the German Panzers came boiling out of the west end of the Pass, with a whip lash of tanks, guns and men, that set the American forces reeling back behind the mountain passes at SBEITLA and KASSERINE (40 miles west of the FAID PASS).

Combat Command "A" and Combat Command "C" (of the American 1st Armored Division), then located in the SIDI BOU ZID area (10 miles west of the FAID PASS), caught the brunt of the German break-through attack. Out-maneuvered, out-numbered and out-gunned, by the German Panzer Divisions, they were badly mauled, and lost 54 tanks in this engagement. A side swipe, by these on-rushing German Panzers, also over-ran the 168th Infantry Regiment, of the American 34th Infantry Division, then located north of SIDI BOU ZID.

Following their quick success at SIDI BOU ZID, the German Panzers were then well on their way to SBEITLA and KASSERINE, just 30 miles further to the west. It then became necessary for the American II Corps to take immediate steps to protect the mountain passes, through SBEITLA and KASSERINE, and the passes west thereof, leading north to TEBESSA.

8. American Reinforcements from the North

When it was finally realized that the tremendous American supply base at TEBESSA was in grave danger of being captured; and that the Germans very possibly could smash north through THALA, clear to LE KEF, and thus threaten the right rear flank of the entire British 1st Army; then, finally, the Headquarters of the British 1st Army saw fit to release additional reinforcements from the north, to assist the hard pressed American II Corps. These initial reinforcements included Combat Command "B" (of the American 1st Armored Division), and the 18th Infantry Regimental Combat Team (of the 1st Infantry Division).

Combat Command "B" (of the 1st Armored Division) (Col. Robinette, Comdg.) - on release from the British V Corps, boiled down south, and by 16-17 Feb. was in position, north of SBEITLA, to cover the American withdrawal therefrom. It was later ordered further northwest, to help protect the THALA area and the passes leading into TEBESSA, from the east.

The 18th Infantry Regimental Combat Team (of the 1st Infantry Division - with the 32nd Field Artillery Battalion attached), Col. Greer, Comdg., on release from the British V Corps, came down from the north, on 17 Feb., to occupy a defensive position, just southwest of SBIBA, (24 miles, north of SBEITLA). On 19 Feb. '43, it repulsed several enemy armored-infantry attacks, in this area, after inflicting heavy losses on the enemy; and thus secured the left flank of the hard pressed American II Corps.

9. The German Break-through at the KASSERINE PASS, ¹⁹⁻²¹ Feb., '43.

The KASSERINE PASS provided the most favorable corridor of approach for the German Panzer Units, in their advance north towards the critical area near THALA (at the head of the KASSERINE VALLEY). The KASSERINE PASS had been occupied initially by the 19th Combat Engineer Regiment (a regiment of Corps troops, which was new to combat). These defending troops were reinforced, and the Pass was hastily organized for defense on 19 Feb., under command of the Headquarters, of the 26th Infantry Regimental Combat Team (Col. Alec Stark, Comdg.). In this hasty defensive organization, the 19th Engineer Regiment occupied the west side of the Pass; and the 26th Infantry Regiment (less the 2nd and 3rd Battalions) occupied the east side of the Pass. The 33rd Field Artillery Battalion (Lt Col. Verdé Barnes, Comdg.) was in general support.

The organization of this defensive position has hardly been started, on 19 Feb., '43, when the Germans launched a probing attack. They later launched their main attack, against the Pass, early on 20 Feb., and gained possession of the dominating heights on the west flank. After bringing up their 88mm guns and mortars, the Germans then pierced the right flank of the west sector (held by the 18th Engineer Regiment), and drove on through *the 26th Inf. sector* *on the east flank of the Pass.*

During the night of 20-21 Feb., the Germans over-ran both positions, cleared the mine fields, and their tanks then started rolling up the KASSERINE VALLEY, early on 21 Feb. In the meantime, after having incurred heavy losses, the surviving American defenders had been forced to withdraw to the north, under strong enemy pressure.

10. Additional Allied Reinforcements (British)

Two additional tank regiments, of a British Armored Brigade, had been rushed down from the north, on 19-20 Feb., to reinforce Combat Command B (of the 1st Armored Division), in the area near THALA. This combined British-American Task Force was later driven back further north, behind THALA (the northern exit of the KASSERINE VALLEY), by the heavier German tanks, and were being hard pressed. However, at that time, the Division Artillery, of the American 9th Infantry Division, had just arrived after a forced march of 750 miles, from SPANISH-MOROCCO. Their added artillery support saved the day for these Allied units, then holding the critical northern exit of the KASSERINE VALLEY (south of THALA).

11. Movement to Southern TUNISIA, by remainder of the 1st Infantry Division.

When the German offensive in Southern TUNISIA first started, the 1st Infantry Division (less units detached elsewhere) had been holding a sector in the OUSSELTIA VALLEY, in Central TUNISIA, under the French XIX Corps. The units, under 1st Division command, in this sector, then included the following:

1st Infantry Division Units

1st Infantry Division Headquarters
Division Special Troops
16th Infantry Regiment (Col. Fechet, Comdg.)
2nd Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment (Lt Col. Beck, Comdg.)
1st Engineer Battalion (Lt Col. H. C. Rowland, Comdg.)
1st Division Artillery, to include
5th Field Artillery Battalion (Lt Col. Tyson, Comdg.)
7th Field Artillery Battalion (Lt Col. Geo. Gibb, Comdg.)

French Units temporarily attached to 1st Infantry Div.

French Groupment, to include:
8 Infantry Battalions
1 Field Artillery Battalion
Signal Company

At this time, the 1st Infantry Division Headquarters had close working relations with Gen. Koeltz, the Commanding General, of the French III Corps. On 18 Feb., '43, the following radio telegraph message was received, by the Comdg. General, of the 1st Infantry Division, at his OUSSELTIA VALLEY CP - Quote:

C.G. of 1st British Army

Feb. 18, '43. Koeltz to Allen: "This is a warning. General Anderson has just issued a directive to Colonel Fechet's Regiment (the 16th Infantry Regiment) to go to Fredenall as soon as possible." (Referring to Gen. Fredenall, C.O. of American II Corps).

It was then urgently requested by Gen. Allen that this reinforcement to the II Corps, be provided on a divisional basis. Instead of sending the 16th Infantry Regiment down (merely as another Task Force component).

Gen. Koeltz was requested by Gen. Allen to arrange for the movement of all available combat elements, of the 1st Infantry Division, to go as a unit, under 1st Division Command, to support the American II Corps, in Southern TUNISIA. Shortly thereafter, it happened that all available combat units of the 1st Infantry Division were ordered to move without delay, (under 1st Division control), to support the American II Corps. The 2nd Battalion of the 26th Infantry Regiment and the 5th Field Artillery Battalion were left behind as a nucleus for the incoming French units, detailed to take over the OUSSELTIA VALLEY Sector, which was to be vacated by the 1st Infantry Division. The OUSSELTIA VALLEY sector was 80 miles NW of THALA.

An advance detail from the 1st Infantry Division, to include the Division Commander, the Division G-2 (Lt. Col. R. W. Porter), the Assistant Division G-4 (Major Donald Curtis), and Assistant Division G-3, and several liaison officers, left the OUSSELTIA VALLEY at dusk, on 18 Feb., to contact the Headquarters of the II Corps, in the HAIDRA-TEBESSA area, in Southern TUNISIA.

While enroute by motor to TEBESSA, early on 19 Feb., '43, the Advance Command Group, of the 1st Division, met Gen. Fredenall (C.G. of the American II Corps) with his aides, on the road in motors, near HAIDRA (24 miles northeast of TEBESSA). Gen. Fredenall was cheerful and optimistic. He outlined the latest developments at the KASSERINE PASS; and stated that the 1st Division must be prepared to counter-attack where needed. He directed that the 1st Division make early contacts with Gen. Welvert (C.G. of the French Constantine Division, then located south of TEBESSA), and have him coordinate his efforts with the 1st Division.

The 1st Division Artillery Commander, Gen. Clift Andrus, completed the turn-over of the 1st Division Sector, in the OUSSELTIA VALLEY, to the incoming French units, on 19 Feb.; and then followed immediately thereafter with the designated combat units of the Division, to an assembly area, southeast of TEBESSA, in Southern TUNISIA.

12. Combat preparations initiated by the 1st Infantry Division.

Assembly areas were indicated for the incoming 1st Division Units, near BOU CHEBKA, west of the KASSERINE PASS VALLEY.

That evening, on 19 Feb., the C.G. of the 1st Infantry Division contacted the rear CP of the 33rd Field Artillery Battalion, then in direct support of the American units, defending the KASSERINE PASS. This CP was operated by Capt. Theodore Crocker, S-3 of the 33rd Field Artillery Battalion. Crocker was not particularly worried, now that the remaining 1st Division units were on the way. He was a unique type of combat soldier, and quite a "rustler". He even produced Gen. Welvert (C.G. of the French Constantine Division), at 2:00 AM, on the morning of 20 Feb.

Gen. Welvert was a gallant old soldier. But, having had 10-15 years service, as a Major General, in the French Army, he was very jealous of his prerogatives. He was not too sure but that he might be "Having his leg pulled". But he finally offered to have the French Constantine Division cooperate "full out", with the 1st Division.

combat

During the night of 19-20 Feb., the remaining elements of the 1st Infantry Division (including the Division Special Troops, the 16th Infantry Regiment, the 7th Field Artillery Battalion, and the 1st Engineer Battalion) rolled into their assembly areas near BOU CHEBKA, west of the KASSERINE PASS VALLEY.

13. Counter-Attack Orders, Issued by the 1st Infantry Division.

Late on 20 Feb., warning orders were received, by the 1st Division, from the II Corps, to be prepared, at daylight, on 21 Feb., to block the north exit of the KASSERINE PASS VALLEY, and to counter-attack, from positions west of the KASSERINE PASS VALLEY, against any German forces advancing north up the Valley. Orders were then issued by the 1st Division, as follows:

To have the 16th Infantry Regiment (Col. Fechet, Comdg.) place one battalion, with anti-tank weapons attached, in position on the DJEBEL HAMRA (north of BOU CHEBKA), prepared to block any continued German armored advance, up the KASSERINE VALLEY to the northwest, towards HAIDRA, or through the Pass, in that area, leading directly west into TEBESSA.

To have the 16th Infantry Regiment counter-attack with its two remaining battalions, from the west, against the left (west) flank of any German infantry forces, that may advance up the KASSERINE VALLEY, to the north.

To have the 7th Field Artillery Battalion operate in general support.

To have the 1st Engineer Battalion alerted in Division reserve.

14. Limit of the German break-through up the KASSERINE VALLEY.

After the Germans had finally over-run both flanks of the KASSERINE PASS defensive position (on the night of 20-21 Feb.), the German heavy tanks then started rolling north, up the KASSERINE VALLEY, early on 21 Feb., followed by the German infantry units. In the meantime, the surviving American defenders had withdrawn to the north, towards THALA, under heavy enemy pressure.

The British had rushed in their lighter tanks (from the THALA area) very early on 21 Feb., to support the hard pressed American units, in the Pass. But these British tanks were little match for the heavier German "Tiger" Tanks. Driven back close to THALA, (near the northern exit of the KASSERINE VALLEY), the British tanks were finally able to hold in that area, under the close support of the newly arrived American artillery units, and Combat Command "B" of the US 1st Armored Division.

At this time, early on 21 Feb., '43, the German Panzers had reached the furthest northern limits, of their hard fought drive from the south. After their initial success at FAID, SIDI BOU ZID, and SBETLA, and finally in their break-through at the KASSERINE PASS, the Germans were now over-extended, and were "riding for a fall." The Allied final line of defense, protecting the northern exits of the KASSERINE VALLEY, had to be held, at all cost.

Both sides were "wobbly and punch drunk." But, the Allies still had one "Ace left in the hole." The last remaining elements of the 1st Infantry Division, had come down from the north, under Division control, and were all set to counter-attack.

15. Launching of the 1st Division Counter-Attack.

This was the picture, when the newly arrived 1st Division units came in at daylight, 21 Feb. '43, to counter-attack.

The 3rd Battalion, of the 16th Infantry Regiment, Lt. Col. Mathews, Comdg., with special anti-tank weapons attached, was located on the DJEBEL HAMRA (10 miles south of HALDRA), prepared to block the northwest exit of the KASSERINE VALLEY, and to protect the mountain pass, leading west to TEBESSA.

The 1st and 2nd Battalions (Lt. Col. Cunningham and Lt. Col. Crawford, Comgd.), of the 16th Infantry Regiment, from positions west of the KASSERINE VALLEY, had gained early contact with the German follow-up infantry units, and attacked aggressively, at daylight, on 21 Feb. After considerable close-in hard fighting, the German Infantry units attempted to withdraw to the north, under close pressure from the west, by the 16th Infantry assault battalions. But these German units incurred heavy casualties when they found escape in that direction cut-off by the British and American tanks (with close-in artillery support - located south of THALA).

The 7th Field Artillery, Lt. Col. George Gibb, Comdg., of the 1st Division Artillery, was in close support of the 16th Infantry units, during this operation.

Allied Air Support was tremendously helpful at this time. American and British bombers joined in a series of highly effective sorties, on the afternoon of 21 Feb., against the German tanks and guns, which were then jammed-up "bumper to bumper", in their hurry to escape being bottled up in the KASSERINE VALLEY.

16. The German Withdrawal.

Once the German withdrawal to the south had started, their evacuation of the KASSERINE VALLEY was conducted with remarkable celerity. The lack of any pre-planning for an organized direct pursuit, had delayed the regrouping of any mobile II Corps troops, for a quick, direct pursuit.

Thus, contact with the retreating German forces was lost, and their withdrawal to the south was effected without serious hindrance. A few days later, close contact was regained with the German units, further south, at the same old stands, at GAFSA, MAKNASSY, FAID and PICHON.

The German High Command had "Shot the Works", in an all-out effort to seize the initiative. But, from that time on, the end in TUNISIA, was inevitable; although the fighting became even more severe, before the Allies had won the final victory in TUNISIA, on 13 May, 1943.

17. Summary of the Combat Operations (Leading up to and following the KASSERINE PASS Break-through)

To present a clear picture of the entire KASSERINE PASS Operation, there is included herein a terrain analysis of that general area, and a chronological listing of the combat operations connected therewith.

Terrain Analysis (See Battle Map #2)

The Southern Tunisian Sector included a wild desert area, covering a frontage of 200 miles, interspersed with a series of precipitous mountain ridges. The FAID PASS (located in the north central part of that area) provided the only feasible route, through the south end of the GRAND DORSAL Mountain Range. Control of this Pass was vitally important, both to the Germans and to the Allies.

From FAID (near the west exit of the Pass), it was 10 miles due west, to SIDI BOU ZID; and thence 32 miles northwest, to SBEITLA. From SBEITLA it was 28 miles north (through the SBEITLA Pass) to SBIBA.

BATTLE MAP #2



TUNISIA

1:2,000,000

ARTILLERYMAN WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

This map is a pocket guide which will orient you in your travels and experiences in the battle zone.

Keep yourself constantly oriented and connect your experiences with places.

One inch on this map is 32 miles on the ground. Do not mark this map! It is not intended to help the Hun.

Keep this map on you at all times. Know where you have been, where you are, and where you are going. Become a G-2. With this aid, you can be the best in formed soldier in this fight. Report to an officer what you see.

E 1

The road junction at SBIBA controlled the main eastern highway leading 44 miles further north to LE KEF; it also controlled the road leading 20 miles west to THALA.

The cross-road center, at THALA, controlled the western highway, leading 46 miles north to LE KEF, and a road leading 32 miles west (through HAIDRA) to TEBESSA (the location of the huge American supply dumps).

The pass at KASSERINE (16 miles west of SBETLA) provided direct access, up the KASSERINE Valley, to THALA (30 miles north of the KASSERINE PASS). A continued break-through, by the Germans, to the north, through THALA, would seriously endanger LE KEF (46 miles further north). The German seizure of the road center at LE KEF, would disrupt the main Allied supply route, and would endanger the right rear flank of the entire 1st British Army, in Eastern TUNISIA.

Chronological list of the Combat Operations in Southern TUNISIA (previously explained):

Capture of FAID PASS, by American Tank Forces in Southern TUNISIA, about 4 Dec., '42.

Establishment of the American II Corps, in Southern TUNISIA (Gen. Fredendall, Comdg.) about 10 Jan. '43.

Recapture of FAID PASS by the Germans, about 3 Feb. '43 - followed by American attempt to again recapture the Pass.

German break-through, at FAID PASS, 14 Feb. '43.

German defeat of Combat Command "A" and Combat Command "C" (of the American 1st Armored Division) and of the 168th Infantry Regiment (of the American 34th Infantry Division), near SIDI BOU ZID, 15 Feb. '43.

Allied Reinforcements sent down from the North:

Combat Command "B" (of the American 1st Armored Division) to the SBIBA-THALA area, 16 Feb. '43.

18th Infantry Regimental Combat Team, with the 32nd Field Artillery Battalion (of the American 1st Infantry Division) to the SBIBA area, for a critical defensive role, 17 Feb., '43.

Remainder of the American 1st Infantry Division (to include the 16th Infantry Regiment, the 7th Field Artillery Battalion, the 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, and the Division Special Troops) came south, from the OUSSELTIA Valley, to counter-attack, from the area west of KASSERINE Valley, on 19-20 Feb., '43.

Two British tank regiments came down to reinforce Combat Command "B", of the American 1st Armored Division, at THALA, 19 Feb., '43.

The Division Artillery, of the American 9th Infantry Division, arrived from Spanish MOROCCO, 19 Feb., '43, to reinforce the Allied units in the THALA area.

The German attack and break-through at the KASSERINE Pass, 19-21 Feb., '43. The American defending force, then holding the KASSERINE PASS, included only the 26th Infantry

Regimental Combat Team (of the 1st Infantry Division), less two battalions; and with the 19th Engineer Regiment attached to the 26th Infantry Regiment.

Counter-attack by elements of the American 1st Infantry Division, from the area west of KASSERINE Valley, 21 Feb., '43.

Counter-attack by Combat Command B (of the American 1st Armored Division) and by British tank regiments, in the THALA area, 21 Feb., '43.

Allied Air Support, in the KASSERINE VALLEY, 21 Feb., '43.

The German Withdrawal, to the south, 21-23 Feb., '43.

18. Conclusions to be drawn from the KASSERINE PASS operation.

When Gen. Fredendall took command of the Allied Forces in Southern TUNISIA (under the American II Corps), about 10 Jan. '43, he found that sector sparsely occupied by a heterogeneous group of Allied Tank Forces. It was reported that Gen. Fredendall had endeavored to bring these scattered units, under cohesion and control; that he had asked to bring the American 1st Infantry Division under unified division control, in one section of the line; and, that he had tried to bring the widely separated components of the American 1st Armored Division together, in a central location, under proper division control. But, he was not able to attain these objectives, for the unification of his command.

The G-2, of the American II Corps, had predicted that the Germans would break through in force, at FAID PASS; and Gen. Fredendall had repeatedly requested reinforcements for that critical area. But, the British 1st Army Headquarters (in overall field command) was far more worried about a German break-through, further north, at PICHON, in Central TUNISIA; and made their plans accordingly.

After the German break-through at FAID (as predicted by the American II Corps), followed by their victory at SIDI BOU ZID, reinforcements were then finally rushed down, from the north, to assist the hard-pressed American II Corps. Only a few Allied units (moved barely in time to "plug" the critical holes) had finally succeeded in preventing an all-out German victory.

There was never any indication of panic at the Command Post of the American II Corps, in spite of the difficulties incurred, at that time. There seemed to be a feeling of certainty, that eventually the tide would turn in their favor.

The Advance Command Group (of the First Infantry Division), while enroute from the OUSSELIYA VALLEY to TEBESSA, happened to meet Gen. Fredendall, on the road, by motor, at about daylight, on 19 Feb., '43, near KALATT JERDA, northeast of TEBESSA. The verbal instructions, then received by the Division Commander, from Gen. Fredendall, (as to the immediate mission of the incoming 1st Infantry Division units) were positive and clear cut. Detailed instructions (regarding the counter-attacking mission, for the 1st Division) were received shortly thereafter.

A final analysis of the results attained, in the German break-through drive in Southern TUNISIA, would indicate that the entire operation finally terminated in a stale-mate, with heavy losses in personnel and equipment, both to the Germans and to the Allies. Actually, the Germans had failed in their primary objective for this offensive - to gain more maneuver space to the west, for their German Afrika Korps, then withdrawing from the East, before the advancing British 8th Army.

For the American forces, the KASSERINE PASS Operation had resulted in a bitter lesson, stressing the need for cohesion and control, in the battle leadership of the major American combat units. It had not been possible for Gen. Fredendall to exercise the proper cohesion and control of his major units, because of the conditions involved in Southern TUNISIA, during his period of command of the American II Corps. He was greatly handicapped, in this respect.

However, it happened that, early in March, '43, the American II Corps was then designated as a separate autonomous command, responsible thereafter only to the new field commander, General Sir Harold Alexander, of the British Army, who had been designated as field commander of the entire Allied Forces in TUNISIA. This assurance of control of his major units, in the II Corps, had never been available to Gen. Fredendall, as it was later for his successors (Gen Patton and Gen Bradley).

IV. REASSEMBLY OF THE 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION.

Rest Period at MORSOTT

Following the German retreat from the KASSERINE PASS area, on 21-23 Feb., '43, the new German defensive line was later re-established along the general line (GAFSA-SENEDE-MAKNASSY-FAID-PICHON).

After the German withdrawal to the south, the 1st Division was pulled back and regrouped, on 1 Mar., '43, near MORSOTT, northwest of TEBESSA. Here all units of the Division were reassembled, rested and filled with replacements, preparatory to further combat operations. A quick reorganization was needed, as there had been considerable battle casualties, particularly in the Infantry units, some of which had been almost continually in combat, since the landing at ORAN, on 8 Nov., '42. But, with the 1st Division again reunited, there was a general feeling, throughout the Division, of renewed confidence and combat esprit.

The 1st Division Battle School for Replacements

A Battle School, for Incoming Replacements, assigned to the 1st Infantry Division, was established at this time near MORSOTT; and it continued in effect during the remainder of the campaign in N. AFRICA. This brief special course of instruction, for replacements, was conducted by a small selected group of battle wise Officers and NCO'S, operating on a rotating basis, from the front line units. The instruction included an orientation on the background and traditions of the 1st Division - a program of intensive physical conditioning - special instruction in infantry weapons - scouting and patrolling - night combat - and platoon combat exercises.

As a result of this procedure in special Replacement training, the number of battle casualties was greatly reduced, and the combat efficiency of all units was maintained at a higher level.

V. THE RECAPTURE OF GAFSA (16-17 Mar., 1943)

Strategic Value of GAFSA

GAFSA, a former French garrison town, was located on the edge of the desert, 50 miles south of KASSERINE. It was then occupied by a garrison of German-Italian troops, having been evacuated by the American II Corps, when the Germans broke through at FAID, on 14 February, 1943. GAFSA had strategic assets, as a road center and a railroad junction. Its re-capture was needed in order to provide a railroad supply point for the British Eighth Army, then advancing from the south, through the coastal area to the East.

1st Infantry Division, Summary of Activities,
January-March 1943, and Division Commander's
Notes

HEADQUARTERS 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION
A. P. O. #1, U. S. Army

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NNAG 735017

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/es
8 March 1943

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES OF 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION

After the initial successful landing operations at ORAN, the Division underwent intensive training in a large area south of ORAN. Emphasis was placed on rapidity of maneuver and quick use of supporting fires. It was also necessary to guard TAFARAQUI and LA SENIA airdromes, and air field at NOUVION, and to furnish a battalion to maintain order in ORAN.

On November 20, the 5th FA Battalion started east from ORAN to join the British 5th Corps. By November 25, they were in action SW of TUNIS. They have operated continuously on the Tunisian front since then and have been at BEJA, TABOURBA, MEDJEZ EL BAB, GAFSA, SBETLA, OUSSELTIA, and KESSERA. They rejoined the Division on March 4th.

On November 20, the third battalion, 26th Infantry, was flown by air transport from ORAN to YOUKS-LES-BAINS airport and attached to the remaining elements of Col. Raff's parachute battalion. They took part in the initial action at FAID and then operated from FERIANA-GAFSA as part of the RAFF FORCE. They conducted numerous raids on SENED and MACKNASSY and together with the Rangers, covered the withdrawal of II Corps elements from GAFSA and FERIANA. The battalion came back under Division control on February 21.

On November 19, Btry "C", 33d FA Battalion and the Anti-tank Company, 26th Infantry, were ordered to MARTINPREY DU KISS from ORAN to reinforce the French units of the TLEMGEN sub-division. They were returned to the Regiment on December 27.

Combat Team 18 was ordered east on December 8, and attached to British 5th Corps. They went into the lines at MEDJEZ EL BAB on December 23. The first battalion was given the mission of relieving the Coldstream Guards, after the Guards had taken LONGSTOP HILL which is northeast of MEDJEZ EL BAB. In a two-day action, the first battalion suffered casualties of 344 officers and men. Drafts were taken from the other battalions of the Regiment to re-man this battalion.

The 18th CT operated in the MEDJEZ area until February 15, when they were relieved and sent south to the XIX French Corps. While in the MEDJEZ area the 18th Combat Team took part in many raids and were very active in their patrolling. They were well spoken of by all elements of the 5th Corps, and our 32nd Field Artillery battalion was taken as a model for artillery of this British Corps.

Upon passing to the command of the XIX French Corps, the 18th Combat Team was placed in the line at SBIBA between the British Guards Brigade and the American 34th Division. In this sector on February 19-20 the 18th Infantry distinguished itself by completely stopping every German tank and infantry attack. They are expected to rejoin the Division within the next few days.

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On January 10, CT, 26, less third battalion, with the 1st Reconnaissance Troop attached, was ordered east and attached to II Corps for operation in Southern TUNISIA. They were split up into Task Forces by II Corps and operated with armored elements in the GAFSA-SEBEITLA-FAID area until the German breakthrough southwest of PONT DU FAHS. They were then ordered into the OUSSELTIA VALLEY with Combat Command "B", 1st Armored Division, and assisted in restoring the situation in that area.

Combat Team 26, less the second and third battalions and the 1st Reconnaissance Troop, was then ordered to SEBEITLA, and took part in operations around FAID with Combat Command "A", 1st Armored Division.

They were then withdrawn to the KASSERINE PASS where they took part in the heavy fighting which proceeded and followed the German breakthrough in that area. They came back under Division control February 26th.

By January 20, the Division, less 26th and 18th Combat Teams, and certain divisional units, were at GUELMA which is 75 miles east of CONSTANTINE.

On January 18, the Division, less detachments, was ordered to join the French XIX Corps. A sector was assigned the Division in the OUSSELTIA VALLEY extending from PICHON N about thirty miles. Six French infantry battalions and two Tabors (Moroccan Irregulars) together with British, French, and American artillery and tank units, were attached to the Division for the defense of this sector. The thirty-mile sector was organized for a vigorous defense. It was sub-divided into two sub-sectors with the various French Moroccan and British units in the PICHON (right sector) with General Roosevelt in command. The left sub-sector was composed of First Division units under Colonel Fchet who commands CT 16. The work of General Roosevelt in organizing his conglomerate units was outstanding.

Activity in this sector was largely restricted to continual active patrolling and to artillery fire. Minor enemy attacks were quickly broken down. Enemy air was very active. The OUSSELTIA VALLEY is very flat and open. Daylight movement of combat vehicles in the VALLEY brought almost immediate strafing. Two German planes, particularly, nick-named "Ike and Mike" by the soldiers were very annoying in their strafing and diving tactics. Even a lone jeep was a fair target for "Ike and Mike".

The French High Command discussed the advisability of the Division capturing EJEBEL BOU DABOUSS which was a commanding hill mass north of the HALFA PASS. It dominated our left sub-sector. With the continued reverses in southern TUNISIA, an early withdrawal from positions east of the OUSSELTIA VALLEY seemed inevitable. Consequently, it seemed futile to waste lives and materiel in capturing this position. In football parlance taking this hill mass would have been "battering our brains out to gain a yard and a half in the middle of the field". Accordingly, plans to capture this hill was abandoned. This turned out to be a wise decision, since the High Command later ordered us to withdraw west across the OUSSELTIA VALLEY.

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The withdrawal order was issued on February 15th. The Division was ordered to occupy and defend the mountain range along the west side of the OUSSELTIA VALLEY. Ammunition and heavy supplies were moved across the Valley the night proceeding the withdrawal of infantry and artillery elements. All units were withdrawn the night of February 17-18 without casualties, confusion, or the loss of materiel. The new position was occupied and organized by February 19th.

On February 19, the Division, less detachments (CT 18, CT 26, and 5th FA Bn) was ordered to move with all possible speed to vicinity of BOU CHEBKA, northwest of KASSERINE to reinforce that sector. The Germans, attacking in force, had taken the KASSERINE PASS. This gave them a close approach to our supply base, TEBESSA. Further advances by the Germans would cut Allied communications, threaten CONSTANTINE, and might necessitate a general withdrawal of Allied forces in TUNISIA.

On arriving at higher headquarters en route, I was informed of the dangerous German break-through in the KASSERINE PASS, that our units were withdrawing toward THALA and that the situation was critical. I was directed to assume command of the KASSERINE sector, including the French Constantine Division and various separate American units. At that time, the German continued advance up the KASSERINE VALLEY seemed inevitable.

A division command post was set up at 11:00 P.M., February 20, near BOU CHEBKA, where contact was hastily established with the French Constantine Division, attached American units, and elements of the First Division. The situation at this time was precarious. The second battalion, 16th Infantry, was attached to Combat Command "B" at daylight, February 21, and remained in position on the high ground south of DJ HAMRA during the day. At midnight on the night of February 21-22, it was decided to block the HAMRA PASSES at the head of the KASSERINE VALLEY with one battalion of the 16th Infantry, heavily reinforced with artillery and accompanying weapons, and to be prepared to counter-attack from the commanding ground south of HAMRA position, held by our 16th Infantry and two French Senegalese Battalions.

The German attack was resumed on the night of February 21-22. There was considerable confusion, since the leading elements of the German Infantry attacked in American and French uniforms. They overran and captured one battery of the 33rd Field Artillery, then supporting Combat Command "B", 1st Armored Division. It was "touch and go" for a short time. In fact, warning orders had already been issued by higher headquarters to prepare for a general withdrawal.

The German Infantry was followed by German tanks. Local counter-attacks were directed for all available infantry units with the close assistance of the artillery. The 33rd Field Artillery Battalion, now under Divisional control, and the 7th Field Artillery Battalion participated in the counter-attack, firing at close ranges at German Infantry and Tanks. General Andrus (Divisional Artillery Commander) was very active in directing these counter-attacks. A coordinated counter-attack was launched by the 16th Infantry at 3:30 P.M., February 22nd. As the lines of our infantry reached their positions, the Germans broke and ran. Some 400 surrendered to a group of 13th Armored Regiment tanks on reaching the valley. Our attack was followed by a counter-attack by Combat Command "B" of the 1st Armored Division from the northeast side of the valley.

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These counter-attacks apparently caused a complete German withdrawal from the KASSERINE VALLEY. They were made on the flank of the thrust toward THALA and threatened to cut off elements engaged there. I have been told that this incident seemed to be a turning point and that a general withdrawal was then started of all the German forces in contact with the Allied Forces.

On February 27, the Division was withdrawn to a rest area for re-supply and re-equipment.

All combat operations of the Division in TUNISIA, including the minor operations of separated battalions were as successful as might have been expected, considering the handicaps and difficulties of control. Marked success attended the efforts of the Division when it was possible to operate under Divisional control and take advantage of the teamwork and morale so thoroughly instilled during training periods. Losses have been suffered, which are part of the cost of belonging to the "Fighting First", but in no case was there any disorganization, and the Boche was made to pay in kind. Casualties in the officer personnel have been particularly heavy and indicated the active leadership of the junior officers.

One incident occurred in the OUSSELTIA VALLEY about the 31st of January, which seemed typical of this spirit. Lt. Colonel Davis, 7th Field Artillery Battalion, and his S-3, Major Levin, were killed while reconnoitering for a new forward position. Both were buried in rear of their artillery positions. When their bodies were lowered into their graves, the entire 7th Field Artillery Battalion fired three concerted salvos at located enemy targets. This incident indicated the spirit in which the Division is making the Germans pay for the losses received.

/s/ TERRY ALLEN

TERRY ALLEN,
Major General, U. S. Army,
Commanding.

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~~COPY~~

Gen. McNarney JTM
Gen. Handy (H)
Gen. McNair

HEADQUARTERS 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION
APO #1, NEW YORK, N. Y.

return

GCM

March 10, 1943

General George C. Marshall,
War Department,
Washington, D. C.

Dear General Marshall:

Knowing your interest in the First Division, which we appreciate very greatly, I am sending you a brief summary of the operations of units of the Division on the Eastern Front.

Higher tactical considerations have necessitated the dispersion of many elements of the Division during a great part of this period. Considering the difficulties of control and leadership that were thus involved, all units did exceptionally well in some cases, and very well in others.

Elements of the Division did particularly well when half the Division was assembled on February 21 and 22 at the time of the German breakthrough in the Kasserine Valley. At that time, the French Constantine Division and various separate units were attached to the First Division for the final defense in this sector and the following counter-attack. If I do say so, the counter-attack launched by the First Division was most successful and I have been told that it was responsible for the initiation of the general German withdrawal.

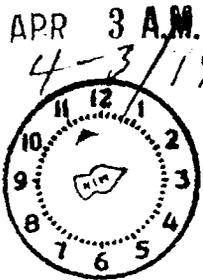
I am happy to say that the Division is now being reassembled for use as a complete unit in a very important impending operation. Many of the units have been separated for some time, but their morale and esprit is still excellent and I am sure they will give a good account of themselves.

I have enclosed a citation given the Division by General Koeltz, commanding the French 19th Corps, under whom we temporarily served, and by General Eisenhower, following the counter-attack on February 22. I have also enclosed two memorandums recently issued the Division.

Assuring you of our serious intentions of living up to the confidence that has been reposed in the Division, I am

Very sincerely,

/s/ Terry Allen
TERRY ALLEN



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R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS 1st INFANTRY DIVISION

A. P. O. No. 1, U. S. Army

MEMORANDUM:

March 4, 1943.

SUBJECT : Message of Commendation.

TO : Unit Commanders, 1st Infantry Division.

The following message of commendation from the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Force, is published for the information of all personnel of this command:

"As an American, I am proud of the way in which American Troops, in the recent battling, recovered from initial shocks and speedily demonstrated a readiness to slug it out with the enemy. Our troops are rapidly becoming battlewise and their future operations are certain to bring discouragement to the ranks of our enemies. Front line units now have the urgent task of replacement, rehabilitation and training, and I assure you that I am straining every nerve to bring your magnificent organization up to strength as quickly as it is humanly possible.

"Let us make sure that the new men coming up quickly absorb the lessons that the front line units have learned, so that every pound of ammunition and equipment that is brought to you, may be most effectively employed in the destruction of the forces opposing us.

"I hope that every man in your command realizes that I have complete confidence in his readiness and ability to do his full part alongside our gallant allies in driving our enemies out of Africa. Please accept my personal thanks and congratulations on your fine record of leadership.

/s/ EISENHOWER"

By command of Major General ALLEN:

/s/ LEONIDAS GAVALIAS
Lt. Col., A.G.D.
Adjutant General

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R E S T R I C T E D

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19 Army Corps

Staff G-1

~~SECRET~~

GENERAL ORDERS NO. 65

At the moment when the 1st American Division is leaving the sector of the C.A.F., General Koeltz, commanding the 19th Army Corps, is particularly happy to express to its commander, General Allen, as well as to his assistants, General Roosevelt and General Andrus, all the satisfaction that he felt in having under his orders such valorous troops.

Arriving in the Ousseltia Valley at the moment when a powerful German attack had just been launched on the flank of the 19th Army Corps, they came at once with resolution to the aid of their French comrades and threw back the enemy into the mountains.

Animated by the finest military spirit, they thus showed the highest battle comradeship.

Side by side with the battalions of the Division of Algiers, they then fought to hold the reconquered heights in Ejobels Rihana and Lehrich and the Byzantine Ruins.

General Koeltz asks General Allen to be so kind as to transmit his sincere thanks and his very best wishes to the officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the 1st Infantry Division.

Headquarters, 21 February 1943

Lt. General Koeltz,
Commanding 19th Army Corps

Directed to General Allen

True Copy

/s/ Terry Allen
Maj. Gen.

~~SECRET~~

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HEADQUARTERS 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION
APO #1, U. S. Army

March 4, 1943

~~SECRET~~

MEMORANDUM)

TO : All units in the 1st Infantry Division.
)

My sincere thanks to all units for your efficient execution of missions assigned you during recent operations. Your cheerful execution of difficult missions has been favorably commented upon. Preparation for our coming tasks will require the most intensive efforts. The following items are of utmost importance:

Discipline
Physical toughness
Combat efficiency
Intensive belief in your units.

Discipline means thorough teamwork and cooperation and the prompt, cheerful execution of orders and instructions. Your discipline must be exemplified by the prompt execution of orders, by military bearing and the proper wearing of the uniform, by careful attention to saluting discipline and by the general demeanor of all individuals.

Physical toughness is a vital requisite to success in combat. It must be attained by intensive physical conditioning. All of us must be mentally, morally, and physically tough and well able to "Take it and dish it out."

Combat training must be stressed to acquire the battle wisdom necessary to inflict the maximum losses upon the enemy, with the minimum losses to ourselves. Maximum proficiency must be attained in the use of all weapons, in mine laying, mine detection and the detection and removal of booby traps, in all types of night operations, and particularly in the skillful use of FIRE and MANEUVER. Reconnaissance, security, patrolling, the use of cover and the lessons learned in recent combat operations must all be stressed.

An abiding belief in your units is a pre-requisite to success in combat. All individuals must be actuated by the need for maintaining the traditions of our Division. "Nothing in hell must delay or stop the FIRST DIVISION."

/s/ TERRY ALLEN,

TERRY ALLEN
Major General, U. S. Army,
Commanding

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R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION
APO #1, U. S. ARMY

March 9, 1943.

MEMORANDUM)

TO : All Units, 1st Infantry Division.
)

Recently, the units of the Division, of necessity, have been widely separated on detached combat missions, involving great difficulties of leadership and control. We have not been able heretofore to fight as a complete division. The First Division is now reassembling.

We do not know what our next mission may be or how soon it must be executed, but in any case, "WE WILL FIGHT AS A UNIT."

Every individual must be prepared to give everything he has got for the honor of our Division. Every objective must be taken per schedule with the maximum damage to the enemy. Every objective seized must be held.

"Nothing in hell must delay or stop the First Division."

/s/ TERRY ALLEN,

TERRY ALLEN,
Major General, U. S. Army,
Commanding.

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R E S T R I C T E D

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16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division, Operations
Report, 19-26 February 1943

KASSERINE CAMPAIGN

FEBRUARY 19, 1943: CT moves from Ousseltia Valley, having turned sector over to French Forces for defense. CT moved to new location at 6253, Sheet 13, to open Kasserine Phase, beginning movement at 1850 hours, 19 February 1943 and arriving in bivouac area at 0530 hours 20 February 1943.

FEBRUARY 20, 1943: CT in bivouac in Kasserine sector. Preparation made and orders issued for movement into lines.

FEBRUARY 21, 1943: 1st Platoon Company A, 1st Engineers Battalion relieved from attached to CT 16 and reverts to control of Commanding General, 1st U. S. Infantry Division. The 2nd Battalion is moved forward into the lines and the remainder of the CT is alerted for movement. However, no movement is made. At 2200 hours 1st and 3rd Battalion with attachments from Special Units are moved forward but are not committed.

FEBRUARY 22, 1943: Regimental CP moved forward to 6967, sheet 13. Orders received from Commanding General, Combat Command B that CT 16 will have mission of protecting 7th and 33rd Field Artillery Battalions. At 1045 hours K and M Companies 16th Infantry come in contact with enemy. 1st Battalion is sent on mission to protect flanks. Commanding Officer issues plan to make local attacks in coordination with Combat Command B. At 1443 orders issued for 2nd and 3rd Battalions to make their local attacks as planned at 1500 hours, preceded by small artillery barrage. Battalions jump off on time. Company C, 1st Ranger Battalion attached to CT at 1618 hours. Local attacks made by battalions were successful in that dominating ground was taken and some field artillery guns captured by enemy were retaken. The Commanding General, II Corps and the Commanding General, 1st U.S. Infantry Division, each sent the following message to the Commanding Officer CT 16; "Many thanks for the splendid work of your CT today.

FEBRUARY 23, 1943: Orders received from Commanding General, 1st U. S. Infantry Division that very active patrolling must keep up as it is believed that enemy is making a general withdrawal. Orders passed to Battalions which are out of contact following attacks of yesterday. 39th Infantry takes over sector occupied by 3rd Battalion, 16th Infantry. 3rd Battalion moves to new defensive position.

FEBRUARY 24, 1943: Extensive plans made to move forward thru pass. Plans made in detail and although no resistance is expected, every detail is planned to take care of it. CP moved to 8477 after meeting of all unit commanders.

FEBRUARY 25, 1943: At 0700 all battalions move forward as planned. At 0820 hours the 1st Battalion had reached the base of the hill which is its first objective without resistance. At 1000 hours the 1st Battalion had passed its first objective and reached its 2nd one. The 3rd Battalion moved forward without resistance and took objective on schedule. Kasserine pass was cleared of enemy, but found to be mined and booby trapped extremely. All units moved forward without resistance to Thelpte and Feriana. There, lines were stopped, and defensive positions organized.

FEBRUARY 26, 1943: Defensive positions organized and a period of reorganization. Not in contact with enemy. At 1155 hours new CP opened at 390742, 1/50,000. 1st Reconnaissance Troops attached to CT to reinforce motorized reconnaissance for a short period.

*10th Panzer Division, War Diary (Extract), 14-22
February 1943*

Intelligence Report of Activities

9 February 1943

Transfer of Div. Hqs. to Bou Thadi (south of Kairouan).

13 February 1943

Transfer of Div. C.P. to the region east of Faid.

14 February 1943

Attack of the division on Sidi bou Zid.

At 0600 hr the advanced elements of the 86th Pz.Gren. reach the area 8 km west of the Faid pass without coming in contact with the enemy. After clearing the mines at the ^{Faid} pass our tanks, ~~XXXXXX~~ sweeping around to the right past the north edge of Dj. Lessouda, advance on the road to Sbeitla. At 0650 hr our tanks are engaged with enemy tanks just southeast of Dj. Lessouda. The mountain itself is occupied by enemy infantry. At 0700 hr the right flank of the 86th Pz.Gren.Rgt. enemy tanks attack/east of Dj.Lessouda (north of the road to Sbeitla). The attack is repulsed. At 0730 hr the enemy artillery was still firing on the defile just west of Faid. At 0735 hr the enemy resistance on the road to Sbeitla (about 8 km northeast of Sidi bou Zid) was broken. At 0830 hr after our tanks had reached the road fork about 14 km west-northwest of Faid, the enemy withdraw/~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ while at the same time he attacked with tanks from Sidi bou Zid on the road to the northeast. At 0900 hr enemy low level attack on the 7th Pz.Rgt. At 0930 our tanks advanced southward on Sidi bou Zid. At 0900 hr some enemy tanks withdrew from the road coming down from Sidi bou Zid and moved toward the west. The ^{bulk} ~~mass~~ of the enemy tanks was successfully attacked by dive bombers north of Sidi bou Zid between 1045 and 1055 hrs. At 1100 hr our air and ground reconnaissance ascertained that the enemy ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ east of Sidi bou

J.C.

Zid was retreating through Sidi bou Zid to the west and the northwest, and that there was heavy tank and artillery traffic. At the same time 25 enemy tanks were ^{observed} ~~observed~~ driving from Sidi bou Zid to the west. Behind the lines vehicles movements also from Sidi bou Zid to the southwest. At 1123 hr the 7th Pz.Rgt. reported a new enemy tank attack of 10-15 tanks from the West on Sidi bou Zid; it was repulsed. During the engagements the 86th Pz.Gren. ^{and} the 7th Pz.Rgt took 71 prisoners including 6 officers. In addition the following matériel was captured or destroyed:

- 40 tanks
- 7 armored personnel carriers
- 15 gun motor carriages
- 1 antitank gun
- 1 prime mover truck
- 4 trucks
- 8 passenger cars
- 9 machine guns

In addition 10 vehicles, some of them armored were captured or destroyed, one enemy plane was shot down and an enemy reconnaissance plane shattered on the ground. Several ammunition dumps were set on fire.

Enemy tanks were mostly of the Sherman type.

15 February 1943

The night passed without special occurrence. At 11:00 hr the reconnaissance detachment of the 86th Pz.Gren. reported heavy enemy movements from the north on the Paid-Sbeitla road, 15 km west of Dj.Lessoula. At 1150 hr 86th Pz.Gren. reported enemy motorized column with tanks advancing on the Sbeitla road. Then strong enemy concentrations were observed in the area west of Sadagula. At 1525 hr the enemy attacked with 10 tanks (Gen. Sherman) from the area of Sadagula on Sidi bou Zid and the road 6 km

T.C.

southwest thereof; the attack was executed with artillery support. An immediate counterattack with tanks brought the enemy attack to a standstill. About 30 enemy tanks were shot down by our tanks during the repulse of the enemy tank attack from the area 10 km northwest of Sidi bou Zid to the east and southeast. Three additional enemy tanks which had broken through in the area 6 km southeast of Sidi bou Zid were shot down. A total of 81 prisoners has been brought in.

Prisoners statements disclosed the following units in line: 3d Bn., 1st Armored Rgt.; 91st Field Arty Rgt. (10.5 cm guns on gun carriages); 17th Field Arty. Rgt. (15.5 cm guns); 168th Inf.; 701st Antitank Bn. (7.5 cm on gun carriages). Captured papers disclosed that these units and the elements they have in line here belong to Combat Kommando A, and that ~~the~~ the latter had its Hq Hqs ~~and~~ in Sidi bou Zid until a few days ago.

Combat Kommando C was committed north thereof according to captured papers. The following elements belonged to it: 2 battalions of the 6th Inf. Rgt. (Armored?), C battery of the 68th Field Arty., G Co., 13th Pz. Rgt., B Co., 701st Antitank Bn., 1st Co., 16th Engineers, 2 platoons of 443 Flak Arty. Bn.

In the course of the tank fight on the afternoon of 15 Feb. there arose the impression that the enemy ~~had~~ intended to put into line the hostile elements located on Djebel Garat Madid and east thereof. In the evening of 15 Feb. enemy elements were still holding out on the heights of Dj. Laouda. On that day ~~was~~ inflicted considerable losses on the enemy. On 15 Feb. the following matériel was captured or destroyed:

- 39 tanks
- 17 armored personnel carriers
- 4 antitank guns
- 3 gun motor carriages
- 8 machine guns
- 1 10.5cm mountain howitzer
- 1 15 cm gun
- 100 vehicles (approximately)

During the 2 days of fighting the total of matériel captured or

destroyed follows: 79 tanks, 30 armored personnel carriers, 18 gun motor carriages, 5 antitank guns, 2 arty guns, 17 machine guns, about 100 vehicles, 2 planes; 125 prisoners were taken.

16 February 1943

During the night the enemy attempted to get away from ^{encircled} Dj. Lessouda. Three officers and 53 men were taken prisoners. Remaining enemy elements are presumably still on Dj. Lessouda.

The encircled enemy on Dj. Garid Hadid was reconnoitered and attacked. In the forenoon enemy tanks advanced north of the ^{cross} road (17 km northwest of Sidi bou Zid) toward the east. The enemy was also reported as advancing with tanks over this ~~intersection~~ intersection on both sides of the road to the east and southeast ~~as far as the area 4~~ as far as the area 4 km west of Sadaguia. It is supposed that this movement was for the purpose of covering the enemy withdrawal (Air reconnaissance) to the west in the direction of Sbeitla. Toward 17 hr enemy tanks retreated to the north and west from our tank thrusts. In the afternoon the road to Sbeitla east of the intersection 17 km northwest of Sidi bou Zid lay under enemy artillery fire. Enemy batteries on gun carriages were ascertained northwest of the intersection.

On the evening of 16 Feb. the enemy held out on Hill 500 of Dj. Ksaira with at least 1 company in well improved positions with antitank guns against our attack from the northwest, and on the northeast spur of Dj. Garid Hadid against our attack from the southeast. There too ~~it~~ it was assumed that the enemy strength was approximately 1 company.

The enemy encircled on Dj. Lessouda was still holding out.

Captured papers disclose enemy minefields on roads between Dj. Ksaira and Dj. Rechaich, and on road 2 km east of Hill 561. The 69th Pz.Gren.Rgt. was warned of the fact by radio.

An estimate of the enemy situation as depicted by the division

to Gen. Ziegler (the enemy is covering with tanks the withdrawal on the east roads in the direction of Sbeitla) leads to the decision for attack and for the destruction of enemy tanks assumed to be there.

17 February 1943

At 0935 our troops reach Hadjeb el Aïoun without contact with the enemy. Our reconnaissance in the area 12 km north-northwest of Hadjeb el Aïoun observed at 1235 hr motorized enemy forces withdrawing to the northwest. The enemy had mined and blasted the mountain pass at Kef el Almar.

At 15 hr our spearhead established liaison with our troops at Fondouk. Native statements disclosed ~~that~~ the enemy as having fallen back to the west during the night.

Hostile forces in still unknown strength on Dj. Lessouda. Tank spearhead was held up by enemy mine obstacles in the area 6 km northeast of Hadjeb el Aïoun and 10 km south-southwest of Fondouk. The approach road to Fondouk lay under enemy artillery fire from a northern direction. For additional information on the enemy ~~by~~ ^{through} prisoners statements see Portfolio Prisoners statements.

18 February 1943

Quiet night. A few more prisoners were brought in; they belonged ^{surrounded} to the remaining/enemy forces (168th American Inf. Rgt) on Dj. Lessouda. In the early morning our troops occupied Dj. Lessouda and the last remnants of the enemy were captured. ~~xx~~ Only weak enemy forces were still occupying Pichon in the forenoon. As our troops approached the enemy withdrew to the west so that the town was taken without fighting. Arab statements disclose that the enemy has withdrawn the bulk of ~~the~~ ^{his} forces about 30 km.

The divisional C.P. is shifted to El Alem, north of Kairouan.

19 February 1943

The intelligence officer sets out for the advanced C.P. of

Pz.A.O.K. Africa, under whose control the division has been placed on 18 February 43, to get oriented on the enemy situation.

At Sbiba the 21. Pz. Div. has come upon British troops. The intelligence officer of Pz.A.O.K. suspects that they belong to the British 6th Pz. Div.. It is assumed that this division has been put in line for the support of the right French flank which, after the fighting for Sidj bou Zid and the subsequent withdrawal of the Americans, ~~was~~ also falling back.
Beside these Britishers only ^{the} French are to be expected at Sbiba. However it is not altogether impossible that elements of an American combat command make an appearance there. In other respects the Americans have gone back to Tebessa with Combat Command B, which ~~was~~ has had few casualties and with the remnants of Combat Commands A and C.

American prisoners were taken in Feriana; they belonged to the infantry. According to statements of prisoners the unit was identified as the 1st American Inf. Div. The British in line at Sbiba ~~was~~ immediately mined and wired their position and ~~was~~ offering ^{ed} stubborn resistance. For this reason the German attack was not continued on the evening of 19 Feb. and was to be resumed in the morning of 20 February.

At Tebessa also the enemy has mined and wired his positions, according to reports on hand at Pz.A.O.K. In the evening of 19 February there is still no report on the Kampfgruppe of Pz.A.O.K. Africa which has been committed from Kasserine to the northwest in the direction of Thala; therefore Pz.A.O.K. is unable to give out a detailed estimate of the enemy situation. However new enemy forces are not expected in this sector. It is true that the Americans have still about 3 divisions in Africa (the 2d Pz. Div., 3d and 9th Inf. Divs.) but they are said to be ^{Receiving them} ~~being~~ back in Morocco and perhaps held ^{ing them} in readiness there for special employment.

20 February 1943

As soon as the defile behind Kasserine has been fought free of the enemy the division has the mission to pursue him immediately through that defile in a northern direction. The Kampfgruppe of Pz.A.O.K. Africa, committed from Kasserine on the defile has only weak infantry elements but is very strong in artillery (9 batteries and projectors). According to prisoners' statements the defile is defended by elements of the First American Armored Division. Enemy strength is estimated at about 1500 men; a few concrete pill boxes have been identified. According to information received the enemy has evacuated all the air fields, including Tebessa, Div. C.P. Kasserine railroad station.

Weather: dull, foggy, rain at night.

Detachment [?] 10 which at first had been committed at the defile north of Kasserine had taken Hill 974 at 1414 hr and was attacking on Hill 1191, with enemy forces between the two points. At 1430 a report is received from Det. 10 that the enemy is still ^{to} northeast of Hill 1191. It is also reported that the enemy is bringing forward reinforcements ~~at~~ ^{from} the north including tanks and artillery on gun carriages.

A prisoner was brought in, a straggler who had become separated from his unit days before (168th Inf.)

21 February 1943

At 0108 hr, 2 km south of Hill 846 (road to Thala) enemy infantry men and vehicles. 86th Pz. Gr n. attacking to the north. At 0115 report received that the enemy is withdrawing northward. At 0238 hr the defile at 846 is taken; the enemy has retreated; only scattered enemy machine gun fire (2 cm). At 0730 hr the 86th Pz. Gren. reports that 2 1/2 km south of Thala and 2 km west of the road 15 enemy ~~trucks~~ ^{armored cars} are feeling forward. At 0815 hr 20 armored cars are observed approaching ^{under} ~~covered~~ ^{of} the early morning fog.

At 0832 hr the enemy is attacking from the north with tanks, and artillery fire from 2 batteries. Kampfgruppe 86 entrenches. At 0935 the ~~xxxx~~ enemy stops his attack. Kampfgruppe lies under artillery fire. ~~4th~~^{7th} advance at first was delayed by strong mine obstacles. At 1230 hr Kampfgruppe reports that strong enemy infantry forces have not been observed heretofore. At 1235 hr ~~Kampfgruppe~~ air reconnaissance: North of Hill 992 7 enemy tanks and 20 motor vehicles; light motor vehicles traffic on the road north thereof in a northern direction. In the meantime our tanks have passed through the Kampfgruppe and are attacking/right of the road in the direction of Thala. The road of advance especially in the area by Hill 992 lies under enemy artillery fire; we are assuming that there are 2 enemy batteries there.

At 1710 hr the 7th Pz.Rgt. reports that the enemy is withdrawing under cover of the haze. ~~During this period~~ While pursuing the enemy 15 ~~enemy tanks were destroyed~~ ^{were} and as the advance continued additional/~~tanks~~^{enemy} were knocked out. At 1930 hr our tanks and advanced elements have reached the area 2 km south of Thala. Our tanks had passed through ~~rather~~ strong enemy forces on both sides of the road of advance; our armored infantry had to fight ~~making~~^{enemy still} them out of their foxholes. At 2035 hr/on both sides of the road south of Thala, tanks, infantry and antitank guns. In the course of the fighting to south of Thala 463 prisoners, including 11 officers, were taken up to 24 hr 21 February 1943. Prisoners' statements disclosed the following ~~is~~ identification of troops:

1. British elements:

- 17-21 Lancers (6th ~~Armored~~ Armored Div.)
- 2nd V Leicesters (1st6th Inf.Div.)
- 86 th Chemical Warfare Co. Royal Engineers, independent company with 12 mortars 4 inches ~~caliber~~ caliber

Enemy composition according to daptured papers

- 11th Inf. Brigade
- 2d Bn., Light Fusiliers
- 1st Bn., East Surreys

- 21 Bn., Hampshire (light Garde brigade)
- 2d Bn., Parachute R
- 6th Commando
- 2-V Leicesters (45th Inf.Div.)
- 86th Chemical Warfare independent Co.

2. American elements:

- 16th Co., Engineer Bn. (1st Armored Div.)
- 168th Inf. Rgt. (34th Inf. Div.)
- 26th Inf. Rgt. (1st Inf. Div.)
- 39th Inf. Rgt. (9th Inf. Div.)
- 19th Engineer Rgt.

Captured or destroyed:

- 32 tanks
- 12 antitank guns
- 1 Flak
- 13 heavy mortars
- 6 motor vehicles
- 3 gun carriages
- 2 motor cycles.

22 February 1943

At 0545 a reconnaissance disclosed that the area on both sides of the road at Thala and south thereof was strongly occupied by the enemy. The enemy attacked out of Thala ~~with tanks~~ with tanks and a few of them broke through our security line. After 5 of his tanks had been destroyed the enemy withdrew northward. A new reconnaissance at 0555 hr disclosed that the hills about 1.5 km south of Thala were ^{occupied} strongly by the enemy, ~~also~~ also with antitank guns and tanks. During the day the enemy has remained rather quiet. According to Arabs statements and ~~statements~~ ~~statements~~ fresh vehicles marks it was assumed that the enemy had brought reinforcements from an eastern direction.

Late in the afternoon the enemy felt forward with 7 tanks west of the road on the left flank of our security line; later he withdrew.[†]

In front of Gruppe Rommel the enemy was getting reinforcements. For enemy cipher see division order of 22 February.

By tearing up the enemy front and destroying strong enemy elements in the deep enemy flank the division has carried out its mission to its

+ During the day intense activity of enemy air force; attacks by bombers and fighters per (low-level attacks)

full extent. During the night of 22/23 February it disengages itself from the enemy and reaches the pass position 15 km northwest of 7716 to defend the latter with the D.A.K. For particulars concerning the enemy see the prisoners' statements file.

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*21st Panzer Division, War Diary (Extract), 14-23
February 1943*

Source: Kriegstagebuch 21 Panzer Division Afrika
1 Jan. '43 - 31 March '43 33 135

14 Feb. '43

The night passed quietly.

Until break of day combat groups pushed forward to the trail 7226-7224. At 0535 hours Kampfgruppe Schütte reports the crossing of the swamp area. At 0610 hours the advanced elements of the March group have crossed the mine field. At 0615 hours and 0630 the Rec. Bn. 580 and the Pz. Rgt. respectively have crossed with all their elements/the mine belt. The sandy areas of the trails mentioned present a considerable obstacle, progress being hindered by the frequent sinking of vehicles. Labor detachments of the 220th armored Eng. are employed so that the vehicles are made mobile as soon as possible.

At 0630 Kampfgruppe Schütte has occupied the prescribed position at 7223 and reconnoiters to the north.

The enemy, intercepting some of our radio messages, knows of our advance, but remains quiet.

The 609 Flak Bn. receives the order to occupy positions on both sides of the road south of the mine ~~line~~ belt and to remain in contact with the enemy.

At 0755 a report could be made to 5th Panzer A.O.K. that the movements had been carried out systematically, but up to now no reports of ~~enemy~~ contact with the enemy are at hand.

The divisional C.P. was located on the south slope of Djebel Zebbak at 7229 and had a good view into the terrain of the advance. At 0730 hours Reconnaissance Bn. 580 crossed point 7231 and in addition covered the right flank at 7223 without coming in contact with the enemy.

At 0820 hours Armored Bn. Rohr is pulled out of area 7223 and brought to the 5th Panzer Rgt. At 0840 the 220th Armored Eng. Bn. report that the column is rolling since 0800 hours. The ~~d~~ slowing up and temporarily stoppage of the

speedway were caused by 2 tanks which had chain trouble. At 0900 hours the division commander decided to go forward to the advanced tank elements as the Kampfgruppe had apparently halted. A radio message received by an armored regiment was ambiguous and armored regiment was standing still on purpose. The division commander took stock of the situation and ordered the march to be resumed.

At 0920 hours the 104 Armored Grenadier Rgt. was marching through the mine belt and passed through without enemy interference. Low flying enemy planes attacked the march groups several times without success. At 1000 hours the 220 Armored Eng. Bn. reported that the 104th A Armored Gren. Rgt. had concluded its march. The 2d Bn., 104th Rgt. reported at 1010 h. that enemy artillery was moving from 7210 in the direction of Sidi bou Zid. At 1015 hours the reconnaissance bn. had reached the prescribed area at 7257 and gone into position. The last vehicle of Kampfgruppe Pfeiffer passed through the mine belt at 1020 h.

In the south sector the forenoon was quiet. At 1030 h. the command echelon of the division starts marching through the mine belt to reach the north slope of the Djebel Zebbak.

A few enemy armored scout cars were engaged by Rec. Bn. 580 north of Djebel Quergha and forced to retreat leaving 1 scout car behind.

At 1055 h. the 5th Armored Rgt. had reached the area 3 km south of 519. The 2d Bn. reports vehicle traffic on the road to Bir el Hafey. The head of the column continues its march in the direction of the road Sidi bou Zid - Gafsa. The terrain is not heavily mined but the mud swamps make the going difficult. The reconnaissance of the 580th Rec. Bn. discloses only few enemy vehicles in the region southeast of Bir el Hafey. The enemy is falling back with his Kampfgruppen to the southwest. Toward 1220 h. Kampfgruppe Stenkoff reaches the road Sidi bou Zid - Gafsa at Point 518. The 4th Bn., 104th B retains contact with

the enemy group at 7221. At 1316 h. the 609th Flak Bn. passes through the mine belt and advances in the direction of 563 -537 to 533. In the area of 518 the 5th Panzer ~~Pz.~~Rgt. has assembled and at 1345 h. advances again on Sidi bou Zid. The 2d Bn. already destroyed 8 enemy tanks northeast of 518.

At 1346 h. a report is received that elements of the 10th.Pz.Div. have captured Si.bou Zid. Pursuit to the southwest is initiated. Grenadier Bn.Major

Knösel carries out a thrust against the enemy at Djbel Ksaira. It has the mission to surround it from the north in a southeastern direction and take it.

The advance of the 5th Pz.Rgt. is going smoothly forward and at 1445 h. the area 2 km ~~west~~ east of 388 is reached. Our artillery fire is increased on the Fekka slopes. At 1450 h. ~~there is~~ a change of C.P. for div. Hqs. takes place in the area 3 km southeast of 534; the final divisional C.P. is reached at 1540h. 3 km northwest of Nasseur.

Kampfgruppe Stenkhoff continues to drive in the direction of Sidi bou Zid in constant contact with the enemy. At 1705 h. west of Sidi bou Zid contact ~~communication~~ is established with the 10th Pz.Div. The enemy continues to hold Hill 7209, and at 1800 h./the 5th Pz. A.O.K.orders pursuit. The 10.Pz. Div. presses from the north on 7209. The 104th B Pz.Gren.Rgt. receives the mission to push forward against 7209 until it comes in contact with the enemy. For the 15th of Feb. 7210-7220 is ordered as objective to force a junction with Battalion Knösels. The Kampfgruppen receive the order to get into position for all-around defense in the areas they have reached, refuel, re-ammunition and organize so as to march on Gafsa as soon as possible.

Flak Bn.609 is committed in the area of 7256 with the mission to ~~protect~~ at 7210, 20 and 21 cover to the northeast/against the ~~enemy~~ encircled enemy.

Sidi bou Zid is securely in our hands. The enemy has withdrawn in the direction of Sbeitla.

At 2015 h./5th Panz. A.D.K. that the divisions expects to be in a position to march on Gafsa at 1200 h. 15 Feb. Gren Rgt. 104 B has been ordered

to block the terrain at 512 in a northeastern direction and to tie down the enemy at 357. At dawn 1 battalion will be launched to destroy the enemy in a coup de main.

Gruppe Sld had the mission to continue on 15 Feb. on the defensive and to carry out offensive reconnaissance against 9015. [Gafsa]

In areas ^[Kawra] 358, 357, 356 a reconnaissance discloses enemy forces with many motor vehicles. Thereupon 5th Pz.Rgt. receives at 2100 h. the order to reconnoiter immediately in these areas with instructions to the Gren.Rgt. 104 B to advance on the enemy groups from the south and southeast on the morning of 15 Feb.

15 February 1943
In all Kampfgruppen the night passed quietly.

The 5th Pz.Rgt. received the mission to reconnoiter from 7237 to the southeast as far as the area ^{[S. of Garat Hadid] Ksar} 7222 and 7209 to establish contact with the Gren. Rgt. 104 B. The 4th Bn., ~~105~~ 104th Rgt. is engaged with the enemy since 0730 h.; the enemy is still occupying the hills at 7221. ^[Garat Hadid] The C.P. of Gren.Rgt. 104 B is in Sidi bou Zid; that of the 5th Pz.Rgt. is 5 km southwest of Sidi bou Zid, south of the road to Gafsa. [Sidi bou Zid]

The general impression is that except for the small enemy group encircled southeast of Sidi bou Zid, the fighting is concluded.

The Rec. Bn. 580 receives the order to keep open the defile 8 km south of 7288 to facilitate the planned operation on Gafsa.

5th Pz.Rgt. receives the basic order to hold the positions reached until the enemy blockaded southeast of Sidi bou Zid is exterminated. In addition it will prepare the march to the south. All supplies will be adjusted to the undertaking.

Toward 0930 h. the division commander with Lt.Col. Stenkhoff and Capt. Voss discuss the operation Gafsa at point 7260 from where they have a view into the terrain. For the conference ordered by 5th Pz. A.D.K. the ^{Ig} ~~Operations~~

~~Observer~~ accompanied by the ~~Observer~~ ^{2d Lieutenant Ia} go to the advanced C.P. of 5th Pz. A.O.K. at at 0700 h. ^{is} La Fauconnerie/ The Gafsa operation ~~was~~ discussed thoroughly and planned.

Toward 1030 a report is received here from the 10.Pz.Div. that enemy columns with tanks and infantry have been ~~not~~ identified in the region of ⁷8250. Their direction indicates that Sidi bou Zid is their objective. ^[Sadaguir]

At 1300 h. the ~~Observer~~ ^{Ia} leaves the C.P. of the advanced Pz.A.O.K. and at 1500 h. arrives ~~arrives~~ at the/regimental C.P. ~~at Sidi~~ (in Sidi bou Zid). Shortly thereafter an observer reports that the enemy already identified is now between ⁷8250 and 7251. After a short consultation between ~~Operations Officer~~ ^{the Ia} Col. Gerhard (7th Pz.Rgt.) and Major Pfeiffer the following elements are put in line for the destruction of the enemy:

3 companies of the 5th Pz.Rgt. attack the enemy in the flank in a south-north direction.

1/3 company of the 104th Pz.Gren.Rgt. follows the tanks. A company of the 7th Pz.Rgt. is put in line northwest of Sidi bou Zid enveloping toward the west. The committed artillery (3 heavy and 2 light guns) is effectively ^{at a} engaging the enemy ~~with~~ brisk rate. The counterattack of our Panzers gains ground. The enemy fails to reach his objective, Sidi bou Zid, and ~~the group~~ he cannot reach the group which is surrounded. At 1630 h. a Stuka attack takes place on enemy tanks. During the entire engagement the enemy artillery tries to find the range on our batteries, but without success. The tank action, so successful for us, continues until nightfall. At 1830 h. the ~~Observer~~ ^{Ia} ~~Observer~~ arrives at the divisional C.P. and reports to the division commander. 45 enemy tanks were shot down; we did not lose any. The loss of time caused by this engagement necessitated a 24 hours delay in the Gafsa operation.

At 1730 h. The Recon.Bn. 580 reported Gafsa free of enemy; thereby the entire operation falls through. As it is provided for that the D.A.K. is to occupy Gafsa coming from the south, the division commander decides to send

the following telephone message to D.A.K.:

"Request elements of the Africa Corps to Gafsa; need Recon.Bn. 580 for other purposes."

The undertaking of Pz.Gren.Rgt.104 B against the enemy group in area ^[Garet Hadid] 7221 was not successful, as the enemy, ⁱⁿ the strength of a battalion, had well established himself in ~~improved~~ improved ~~and~~ positions difficult to recognize. At 1920 h the Recon.Bn. 580 is given the mission to occupy Gafsa and to reconnoiter in the areas 9020, 25 and 9043.

Elements which participated in the tank engagement returned to their rest areas in the evening.

16 February 1943

The night passed without special occurrence.

At 0215 h. a radio message was received from the advanced 5th Pz.A.O.K. giving the 10.Pz.Div. the mission to move very early on Sbeitla with a strong reconnaissance force to pursue the evading enemy at Sidi bou Zid. For that purpose the 21.Pz.Div. will hold an armored battalion in readiness.

At 0610 h. the D.A.K. reports the occupation of Gafsa, and the retention of Recon.Bn. 580 is now unnecessary. At 0630 h. Bn. Plessing engaged anew the enemy positions at 7221. The O.B. orders a conference at 1200 h. at ~~722~~ 7212. ^[Faid Pass]

In compliance with an order of 5th Pz. A.O.K. the Recon.Bn. 580 is brought forward to 7288. At 1100 h. Rgt. 104 B reports that the attack against 7221 advances only slowly. The enemy is falling back step by step toward the northwest.

Pz. Gren.Rgt. 104 A receives the order to initiate immediately a reconnaissance out of Sidi bou Zid. At 1435 h. Recon.Bn. 580 is ordered to reach area 7263. The reconnaissance launched toward the northwest is to stop; a reconnaissance patrol will remain in the defile 8 km southwest of 7288. During

the conference at 7212 Gen. Ziegler gives the division commander and the commander of the 10. Pz. Div. instructions for the attack on Sbeitla. Kampfgruppe Pfeiffer comes under the control of the 10. Pz. Div. effective at once and receives the mission to march in the direction of Sbeitla toward 17 00 h. with a grenadier battalion, an armored battalion and 2 light batteries. The mass of the 21. Pz. Div. will follow as soon as possible. Toward 1600 h. the divisional C.P. is transferred to 7253.

In the south the enemy apparently holds with comparatively weak reconnaissance forces the line 9222, 93, 24 as rearguard. Faced by rather strong reconnaissance forces he withdraws at 9024 toward the northwest almost without fighting.

At 2145 h. Kampfgruppe Pfeiffer reports that at 2130 h. enemy infantry with antitank guns is covering ⁵ km east of 7275. The Kampfgruppe is attacking. At 2246 h. 4 enemy tanks are reported; 1 antitank gun is destroyed. The attack is gaining further ground.

On 16 Feb. Rgt. 104 B continues his attack on 7221 and Djebel Ksaira.

At 2345 h. Flak Bn. 609 receives the following mission: it will cover the advance of the division with the combat detachments under its control at 7240 - ^{Leanda} 7249 and on the road ^{Kern's X-roads} 7269 - ^{NW of Zofia} 7249 by occupying a position in the valleys between ^{Dr Hamra & km SW of Dr Hamra} 7272 and 7270. At the same time the battalion will assume air protection for that area. When this task is accomplished the division will recall the battalion. At 2345 h. the ^{Ia} ~~Operations Officer~~ supplements the order issued, and goes over it once more. The battalion will fall in at 0100 h. and between 0400 and 0500 will reach the area between 7272 and 7271 with front toward the northwest, west and north.

The 2d Bn., 25th Flak will take the protection of the cross roads at ^[Kern's X-Roads] 7249 with 1 light and 1 heavy battery. They will be ready to fire at 0400 h.

At 0045 h. the 1st Bn., 104th Rgt. receives the order to move in such

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a way that its advanced elements will stand at 7249 on 17 Feb. at 0900 h. It will leave the present area at 0500 h. The left flank will be covered from the region 7272 -7271 by Flak Bn. 609. The march route will lead through ^{Zaabna} 7268, ^{Bir el Hafey Rd} ~~to~~ ^[Karr's Rd] 7249. The 1st Co., 220th Eng. is ordered to the Sbeitla area early on 18 Feb. and there will be at the disposal of the division. A labor detachment will occupy Wadi Meheri until 104 B has passed through and will then complete the mine belt.

At 0110 h. the 2d Bn., Flak 25 receives the mission to set to march a flak combat detachment to the 1st Bn., 104th at 7232.

During the night Kampfgruppe Pfeiffer meets strong enemy resistance ^[Bridge across 5 mi E of Sbeitla] of at 7275, and upon order/the division commander remains stationary until dawn.

Toward 0100 h. Kampfgruppe Pfeiffer passes out of the control of the 10. Pz. Div.

17 February 1943

During the night and morning the movements of the division are taking place as planned. At 0530 the division commander with the assistant ~~ix~~ Ia go ^{NW of D. Hassan} to the C.P. in area 7274. In the morning hours the elements which had remained in the former divisional resting area identify enemy forces south of the road Sidi bou Zid - Bir el Hafey. In a vigorous action about 800 prisoners were brought in. They belonged to that enemy unit which had occupied a position ^{Garet Haidid} at 7221 and was now attempting to fight its way through to the north west. On its ^{RJ SE of Zaabna} march from 7253 to ~~7252~~ ^{Zaabna} 7268 the 1st Bn., 104th also came upon the enemy falling back to the northwest; he ~~had~~ was well camouflaged in cactus fields. After a short exchange of fire about 600 prisoners were taken, including Col. Drake, commander of the position in area 7221,

The enemy has organized for defense in the favorable terrain around Sbeitla and the attack is set for 1200 h. Reconnaissance discloses that he is

withdrawing his train elements to the northwest in the direction of Sbiba.

The Recon. Bn. 580 has the mission to reconnoiter and screen the line 7282 and 7291.

Kampfgruppe Stenkjoff attacks, south of Sbeitla, the enemy tanks which, well camouflaged in the olive groves, accept the fight. ^{Hostile} Armored forces are ~~sit~~ also ⁿ on the spurs of the Djebels el Rheradok. The tanks were partly buried and interspersed with antitank guns. Enemy artillery had a good range on our attacking tanks; observation for the artillery was conducted by single-engine fighter planes. The Panzer Regiment had to advance through the difficult terrain on a width of 10 km. A violent tank fight developed and one could see that it was a case of a systematically prepared defense with the objective of getting out of Sbeitla everything possible. The enemy's expenditure was 50% smoke shells.

During the attack our Luftwaffe was very active and attacked the enemy positions and columns with bombs and in low flying raids.

The 3d Bn., 104th attacked Sbeitla frontally and made good progress along the Wadi southeast of Sbeitla. Toward 1700 h. it reached Sbeitla and the same evening pushed a company to the northwest through the locality and there moved into defensive positions. The tank engagement taking place south of Sbeitla was very stubborn and last until 1830h. Despite everything on this day 27 tanks were put out of commission without ^{one of our tanks being} a complete loss ~~on our side~~.

During the evening the 5th Pz. Rgt. assembles in the area 2 km east of Sbeitla. The Grenadiers have the mission to defend Sbeitla. The artillery supports the Grenadiers and is ready to beat down ^{at once} any eventual enemy attack. The division intends to undertake ⁿ in the morning of 18 Feb. a vigorous reconnaissance to Kasserine. The mission of Col. Lang, the defense of the high ridge (Djebel Lessouda) with reconnaissance up to the line 7217 - 7218 - 7220 remains in force as there might still be some remaining enemy forces to reckon with.

Supplement to 17 February.

At 0715 h. Major Pfeiffer reports to the division commander: "Advance ~~xxxxx~~ elements are still holding firm in front of a superior enemy." The division commander decides to put off the attack until 1200 h. At 0915 h. the attack is discussed with the commanders. After a short, vigorous artillery preparation the tanks advance on Sbeitla in an enveloping movement to the right, while the infantry carry out a frontal attack. At 0800 h. ~~at~~ 2 light enemy batteries find their range and at the same time the first enemy low-flying raids take place. A reconnaissance discloses that on the right attack flank ^{THAT} there exists a tank obstacle and on the slope behind it about 15 enemy tanks have concentrated. Thereupon at 1015 h. in the presence of the commanders the division commander decides to launch the panzer attack enveloping on the left. Flak combat detachments assume the protection of the right flank. An anti-aircraft battery 8,8 moves forward in the area 7274 and takes over air raid defense and at the same time ground commitment.

At 2140 h. Kampfgruppe Kuhm receives the order to return to Rgt. 104 A. Report at 0645 18 Feb. by Major Pfeiffer.

Recapitulation

The enemy resistance at Sbeitla proved considerably stronger than expected. / Opposing the division was an organized, tactically well planned defensive position in which a strong, mobile armor belt took a hand (about 50 enemy tanks) The 7 hours tank fight was ^{very} hard. Sbeitla is firmly in our hand.

Main body of tanks east of ^[Sbeitla] 7279; 5 batteries northeast of 7279; ^{N. of Djel Koumin} 104th A Sbeitla. Flak 609, 7280.

The reinforced 1st Bn., 104th ~~armored~~ ^[NW of Zaafra in Bir el Hafes - Kerak & Rda tanks] moving to assembly position in the area north of 7269 destroyed the remnants of the 168th in hard close combat. Plans for 18 Feb.: Defense of Sbeitla, cleaning up of the region ^{Sbiba [Kassone village]} 7237 - 7263. Reconnaissance with point of main effort 5372 and 7716.

18 February 1943

The night passed quietly.

The divisional C.P. is located 6 km west-northwest of 7219. The Pz. Gren.Rgt. 104 B is again placed under the control of the division with its 2 battalions and attached elements and has the mission to cover with Bn. Knöfels area 7230 and with Bn. Flessing and 1 light battery/7263 [Dr. Howe: the same words are crossed out in the text] ^[Ed. Stehle]

The intermediate terrain retains some enemy remnants which must be cleaned up. For the missions of the various units for 18 Feb. see division order no. 4 in the annex.

At 1300 h. Gren.Rgt. 104 A launches a reconnaissance platoon in the direction of Kasserine and twice encounters an armored enemy reconnaissance which, after a short exchange of fire, withdraws to the north.

In the course of the afternoon this reconnaissance platoon made contact with the DAK in Kasserine.

The division receives the order to push immediately a fresh security of detachment to Kasserine; as this is not possible the division requests/DAK the permission to keep the detachment until 1000 h. 19 Feb. It is provided that a Kampfgruppe under the command of Capt. Kuhn/^{will assume} the duty at 1000h. 19 Feb.

The closing report of the day to the 5th Pz. AOK is as ~~follows~~ ^{follows}: The enemy ~~remains~~ retains weak reconnaissance forces in the area 5378 and on the road 7279-7716. Occupation of ~~5347~~ ^{5beitla Kasserine} is established. No enemy air activity. Our reconnaissance forces in 7716; contact made with elements of DAK. Combing through the area ^{[S. of Kasrin] [Bir el Hafes] [Keriat Rd.]} 7209 - 63 - 79 results in taking 2 officers and 150 men prisoners. 2 tanks, 4 personnel transportation wagons destroyed. Numerous motor vehicles captured, mostly disabled. From 14 Feb.-17 Feb. the 5th Pz.Rgt. has destroyed 103 tanks without completely losing one.

Tank situation: 55/III, 14/IV.

Plans for tomorrow: Kampfgruppe to 7216.

19 February 1943

The night passed quietly in the Sbeitla sector. At 0445 h. the following radio message was sent from the advanced 5th Pz. AOK: "Get ready to march immediately. Probable time of departure 0800 h. under Rommel in direction of 5372. Order for starting follows". At 0634 h. the division received the following order: "The 21st Pz. Div. comes under the orders of Rommel effective at once. The division will leave area 7279 at 0800 h. 19 Feb. along the main road leading to the north and will reach the road junction 4567." For division starting order see annex. At 0615 h. units were acquainted separately with the new order by telephone or radio. The battery with Gren. Rgt. 104 B and with Kampfgruppe Düwer also follows to the Sbeitla area.

The Recon. Bn. 580 will join the line of march ^{at} ~~in~~ the first possible gap that occurs, if possible between Panzer Gren. and artillery. A move forward is intended later. Capt. ^{Voss} immediately in front to the division commander who drives ~~xxxx~~ behind the armored spearhead.

Toward 1100 h. the armored spearhead encountered a mine field 1 km south of 5374; it was cleaned up without incident and crossed ^{through} ~~A~~. A few enemy scout cars withdraw to the north. ~~After~~ Beyond this rather ineffectual mine field there was a second, much better ^{laid} constructed. Behind it about 20 tanks, 2 batteries and well placed infantry are ascertained. The division commander decided to attack after moving into position. The road as well as the area are obviously under artillery observation fire. While the engineers are occupied cleaning up the second mine field an armored battalion, encircling about 7 km from the east is committed. A light field Haubitzer battery is ready to fire 30 minutes after the tanks came upon the mine field; 4 additional batteries are put in line during the afternoon to fight the enemy batteries which are giving our tanks plenty to do. At 1500 h. Major Pfeiffer receives from the division commander the order to bring forward the 104 A Rgt. and place it for the time being behind the nearest rearward hill. It is intended that the

even today perhaps
~~that~~ regiment be committed to the attack/on the infantry positions along the hills. For the present a reconnaissance is to be carried out in both flanks. At 1620 h. the FM arrives at the C.P. to get oriented on the course of the operations. The FM advocates the view that every means must be employed to throw the enemy. At 1710 h. Lt.Col. Stenkhoff reports the following to the division commander at the divisional C.P.: "Our tank attack is at a stand still as a result of barbed wire obstacles, mines and antitank guns, and also because of enemy artillery; ten breakdowns up to now". The division commander decides to call off the attack and orders to take back the tanks at dusk, to assemble, and refuel/re-ammunition.

A battalion of ^{the} 104 A Rgt. is committed ~~xxx~~ for the defense of the ridge east of the road. The second battalion moves to the hollow as reserve.

Reconn.Bn.580 assume the protection of the right flank and reconnoiters toward the east. Flak Bn.609 covers the left flank and occupies a position ~~xx~~ on the ridge with connection ~~xx~~ to the road. Reconnaissance as far as the enemy will begin immediately when the moon shines.

The division commander takes the following decision: with the first rays of light on 20 Feb. the attack will be launched anew. The entire infantry and the 5th Pz.Rgt. will carry the attack forward under good artillery support. Bn.Kurzei, widely pulled apart, will attack frontally by bounds. The main ~~effort~~ force concentrated will be ~~xxxx~~ on the right flank. An engineer platoon and 2 flak combat detachments, Bn.Kuhn and the 5th Pz.Rgt. will be on the right flank. The attack of the right flank will be carried forward in such a way that from point 5354 ^[X-Rd SE of Drua bou Rouine] either point 5371 ^[X-Rd E of Sbiba] will be reached and thereby Drua bou Rouine, skirting Sbiba, or that the attack from 5354 ~~xxx~~ advance to the north so as to swing west on Sbiba at the proper moment.

To Flak Bn.609 devolves the mission to tie down the enemy and especially to simulate an attack on the left flank.

Attack will begin at 0630 h.

At 2200 h. a conference took place among the commanders concerning the Sbiba undertaking. Since Bn. Kuhn was a little late in reaching his assembly area the attack was ordered for 0830 h.

The artillery will be committed as follows:

3 light Field howitzer batteries will occupy positions on the right flank
3 heavy field howitzer and 1 gun battery have gone into position in the hollow in front of the mine field.

Two flak combat detachments have been attached to Gren. Bn. Kurzei.

20 February 1943

The night passed quietly. Heavy ground fog cut off the view in the morning hours. At 0827 Stukas are requested from Pz. AOK Africa to fight ^{enemy} artillery positions at 5372. At 0830 h. the attack progresses as planned. the Recon. Bn. covers the right flank and reports that the area at 5354 is free of enemy.

The enemy, with considerable artillery, begins adjustment fire on the advance march movements of the division.

At 1130 h. Kampfgruppe Stenkhoff reports that the advance 4 km southeast of 5371 makes only slow progress as the terrain is cut through by deep wadis. Until now the march was accomplished without resistance. The 3d Bn., 104th Rgt. advances only slowly ^{under} heavy artillery and mortar fire. The 1st Bn., 104th Rgt. which fell into line at 0940 h. 2 km southeast of ~~5371~~ 5354 reached the hills of 620 ^[E end of Draa for Rouine] toward 1140 h.

The Panzer Rgt. reports that the terrain between 5371 and Hill 620 ^[S. of 5371] is impassable; a scout patrol sent ahead in advance became bogged. Toward 1200 h. the 3d Bn., 104 reached ^[W. end of Draa for Rouine] Hill 643 with its right flank. On the basis of the report of 5th Pz. Rgt. the division commander at 1230 h. decides as follows: the thrust of the Pz. Rgt. with 1 battery will take place over ^{by-passing Sbiba to the E.} 5371 - 68 - 66

[on Sbiba - Retna road 8 km N. of Sbiba]
to 5367 to seize the enemy in Bbiba from the northwest. The 1st Bn, 104th
continue to
will ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ attack along the wadi in a western direction. The 3d Bn., 104th
closes to the right and follows. Flak Bn. 609 extends its position a few
observation
100 meters to the east. The artillery increases its ~~positioning~~ of the area
west of the road.

At 1400 h. a liaison officer arrives from 3d Bn. 104th and reports
that the attack is at a stand still as a result of the strongest enemy artillery
and mortar fire. Up to now 3 men killed and 10 wounded. The enemy artillery
fires more and more accurately on our batteries and especially on the divisional
C.P. There is strong evidence that enemy observers are located on the hills
west of the road and ~~XXXXX~~ that our entire installations are exposed to their
view.

At 1415 h. there is a call from Ia Pz. AOK Afrika with the report
that FM Kesselring has promised the strongest air commitment for the attack
on Sbiba. The weather becoming worse and worse the project is not carried out.

At 1700 h. the division commander decides to stop the attack and
orders the various Kampfgruppen ~~xxx~~ to disengage from the enemy at night fall.

At 2200 h. a commanders' conference takes place. Its basis is the
division order for the defense of the terrain south of Sbiba. For the order
see the annex. In the course of the day the Reconnaissance Bn. was given the
mission to reconnoiter over 5354, ^[Kafal Akman] 47, ^[Dj. Siba Habes] 48, 55, 56. Result: no enemy observation.
The battalion receives the order to block the defile at 5347 toward the north
with ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ its main body. The reconnaissance will be carried
out as far as 5345, ^[W of Dj. Siba Habes] 55, 56, 70 and 67. ^[N of Sbiba]

Upon order of Pz. AOK Afrika, Recon. Bn. 580 comes under the control
of Pz. AOK Afrika, effective at once.

SE of Sbiba Kasanni
The march takes place over 5353 to 7716.

21 February 1943

The weather became worse during the night; the rain softened roads and terrain. Enemy harassing fire lay on the division positions during the night.

At 0310 AOK issues the following order:

"Pass position south of Sbiba resting on the enemy mine field to be defended. Recon. Bn. 580 to march immediately by the shortest road as army reserve to the area around Kasserine".

Toward 0500 strong artillery fire begins again. Probably the enemy expects us to be moving into position of readiness. During the night we succeeded in disengaging from the enemy and to organize the defense.

During the night a nuisance force under the command of Lt. Col. von Katzler was ordered to block with mines the road net 5 km east of 5616. The force is equipped with radio and has the mission to reconnoiter to the west. According to Arabs' statements from 40 to 50 enemy tanks are moving there.

At 1200 h. enemy artillery fire lays on the divisional C.P. and the division commander decides for an immediate transfer of the C.P. 4 km south of 5376.

At ~~1410~~ 1440 h. it was possible to report to Pz. AOK that the division after ~~regrouping~~ ^{by Major} regrouping on the line 5348, 5353, 5373, had passed to active defense. Toward 1600 h. Cpt. Hissmann reports that about 500 men coming from the north are moving in the mountain in front of the position of Flak Bn. 609, and that according to a reconnaissance ~~there~~ ^{Kapitel Koralt} already about 300 men are there. Thereupon an armored company is set to march and occupy the position behind Flak Bn. 609.

Toward 1610 h. it looks as if the enemy, 400-500 men strong, has the intention of attacking the position of the battalion. At 1630 h. an order goes to Major Pfeiffer: "The enemy will be observed and kept off by a reconnaissance".

laying of mines in the position before Sbiba makes good progress. At 1000h. the enemy fires well placed harassing fire on our advanced positions, especially on ~~that~~ the 3d Bn., 10⁵th Rgt. Our observation is very much hindered by the weather. At 1100 h. the reconnaissance detachment at 5616 reports ^{NW of Sbiba at N. end D.} ~~5616~~ reports ^{Semana} that contrary to map findings there is a good ^{to 1612} pass entrance at Mashei and Abdullah. 5616 is occupied by an enemy ~~company~~ company. Toward 1300 h. again violent smoke firing on the left flank of Flak Bn. 609. It can be assumed that the enemy is undertaking an attack to get relief from pressure. At 1330 h. 20 tanks, 1 battery and a few motor vehicles are observed 4 km. east of Sbiba. As visibility has become extremely good it is assumed that these motor vehicles are ~~the same as those~~ nothing new but simply were there in the previous days and ~~could~~ could not be identified because of the weather.

Toward 1500 h. enemy artillery fire lies on a line with the flak switch line. Westward toward 643 an enemy battery is identified. Our artillery fires on identified objectives. The numerous scouting operations launched by the division during the day disclose that the forward terrain is mostly free of enemy. Toward evening ~~is~~ the enemy's artillery fire slackens noticeably and ~~was~~ ^{is} altogether quiet after 1630 h. At 1730 h. for the first time 12 enemy fighter planes flew over the divisional area. A "Lightning" ⁿ was brought down.

The following commanders were ordered to appear at the [division]

commander: Col. Bruer
Lt. Col. Stenkhoff
" " Werdelmann
" " Pfeiffer
Captain Hissmann
" Richter
" Streitz

At 1830 h. the 3d Bn., 104th Rgt. observed vehicles before the front. They were probably employed to lay mines. Our artillery engages them at once. At 1850 h. Col. Bayerlein informs Ia: "10. Pz. Div. ~~7~~ DAK regrouped and reached

w. of Dj Chambi. N. of Thelepte

the pass positions at 7760,-7745. The 21.Pz.Div. remains before Sbiba for the defense. Again several artillery fire concentrations on the sector of the 3d Bn, 105th Rgt since 1915 h. At 20 h. a radio from X O.B. reaches the division. Contents: [Figures illegible] defense of the present position. *Dj Gobbet [S. side Kassem's Camp]*
10.Pz.Div. and DAK will withdraw to the pass position 7776, 5655 which will be held. Prepare the mining of the road to Sbeitla".

The enemy behaved as on the previous day, but did not attack.

Artillery activity is somewhat less. 5616 is occupied by an enemy company. Our 6 km east of 5616.
~~WXXX~~ flank protection by artillery is weak. First enemy air reconnaissance over the positions of the division. One "Lighting"^{er} shot down. Plans for 23 February: Defense; reconnaissance.

Tank situation: 33/III, 6/LV

23 February 1943

The night passed without special occurrence. The reconnaissance confirmed Arabs statements that the enemy has evacuated the positions south of Sbiba and the locality itself. Enemy artillery fires on Sbiba and north of throughout the Sbiba ~~throughtout~~ day.

At 1220 h. FM Rommel issued the order to continue the occupation of the position.

Bn. Major Knösels with the addition of a company from Major Plessing occupies the position just northwest of Sbeitla. Flak Bn. 609 furnishes a reinforced platoon and ~~sent~~ starts it to march to 5 km east of 5616 for security purposes and to relieve Lt. Col. von Katzler. The platoon is placed under the control of Capt. Römer, commander of the position. The entire position is under the direct control of the division. Toward 1550 h. an armored enemy column coming from the north approaches Sbiba and in front of the northern

exit turns again to the north. At 1630 h. an enemy infantry company is advancing from the north on Sbiba on both sides of the road. Committed fresh reconnaissance patrols reconnoiter south of Sbiba and at ~~1640~~^{h.} report the area south of Sbiba free of enemy. At the southern exit the patrol was fired upon by tanks from the northern direction. Two tanks and I-12 motor vehicles were ascertained without a doubt. At 1720 h. our artillery observers ascertain that the enemy is ~~occupying~~^{moving into} his old position though only with weak elements at first. Toward 1730 h. the Pz. Gren. Rgt. 104 A receives the order to bring to the region east of Faid all the non-motorized elements that are not needed. At 1840 h. The Ia goes to the OB to be apprized of the situation.

At 1940 F.M. Rommel spoke with the division commander and informed him that when the 10. Pz. Div. and DAK pass through Sbeitla the 21. Pz. Div. will cover the march into the positions northwest of Sbeitla. At 2030 h. the division commander instructs all the commanders and orders a commanders conference for 24 Feb.

The plan for 24 Feb. is defense as on 23 Feb.

After a temporary withdrawal the enemy again felt forward. The enemy artillery fired on its own troops. Vigorous enemy air reconnaissance with low level and high altitude bombing. Division position at 5353 to 5373. Division flank protection with 1 company at 5347, and with 1 company and artillery at 5616.

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*Fifth Panzer Army, War Diary (Extract), 18-23
February 1943*

the entire north and center front of the 5.Pz.Armee.

On the basis of these considerations the army has decided to withdraw to the area north of Gabès, the Lw.Jg.Brig.1 as well as elements of the heavy army artillery and flak artillery as army reserve for possible employment at the Mareth front. These elements were held as reserve at noon already by D.A.K. upon orders of the army. The transfer will begin in the evening. In addition the Div. Centauro is ordered to commit its forces reinforced by the 7.Bers.Rgt. in the Gafsa area for defense with front to the north and the west, and to leave the im-mobile elements of the division as support in the former positions east and southeast of el Guettar. (Annex 1097)

The combat group of the D.A.K. receives the order to hold on 18 Feb. with the remaining forces (Pz.Gren.Rgt.Afr., 1 artillery battalion, A.A.33, 1 Pz.^{tank} armored battalion, 1 engineer company, 1 antitank company, 1 Italian ^{tank} armored battalion, 1 Italian artillery battalion) the bridgehead positions gained just north of Thelepte and to launch strong reconnaissances against Kasserine and in the direction of Tebessa. Withdrawal in the direction of Gafsa will be effected only in case of strong, superior enemy attack. (Attack 1098)

2. Morning and noon report to O.K.H. (Annex 1099)

18 February 1943

Sequence of events.

a. Southeast front:

The enemy continues vigorous reconnaissance activities in front of the reconnaissance group and of the 15.Pz.Div., but without advancing with stronger forces. All assaults of enemy armored scout cars are repulsed by our artillery fire. No large scale operation is carried out either in the Fom Tatahouine area or against the rearguard position west of Medenine. (Annex 1100)

The Lw. Jg. Brig. 1 -under the immediate ^{control}/of the army since 18 Feb.- reaches at dawn the assembly area Metouia (north-northwest of Gabès) and remains alerted there at the disposal of the army for eventual commitment at the Mareth front. (Annex 1101)

b. West front:

Our reconnaissance forces throw enemy rearguards north of Thelepte and at the Tunisian-Algerian border near Oum Ali back to the mountain passes leading to Tebessa, where the enemy occupies defensive positions reinforced by artillery. Kasserine is captured and ~~xixx~~ a platoon ~~xxxx~~ of 60 Gaullists arriving from the east is taken prisoner. (Annex 1102)

The weak security detachments of the D.A.K. committed in the Metlauoi - Tozeur line reconnoiter over Moulares in the direction of Tamerza on the Tunisian-Algerian border. ^{No enemy is observed in Moulares.} A quantity of valuable railroad and mining material is secured. Reconnaissance in the direction of the border cannot be continued because of a violent sand ~~storm~~ storm. According to Arab statements Tamerza is still occupied by the enemy. (Annex 1103)

Reconnaissance forces of the 21. Pz. Div. establish ~~xxx~~ contact at Kasserine with the D.A.K. and clean up and secure the area gained. (Annex 1104)

(Situation map and reports see Annex 1105)

Air situation:

Limited commitment on both sides on account of unfavorable weather.

Estimate of the situation and plans:

in West front:

Southeast

Air reconnaissance discloses no important change in the enemy picture before the southeast front. One must suppose that the enemy will attack the rearguard positions at present just west of Medenine only after a concentration and readiness of comparatively strong forces. At the same time we must expect a continued strong pressure of enemy reconnaissance forces against the south flank.

There is no change in the plans of the army ^{east} on the south/front.

b. West front:

The air reconnaissance disclosed in the forenoon movements to the rear from the area northwest of Kasserine and from the area around Bou Chebka; this and the general impression gained from the enemy picture ^{for} gave the army ground ~~to~~ the interpretation that the enemy is falling back with its main body to Tebessa leaving strong rear guards at the mountain exits southeast and east of Tebessa. On the basis of this enemy situation the O.B. is of the opinion that through an immediate thrust of comparatively strong forces from the ~~west~~ southwest on Tebessa and the area/north a unique opportunity is offered to change the situation decisively in Tunisia. This thrust, which would be carried out by the ^[10, 21, Centaurs] 3 Panzer divisions, would penetrate in the deep flank and rear of the British forces facing the north Tunisian front and would likely cause the entire enemy north front to collapse. A prerequisite for the execution of this operation is the assurance of plentiful supply through drawing on the reserves of the 5.Pz.Armees.

Inquiries are made to the 5. Pz.A.O.K.5 as to plans for the continuation of operations. The answer is that the intention is to fall back to the positions of departure -some of which are far forward-. The 21.Pz.Div. will at first cover the occupation of the new positions from the Sbeitla area and then withdraw from enemy pressure behind the main line of resistance. The withdrawal of the mobile units of both armies from the Sbeitla-Thelepte-Feriana area will be carried out by mutual agreement. (Annex 1106)

The 5.Pz.Armees is therefore of an opposite opinion concerning the further conduct of operations. Nevertheless, at 1420 hours the O.B. ^{transmits} ~~informs~~ by radio his suggestion to Comando Supremo for an immediate enveloping thrust from the southwest on Tebessa and north thereof, provided supplies are assured, and requests for that purpose that the 10. and 21.Pz.Divs. be put under his control and be moved as soon as possible to the Thelepte-Feriana area. (Annex 1107)

In a telephone conversation of the O.B. with Gen. von Armin the latter expresses his concern with regard to the plans of the O.B. The 5. Pz. Armee intended in the next few days an attack operation in the area west of Tunis and would need a panzer division for that purpose. The army therefore had already withdrawn the 10. Pz. Div. ^{from} ~~out~~ of the present operations and transferred it to Kairouan.

Nevertheless the O.B. upholds his intention as he sees in it the only possibility ^{of} ~~to~~ bring ^{ing} weeklong relief to the entire Tunisian front and free strong forces to resist the British Eighth Army or to attack the enemy advance before the Mareth position, and thereby change the entire complexion of the North African theater of war.

Toward evening F.M. Kesselring agrees with the O.B.'s point of view ~~to~~ ^{to} that effect and announces that he will that same evening have a talk ^{with} Comando Supremo and the Duce. (Annex 1108)

When at midnight there was still no answer from Comando Supremo a radio message was sent pointing to the fact that the proposed operation had a chance for success only if the attack ^{is} ~~was~~ launched without delay.

(Annex 1109)

2. Morning and noon report to O.K.H. (Annex 1110)

Attack Operations in Central Tunisia

from 19 Feb. - 23 Feb. 1943

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19 February 1943

1. Sequence of events.

a. Southeast front: The enemy continues his reconnoitering with tanks and armored scout cars from the east and southeast against our rearguard positions just west of Medenine. All his assaults are repulsed by our artillery fire.

The enemy does not succeed in feeling forward ~~xxxx~~ beyond Medenine to the west. The town itself is still free of the enemy in the evening. It is occupied by our weak security detachments. (Annex ~~XXXXX~~ 1111)

The pressure of superior enemy forces continues in the south flank against the reconnaissance group. Faced by an enemy infantry attack with artillery support it has to withdraw its right flank from Ksar Mguebla to about 12 km to the northwest on Ksar et Turki to avoid being cut off from some of its elements. (Annex 1112)

b. Front of the attack group north:

The approval of Comando Supremo for the operation suggestion^{ed} is received at 0130 hours.

Comando Supremo orders that ~~the~~ a thrust be carried out against deep flank and rear of the enemy forces opposite the north Tunisian front, making full use of ~~the~~ previous success, cut them off if possible, but at least force the enemy to a withdrawal.

F.M. Rommel will execute this drive/^{first on Le Kef} with all available troops of the D.I. Panzerarmee and those of the newly subordinated 10. and 21. Pz. Divs. ~~with~~ under close concentration of forces and strong screening of the west flank on the general line Sbeitla - Thelepte - Maktar - Tadjerouine. Moreover the 5. Pz. Armee will hold itself in readiness to fall in to an attack upon special orders between the coast and Pont du Fahs on a ~~limited~~ broad front. The enemy facing it will be/^{effective now,} kept tied ~~down~~ down and on the alert by frequent assaults. (Annex 1113)

Deviating from the suggestion of O.B., Comando Supremo has ordered the thrust made on Le Kef. The O.B. had proposed Tebessa as this is farther ^{from} west of the northern Tunisian front and therefore would not lead so easily to the enemy reserves in readiness there.

The army issues immediately the following order to the subordinate

units (extracts given out ~~orally~~ by telephone)

aa. The combat group of D.A.K. (less Bers.Bn. and artillery bn. of the Div. Centauro which will remain at first in the Fériana area to protect and reconnoiter to the north and northwest), starting at once, will reach Kasserine, and there will get ready to attack shortly and will then gain immediately first the mountain pass northwest of Kasserine. Further action from there will be by special order of the army according to the development of the situation.

The following units will be immediately brought forward for the reinforcement of the D.A.K.:

1 mortar battery, 1 smoke battery and 1 Eng. battery.

The Bers.Bn. and the Italian artillery bn. again will be brought forward to the combat group as soon as the newly subordinated 7. Bers. Rgt. and the reinforced co., Lw. Jg. Brig. 1 have arrived in the Feriana and have been committed to the north and the northwest for the defense of the left flank of the Rommel attack group.

The 7. Bers. Rgt. will be brought forward in the forenoon by Div. Centauro and the reinforced Lw. Co. by the Lw. Jg. Brig. 1.

bb. The 21. Pz. Div. will start from the Sbeitla area at 0800 hours 19 Feb. (the order will be transmitted by A.O.K.5) along the high road leading north and will gain the ~~the~~ road junction about 75 km north-northwest of Sbeitla (Ksour)

cc. The 10. Pz. Div. will leave the present area around Pichon immediately and reach ^{Sbeitla} by the shortest road at the disposal of the Rommel attack group. It will hold itself in readiness there, and according to the situation will, on special order, be committed either behind the 21. Pz. Div. in the direction of Le ~~K~~ Kef or over Kasserine in a general northwesterly direction.

dd. Div. Centauro will bring forward ^{without delay} to the Gafsa area all the ~~mix~~ elements

heretofore committed southeast or south of Gafsa and will put them in line for defense there. The 7. Bers. Rgt. will be detached immediately from the positions in front of Gafsa and will march to Feriana. There the regiment will be placed under the control of D.A.K.

ee. The Lw. Jg. Brig. 1 will set to march as soon as possible 1 co., reinforced by a platoon of light flak and a platoon of heavy flak, to Feriana at the disposal of D.A.K. (Annex 1114)

The O.B. decides to start at dawn to the D.A.K. Hqs. with an operations staff and the necessary communication equipment and, according to where the main effort of the attack unfolds, ^{to} conduct the operations directly with the following advanced C.P. ^{following} behind the D.A.K. or the 21. Pz. Div. The main body of the Pz. A.O.K. will remain ^{under} the command of the 1st officer of the General Staff at the Mareth front. ^{open?}

The order of Comando Supremo provides for F.M. Rommel's retention of the responsibility for the Mareth position. Nevertheless, the army requests Gen. Messe to take over the high command over the Mareth front as a representative during the absence of the O.B. from the southeast front. Gen. Messe declines. Thereupon the O.B. informs Comando Supremo that it is not possible for him to command at the Mareth front and lead the western operations at the same time, as means of communication are lacking for the exercise of direct command. The O.B. therefore requests that Gen. Messe take over the command of the Mareth front as his representative. (Annex 1115)

While in the morning hours D.A.K. is getting into a position of readiness in the Kasserine area for attack, the A.A. 33 is thrown forward to open the pass ⁱⁿ northwest of the locality in a coup de main. This is foiled however by the stubborn resistance of the enemy in line on the heights on both sides of the pass. At 1100 hours the Pz. Gren. Rgt. Afrika moves to the attack. It succeeds at 1315 hours ⁱⁿ to capture ⁱⁿ Hill 914 with the right flank, while in the left

the attack comes to a standstill. The tank attack launched in the afternoon is stopped by the ^{strong} mine ~~bar~~ blocks at the pass. However at 1600 hours Hhâl 712 is taken and in the evening hours stubborn fighting forces the violently resisting enemy to fall back to the north, though it is not possible to break through the well fortified defensive positions. (Annex 1116)

The 7.Bers.Rgt. coming from the Gafsa area arrives toward noon in Feriana, and with the reinforced company of the Lw.Jg.Brig.1 which has also arrived there, will be committed for the defense of the left flank west and northwest of Thelepte on the road leading in the direction of Tabessa. Thereby the Bers.Bn and the artillery battalion of the Div. Centauro are freed to be committed by D.A.K. In compliance with orders they arrive in the afternoon in the Kasserine area. The army Eng.Bn.Afrika and 1 mortar battery and 1 smoke battery also arrive there for the reinforcement of the combat group of the D.K.K. and are placed under the control of the combat group. (Annex 1117)

At 0830 hours the 21.Pz.Div. starts from Sbeitla^a to the north. Weak enemy forces -probably combat outposts- in the region 8 km south of Sbiba are pushed back at 1100 hours. At 1230 hours, 4 km south of Sbiba the division runs against ^a comparatively strong enemy in improved positions with several mine fields extending in front of them. After moving into position of readiness and clearing paths free of mines the Pz.Rgt.resumes the attack at 1600 hours. Because of stronger resistance, new mine lines and rain making the terrain almost impassable it is impossible to break through the enemy lines. The attack comes to a stand still. The division passes to the defensive for regrouping. (Annex 1118)

The 10.Pz.Div. coming from the Kairouan - Pichon area reaches Sbeitla with his advanced elements only toward the afternoon because of road difficulties. The division which has only half of its combat strength because a considerable part of its elements are committed and immobilized on the north

front of the 5.Pz.Arme, will have reached with the mass of its units the the assembly area of Sbeitla by dawn of next day. (Annex 1119)

There is no contact with the enemy in the Gafsa - Matlauoi - Tozeur area and west thereof.

The immobile forces of the Div.Centauro which had remained in the former positions at el Guettar are brought forward and put in line at the north front of Gafsa.

Situation map and reports see Annex 1119) [?]

Air situation:

Sand storms and strong fog formations in the mountains make the use of the air force almost impossible on both sides.

Estimate of the situation and intentions:

a. Southeast front:

Because of the weather situation air reconnaissance discloses only an incomplete picture before the front.

The army intends to hold the rearguard positions just west of Medenine on 20 Feb. also.

b. front of the attack group north:

On the north front the enemy opposed stubborn resistance to our attack. The attack came to a standstill in the two attack groups (21.Pz. Div. and combat group D.A.K.) because of strong enemy resistance in well improved positions/reinforced by numerous mine blocks. The enemy has apparently brought reserves forward. British troops were identified opposite the 21.Pz.Div. It is to be assumed that the enemy has brought forward the 6th British Panzer Division located heretofore behind the north sector as reserve and has thrown it into the fight. ~~The enemy has a combat value~~ A combat value considerably higher than that of the American troops can be attributed to these British troops. Therefore the army expects a further stiffening of the resistance on 20 Feb. (Annex 1120)

The army intends to continue the attack on 20 Feb. with the main effort in the D.A.K.

The following orders are issued in that intention (in the evening the O.B. instructs the individual division commanders ^{orally} ~~verbally~~)

by
aa. The combat group of the D.A.K. will gain ~~in~~ a coup de main during the night if possible the pass positions still held by the enemy, and at dawn will debouch from the pass in the direction of el Hamra and of the pass 5 km to the southwest, open the passes and will pass to the defensive with ~~its~~ its front to the west. In connection with this operation a combat group will be employed to open the Dernaia pass from a northern direction ~~to~~ to connect with Div. Centauro's attack from the ~~Thelepte~~ direction of Thelepte.

bb. Until dawn the 10.Pz.Div. will bring its units forward to the Basserine area and west thereof and will attack, following behind the D.A.K., in the direction of Kalaa Djerda, and at the same time will protect the right flank of the D.A.K. from a possibly enemy drive from the Thala direction.

cc. The 21.Pz.Div. will continue the attack through Sbiba on Ksour.

dd. Div. Centauro, while retaining its former mission -reconnoitering and covering in a western and northern direction- ^{in the afternoon} will open ~~the~~ the Dernaia ~~pass~~ ^{pass} (north~~west~~ - northwest of Thelepte) with a combat group. (Annex 1121)

2. Morning and noon report to O.K.H. (Annex 1122)

20 February 1943

1. Sequence of events

The order of Comando Supremo for Gen. Messe ~~to take over the command~~ (First Ital. Army) to take over the command at the Mareth front is received during the night. The First Ital. Army and the attack group north will ~~be~~

join the Rommel group and ^{be} placed under the joint command of F.M. Rommel who, at the same time, will retain the direct command of attack group north.

(Annex 1123)

a. First Ital. Army:

At 0600 Gen. Messe has taken over the high command of the Mareth front. All the German and ital. troops heretofore under the high command of the D.I. Panzerarmee will at that time come under the ~~XXXXXX~~ high command of the First Ital. Army inasmuch as they are in line at the Mareth front. Gen. Messe will be given a German liaison staff for the command of the German units. (Annex 1124)

To watch over German interests F.M. Rommel orders that Gen. Ziegler be entrusted with the command of D.A.K. until the arrival of the commanding general. All the German troops employed at the Mareth front are placed under the control of D.A.K. Only the 90. le. Afr. Div. will receive operational orders from the XX.A.K. (Annex 1125)

Under the cover of strong dust clouds loosened in the forenoon by a sand storm, strong enemy armored units have advanced with their point of main effort north of the left flank of the rearguard position of the 15. Pz. Div. and in the early forenoon stand in the deep northern flank of the division. The division had to fight stubbornly and call out all its forces to resist the crushing superiority of the enemy panzers, and despite the enemy attempt to encircle the southern flank also, it kept open the withdrawal road Medenine - Toujane. The one armored battalion at the disposal of the division (with about 20 tanks) repeatedly brings to a standstill through counterattacks an enemy almost five times as strong. Severe fighting continues until dusk. The division has mastered the situation so far that it can disengage itself from the enemy systematically and withdraw along the Medenine - Toujane road behind the advanced position. (Annex 1126)

Herewith the last German units have been withdrawn behind the advanced

about 30 American armored personnel carriers mounted with 7.5 cm guns.

(Annex 1129)

After a breakthrough the pass position had been forced, elements of the D.A.K. and of the 10.Pz.Div. were immediately put in line in the direction of Djebel el Hamra or Thala for pursuit.

For the first time on the African theatre of war rocket launchers were used in the fighting for the Masserine pass position. One of the batteries at the disposal of the D.I.Panzerarmee supports effectively the attack of our infantry. The O.B. requests therefore the immediate bringing forward of additional rocket projector equipment and submits this request also to F.M.Kesselring at his C.P. in the afternoon. (Annex 1130) ✓

The Div.Centauro holds its positions at Feriana. An attack executed with only weak available forces against the pass north of Thelepte effects no penetration because of strong artillery resistance. (Annex 1131)

There is no contact with the enemy before the west front in the Gafsa - Metlauoi - Tozeur area.

in the afternoon
Upon order of Comando Supremo the 5 Pz.Armeel/with Kampfgruppe Buhse (reinforced Gren, Regt.47) fell in to the attack from the area north of Kairouan to the west in the direction of Maktar. The Kampfgruppe by evening reaches the region 6 km south of Ousseltia without meeting strong enemy resistance. Continuing the advance its foremost elements come upon strong enemy forces *which* had taken a foothold in favorable positions at the passes west of Ousseltia. (Annex 1132)

O.B.Sld F.M.Kesselring arrives toward noon at the C.P. of Gruppe Rommel northwest of Kasserine and the O.B. orients him concerning the situation.

Situation map and reports see Annex 1133)

Air situation:

Strong dust clouds and sand storms continue to limit the air activity on both sides. (Annex 1134)

Estimate of the situation and intentions

a. First Ital. Army:

It is supposed that today's attack of strong enemy armored forces against the 15. Pz. Div. was carried out to ^{bring to} relieve the American units engaged in heavy fighting. It is apparently the enemy's intention to induce our command to pull out forces from the attack group and transfer ^{them} to the Mareth front. Therefore additional strong enemy attacks must be expected on 21 Feb. also. An air reconnaissance confirms this assumption, as the enemy group between Medenine and Ben Gardane has been ^{rein}reinforced by 2 500 motor vehicles.

(Annex 1127)

(the troops fully alerted?)

The First Italian Army has ordered full defense readiness at the Mareth front.

b. Attack group north:

Using all his available forces the enemy attempted to hold his new switch position on the ridge northwest of Sbeitla - Kasserine - Thelepte. He continued to send reinforcements for this purpose to Sbiba, northwest of Kasserine, as well as north of Thelepte. According to today's impression made by the enemy, the army must expect enemy counterattacks on all of the three sectors, as the enemy will be anxious to restore the line that was partly lost.

On the basis of this situation the army decides to remain on the defensive on 21 Feb. at Sbiba and Feriana, to prepare for defense at Kasserine pass with comparatively weak forces and to be ready with a strong assault group to fall in, according to the development of the situation, either to an assault or to a counterattack to the north or to the west.

In this connection the following is ordered:

aa. The 21. Pz. Div. will defend its positions south of Sbiba to the edge of

of the enemy mine field. The A.A. 580, placed under the control of the division, will be set to march immediately to Kasserine as army reserve.

bb. The D.A.K. will defend the pass positions west of the Kasserine - Thala road ~~road~~ and will send a kampfgroupe to reconnoiter in the direction of Djebel el Hamra. The relief of the 10.Pz.Div. east of the road will be prepared.

cc. The 10.Pz.Div. will defend the pass positions east of the Kasserine - Thala road and will ~~dis~~move with a kampfgroupe (without tanks) in the direction of Thala. Tanks and the mass of the division will be held in readiness for a thrust to the north or possibly a counterattack to the west.

dd. The Div. Centauro will defend the Feriana - Thelepte area and brings forward for that purpose additional artillery from the Gafsa area. (Annex 1135)

2. Morning and noon report to O.K.H. (Annex 1136)

21 February 1943

Sequence of events

a. First Ital. Arme

^{the night}
During the 15.Pz.Div. occupied systematically the ordered area in the sector of the Div. Spezia. Though the division has been engaged the whole of yesterday in hard defensive fighting against enemy forces many times superior losses and breakdowns remained comparatively small. (Annex 1137)

Today the enemy did not continue his attack but limited himself to vigorous reconnaissance against the advanced positions of the Mareth line. (Annex 1138)

In the Rhoumerassen area (northwest of Fom Tatahouine) the pressure of strong enemy reconnaissance forces continues against our reconnaissance group in line on the south flank of the position. (Annex 1138)

b. Front of the attack group north:

While the 10.Pz.Div. and combat group of D.A.K. are preparing for

defense in the conquered pass positions, advanced pursuit elements drive during the night farther west and north.

The reinforced A.A. 33 (combat group D.A.K.) strikes against a strong enemy fighting delaying action along the road in the direction of Hamra pass. / ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ ^{back} ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ . It throws / to the northwest an enemy armored attack at 0815 hours and follows / up ^{ing it} ~~by reaching~~ reaches the area about 12 km east-southeast of el Hamra pass. (Annex 1139)

The combat group of the 10.Pz.Div. throws the enemy rear guards back to the area 20 km south of Thala during the night. A counterattack by enemy tanks is successfully repulsed and several tanks are shot down. Other elements of the 10.Pz.Div. clean up / ^{from} the high ground north of the Kasserine pass the rest of enemy forces still established there. (Annex 1140)

The 21.Pz.Div. has organized for defense in the area it reached yesterday afternoon.

The night passes quietly in Div. Centauro. Since it is feared that the enemy will attack on the south flank with strong forces to drive into the left flank of the attack group, the A.A. 580 -army reserve since midnight receives the order to move immediately to the Feriana area. (Annex 1141) -

At dawn Gruppe Buhse of the 5.Pz.Armeekorps resumes its thrust in the direction of Maktar. In compliance with an order of Comando Supremo received during the night Gruppe Rommel will take over the command, effective at once, over the elements of the 5.Pz.Armeekorps which except for the 10. and 21.Pz.Divs. are incorporated into the attack movement or will be incorporated. (Annex 1142)

On the basis of the ~~subjective~~ impression created by the enemy this forenoon (his heavy losses during the fighting yesterday and early today, the withdrawal during the night, no counterattack to regain the lost pass positions, his passive attitude also in the Feriana area) the army comes to the realization that the enemy had been beaten so hard that for the present

he ~~did~~ ^{does} not have the strength to recapture in a counterattack the pass positions at Kasserine that are so important for him. Therefore the O.B. decides at 1200 hours to exploit the situation and continue the attack with the 10.Pz. Div. and the combat group of the D.A.K. and drive immediately on Kalaa Djerda or in the direction of Dj.el Hamra.

In this connection orders are issued as follows: (verbally by the O.B. ✓ to the commander of the 10.Pz.Div., the commander of combat group D.A.K. and the commander of ~~the~~ A.A.580)

- aa. The 21.Pz.Div. will hold its former positions.
- bb. The 10.Pz.Div. (less motor cycle Bn.10, which will at first occupy and hold the Kasserine pass) will drive through Thala on Kalaa Djerda.
- cc. Combat group D.A.K. will fall in immediately and open at first the pass at Slougi and then at Zitoun. An additional thrust in the ~~XXXX~~ direction of Haidra is planned.
- dd. A.A.580 will not reach Feriana but will move to Kasserine by the shortest road and will open the pass north of Thelepte from the north by driving westward through the Kasserine pass.
- ee. Div. Centauro will hold the former positions at Ferian and Thelepte.

(Annex 1143)

To prevent the enemy from drawing additional reserves from the north Tunisian front the 5.Pz.Armees is instructed to carry out limited offensive action in front of its western front to harass the enemy and keep him as busy as possible. (Annex 1144)

At 1400 hours the 10.Pz.Div. and combat group D.A.K. launch an attack to the north and northwest.

The 10.Pz.Div. in a bold advance drives enemy security detachments back and about 15 km south Thala comes upon a comparatively strong enemy in a well developed hill position. In an energetic stroke the division succeeds

in throwing the enemy back and ~~x~~ in inflicting heavy losses to the British armored unit which had come forward to support the Americans in a counter-^a attack. In a rapid follow up thrust Panzer and Panzergrenadiers drive into Thala toward 1900 hours, roll up a battalion and capture it (About 700 men) ✓ However the enemy holds the heights on both sides of the town with strong forces, so that the division has to withdraw a few kilometers to the south at dusk because of a threat to its flanks and rear. About 5 km south of Thala the division passes to the defensive. (Annex 1145)

The combat group of D.A.K., after good initial progress in the attack can only make slow headway in the afternoon on account of extremely strong partly flanking defensive fire. The attack comes finally to a stand still on the plain opposite the enemy occupying overhanging mountain positions. At dusk the combat group has its advanced elements 8 km east of Dj. el Hamra and has organized for defense there. Its losses are considerable. (Annex 1146)

Opposite the 21.Pz.Div. the enemy ~~is continuing~~ during the day gets reinforcements especially of artillery (a total of 11 enemy batteries are now ascertained). At 1700 hours the enemy supported by numerous tanks launches a counter-~~the~~ attack which can be brought to a stand still after 6 enemy tanks are shot down. (Annex 1147)

A renewed attempt of Div. Centauro to open the Dernaia pass north of Thelepte fails because of extremely violent and well placed enemy artillery defensive fire. (Annex 1148)

Gruppe Buhse has been unable to throw the enemy out of his hill positions west of Ousseltia and therefore attempts to continue the thrust on Maktar driving from the north and the south.

(Situation map and reports see Annex 1149)

Air situation:

Limited air activity on both sides on account of bad weather.

Estimate of the situation and intentions:

a. First Italian Army:

Today's air reconnaissance discloses that enemy forces in the area between Medenine and Ben Gardane are not as strong as was to be ~~assumed~~ assumed on the basis of yesterday's air reconnaissance. Today there were only 1200 motor vehicles ascertained in that area.

As a result of his ~~air~~ ground reconnaissance of today the enemy must have observed that he has come against a well developed position. It must then ~~therefore~~ be assumed that enemy, according to his former custom, will make thorough and lengthy preparations for attack. The ~~army~~ army therefore does not expect that he will advance on the Mareth position in the next few days.

The plans of the First Ital. Army are unchanged.

b. Front of the attack group north:

After the loss of the dominant ^{ating} ~~at~~ pass position northwest of Kasserine the enemy attempted today to hold the ridge line el Hamat (14 km southeast of Thala) - Dj.el Hamra. For the purpose he ~~has~~ brought forward additional American forces out of the area around and southeast of Tabessa and also additional elements of the 6. British Pz. Div. The army expects that on 22 Feb. the enemy ~~will~~ in a counterattack will attempt to regain the line of resistance he has lost in parts and that he will oppose stubborn resistance to a continuation of our attacks. (Annex 1150)

The army intends therefore to continue the attack for a limited ob-
at first
jective/with D.A.K. and 10. Pz. Div. and to hold the former positions with the 21. Pz. Div. and Div. Centauro.

To that effect the following orders are issued:

- aa. The 21. Pz. Div. will assume the defensive in the former main line of resistance. If the enemy withdraws through Sbiba, the division will follow up with some elements, the main body being held in readiness for a new

assignment. The O.B. combat echelon will drive from Thala on RoAia in the rear of the enemy from Sbiba.

bb. The 10.Pz.Div. will reach the Thala - Kalaa Djerda area and ^{there} pass to ^{of its} defensive with its main body. The division will push some/elements on Fadjerouine and Le Kef.

cc. Combat group D.A.K. ^{will} continue the attack for the capture of the el Hamra passes. The passes will be encircled far to the south during the night of 21/22 Feb.

dd. A.A.580 will open the passes north of Thelepte by a thrust from the north and will hold them.

ee. Div. Centauro will withdraw from action south of the passes, will reach during the night the old area around Feriana - Thelepte and will pass to the defensive there. The division will hold reserves in readiness for mobile employment. (Annex 1151)

Results of today's air reconnaissance, incomplete because of the adverse weather, but supplemented by ground reconnaissance and listening posts establish that the enemy continues to draw strong reserves from the northern Tunisian front and brings them forward to the Le Kef area. The 5.Pz.Arme ^{is} therefore/requested again to harass the enemy through ~~local~~ local thrusts on the entire front and tie him down. (Annex 1152)

2. Morning and noon report to O.K.H. (Annex 1153)

22 February 1943

Events of the day:

a. First Italian Army

The enemy continues his reconnaissance activities in advance of the Mareth position and also on the south flank in the region of Rhoumerassen. The day passed without any action on any considerable scale. (Annex 1154)

b. Front of attack group north

The attack of the 10.Pz.Div. planned for 1300 hours against the enemy is not carried out as ground reconnaissance in the forenoon disclosed that the enemy has brought up strong reinforcements from the direction of Kalaa Djerda, and is apparently preparing to counterattack. The division plans to ~~meet~~ ^{receive} the enemy attack in its present favorable positions in order to take Thala in a thrust to be delivered immediately following the enemy's move. However, the anticipated strong counterattack of the enemy was not made. Only minor hostile probings to the front are made by him and are beaten off with losses to him. As the enemy continues to move up reinforcements, the army, taking into account the poor state of the terrain as a result of the rain, orders the division not to execute the attack that had been prepared but to pass to the defensive.

(Annex 1155)

The attempt made during the night by Kampfgruppe D.A.K. to seize the pass by a swift stroke fails. The Kampfgruppe reorganizes and at dawn advances again to the attack. As a consequence of the enemy's powerful artillery action and because of flanking fire on three sides coming from dominating positions in the hills, the attack meets with no success. The Kampfgruppe is forced to pass to the defensive toward noon and to meet several violent counterattacks executed by the enemy, some of them with tanks, until evening. In the course of this action our left flank is pressed back eastward, The fighting lasts until nightfall. In this counterattacks the enemy has the advantage of possessing

on the surrounding heights excellent observation posts ~~dominating~~ the entire battlefield. (Annex 1156)

The attack of the A.A.580 to open the passes north of Thelepte from the north is also unable to push through to its objective because of strong hostile interference and the swampy condition of the roads. Consequently the attack is broken off toward noon on orders of the army. (Annex 1157)

Hostile artillery activity is stepped up on the front of the 21.Pz.Div. and Div. Centauro. However the enemy does not advance to the attack.

The advance made by Buhse Group is scarcely able to move forward over the difficult terrain which has become almost impassable from the rain. The enemy defiles continues as before to hold the ~~XXXXX~~ west of Ousseltda in heavy forces.

Further reconnaissance conducted on our part along the north Tunisian front establishes the fact that there has been no weakening of the advanced enemy forces occupying the positions opposite the northern half of the ~~X~~ 5.Pz. Armees sector. Moreover local reserves still seem to be there (Annex 1158)

(Situation map and reports see Annex 1159)

Air situation:

Our Luftwaffe is giving effective support to our fighting despite very difficult weather conditions.

Throughout the day enemy Jabo and attack planes were attacking in the region of Dj.el Hamra and wouth of Thala. In this fighting 5 enemy planes were shot down by ground fire.

Estimate of the situation and plans:

a. First Italian Army:

Because of poor weather conditions, air reconnaissance is able to disclose only an incomplete picture of the enemy dispositions on the front. The impression gained of the enemy today confirms the viewpoint of the army, that the enemy will not move to the attack against the advanced Mareth position until he has brought up stronger forces and has completed his preparations.

The plan of the First Italian Army is unchanged.

b. Front of attack group north:

Air reconnaissance during the day disclosed new enemy forces moving toward the front along the ~~the~~ road Le Kef - Kalaa Djerda to Thala, and also east-northeast from Tebessa. Furthermore, according to reliable sources, orders have been issued all organizations forbidding any withdrawal from the positions now occupied ^{man} or ^{post} any ^A to leave his ^A without express order. The enemy in any case will defend the present line: Sbiba - Thala - Dj. el Hamra, and will probably ~~advance~~ start his counterattack from this line too, to recapture the important Kasserine Pass in particular. The enemy counterattacks made this afternoon on the front of the 10.Pz.Div. and Kampfgruppe D.A.K. support this interpretation. (Annex 1160)

The O.B. orients F.M. Kesselring, who arrives at the C.P. northwest of Kasserine in the afternoon, on the situation and concludes that it appears futile to continue the attack, in view of the constant reinforcing of the hostile forces, the unfavorable ~~situation of the~~ weather which renders the terrain impassable off the hard roads, and because of the increasing problems caused by the mountain terrain which is so unsuited to the employment of armored units, all this added to the low strength of our organizations. The O.B. therefore recommends stopping the attack and withdrawing the attack group once heavy losses have been inflicted ~~on~~ the enemy and his development in the Gafsa - Sbeitla area has been cut up. In favor of this decision is the further fact that the situation on the Mareth front necessitates a speedy shift of the mobile troops of both armies there, in order to strike a sudden blow at the enemy while he is regrouping and before he is ready to attack. By this means it would be possible to gain a delay in his attack.

F.M. Kesselring, who approves of the idea of O.B., is requested to advise ~~Commando~~ Supremo of the situation in the attack group in this sense.

In agreement ~~with~~ O.B. ~~Sud~~ the O.B. plans to effect an initial ² ~~with-~~

drawal to the position in the pass north of Kasserine in the night 22/23 Feb. by the 10.Pz.Div. and the D.A.K., mining the roads and trails. This is to be followed by later bounds by all elements, including the 21.Pz.Div. and Div.Centauro, back to the original departure positions of the operation. Considering the weakness of our forces and the necessity of concentrating all mobile units for an operation from the Mareth ~~position~~ position, the aforementioned position is viewed as the most favorable.

Detailed orders were issued as follows:

- aa. 21.Pz.Div. will defend on 23 February the present position and will prepare to mine the Sbiba - Sbeitla road.
 - bb. The 10.Pz.Div. and Kampfgruppe D.A.K. will fall back at dusk to the old pass positions northwest of Kasserine, mining roads and trails.
 - cc. A.A.580 at dusk will withdraw to the region north of Kasserine and will remain there for the time being in army reserve.
 - dd. Div. Centauro will hold its present positions on 23 Feb. (Annex 1161)
by F.M.Kesselring
On the basis of the estimate of the situation, at 2310 hours Comando Supremo issues the order for breaking off the attack in Central Tunisia and for falling back with the mobile troops to the positions of departure (Annex 1162).
2. Morning and noon report to O.K.H. (Annex 1163)

23 February 1943

1. Sequence of events:

- a. On the front of the First Italian Army the day passed without fighting of any consequence other than reconnaissance by both sides. (Annex 1164)

In the regrouping of the left flank, the reconnaissance group (A.A.3 and A.A.Nizza) is moved to the Bir Sultane area. The mission of the group is to secure the deep south flank of the Mareth front by extended reconnaissance

south and southeast. A rather small detachment of A.A.3 remains initially in the region north of Rhoumerassen. (Annex 1164)

After Gen. Messe had stated that he could not agree to the order directing that all German Units in his ~~XXXXX~~ army be placed under a German commander, the commanding general of the ~~the~~ D.A.K., O.B.Std, by direction of Comando Supremo, orders Gen.Ziegler as deputy commander of the D.A.K. to look after the interests of the German troops in the First Italian Army, until¹ the arrival of the ^[Supremo] "German commander at headquarters of the First Italian Army". (Annex 1165)

b. Front of the attack group north:

The withdrawal of the 10.Pz.Div. and Kampfgruppe D.A.K. in the night of 22/23 Feb. took place free from enemy pressure of any consequence and, despite considerable difficulty on account of the roads, it went off according to plan. In the late forenoon the last units are taken back behind the pass position, all roads and trails being heavily mined. The 10.Pz.Div. and the Kampfgruppe D.A.K. stand in the positions ordered, ready for action (Annex 1166)

The night passed quietly in the 21~~x~~Pz.Div. and Div. Centauro. (Annex 1167)

Toward noon the army orders Kampfgruppe D.A.K. relieved by elements of the 10.Pz.Div. and to reach the region Feriana - Thelepte by evening, where it would take over positions held there by the Div. Centauro. (~~is~~ Given orally by O.B. to the commander of Kampfgruppe D.A.K.)

Apparently held up seriously by the mines, the enemy follows hesitantly only. He limits his activity to reconnaissance and artillery action. The day passes without fighting of any consequence.

Toward evening the situation is as follows:

21.Pz.Div. is defending its former positions just south of Sbiba,

10.Pz.Div. is holding the Kasserine pass positions.

Most of the organizations of Kampfgruppe D.A.K. have arrived in the Feriana - Thelepte region ~~and~~ have begun the relief of Div. Centauro.

A.A.580 is army reserve in region west of Sbeitla.

(Situation map)

Air situation:

Since ~~early~~ afternoon the enemy has kept up a constant attack with bombers of all types and pursuit aviation against the region/^around Kasserine and Feriana in a force heretofore unparalleled. (In a quarter of an hour 104 planes are counted over the Kasserine area).

Our Luftwaffe carries out successful attacks in the region around Thala and el Hamra.

Estimate of the situation and plans:

a. First Italian Army:

Situation and plan on the Mareth front unchanged.

b. Front of the attack group north:

In compliance with orders from Comando Supremo to move the attack units back by echelon in delaying action, it is ordered for the 24 Feb. that:

aa. The 21.Pz.Div. will hold its present positions.

bb. The 10.Pz.Div. will defend Kasserine Pass. In case of strong enemy pressure it will be taken back to the region west of Sbeitla, to cover the withdrawal of the 21.Pz.Div.

cc. Kampfgruppe D.A.K. will defend the Feriana region and will fall back under heavy enemy pressure only after mining the roads and destroying the railway line running to Gafsa. Elements of Div. Centauro attached to the Kampfgruppe will be released to the division.

dd. Div. Centauro with mobile elements, including attached German Lw.Co. will occupy the north and northwest front of Gafsa following ~~through~~ its relief foot? by the D.A.K. There the im-mobile troops will be relieved and put in line in the former positions east of Guettar and south of Dj.Bu Jerra.

Elements previously attached to Kampfgruppe D.A.K. will accompany it.

ee. A.A.580 will secure the right flank of the 21.Pz.Div. in the region north-

east of Sbeitla. (Annex 1168)

At 1730 hours the order is received from Comando Supremo covering the formation of the Army Group Africa under the command of F.^{III} Rommel. To the Army Group Africa are attached the 5.Pz.Army and the First Italian Army, and the are placed under its direct control as a mobile Kampfgruppe. 10.Pz.Div., 21.Pz.Div. and the Kampfgruppe D.A.K./(Annex 1169)

F.M.Rommel reports to Comando Supremo and ~~EX~~ O.K.W/W.F.St., that he has taken command of Army Group Africa at 1800 hours. (Annex 1170)

On the basis of the new organization of the command it is directed that:

aa. The 5.Pz.Army will occupy the former main battle position, its right on the coast, its left at Sened and will organize it immediately for defense. The work of mining the front is to be carried out quickly.

bb. The First Italian Army takes command of the entire front of the former ~~D.I.~~ ~~XXXXXX~~ Pz.Army including the Gafsa area. For this purpose Div. Centauro is attached to it. (Annex 1171)

Toward 2100 hours a ~~XXXXXX~~ second order arrives from Comando Supremo containing instructions for subsequent action of the Army Group. It prescribes the operation on the Mareth front proposed by F.M.Rommel. It directs that:

"The Army Group will move the mobile organizations by echelon in delaying ^{to} action ~~in~~ rear of the former main battle position, so that they will complete their reorganization and rest, and be completely ready to reenter the line at the beginning of March. The following will be assembled as indicated, at the disposal of the Army Group: 10.Pz.Div. in the region of Sfax, the bulk of the other motorized organizations in the area of Gabès."

The new mission of the Army Group is to destroy the advanced combat elements of the British Eighth Army. The objectives of this operation will be announced as soon as possible". (Annex 1172)

On the basis of this order Gen.Messe is requested to submit to the O.B. not later than 26 Feb.:

- aa. Recommendations for an attack of mobile forces in the strength of 2-3 Pz.Divs. to destroy the hostile forces standing on the Mareth front.
 - bb. Recommendations for an attack by 2-3 Pz.divs. against hostile forces operating against the southern front of the Mareth position, with the object of destroying them. (Annex 1173)
2. Morning and noon report to O.K.H. (Annex 1174)

*Deutsches Afrika Korps, War Diary (Extract), 19-
24 February 1943*

T.C

19 February 1943

Quiet night. Combat echelon O.B. ~~has~~ blows up the railroad tunnel northeast of Moularos (A 1 - 4, B 1).

0150 hr Army order (~~is~~ telephoned) through Op. Section H.O.K. via Personal Adjutant to O.B. (Gafsa) to ~~the~~ Operation Section: Kampfgruppe H.A.K. will attack on 19 Feb. over the Thelepte road, the Kasserine Pass northwest of Kasserine and take it (text Army Order A 5) All troops will be ^{ordered} ready to march immediately. Commanders at Corps O.P. The intention of the Corps ~~is to~~ attempt to take the pass northwest of Kasserine in a surprise raid by the 33d Reconnaissance Bn. ~~making~~ making use of the first ^{morning} light. In case the battalion meets strong resistance the Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa will attack later after moving into position and after the advance of the artillery. Armored Bn. Stotten will move forward at first only as far as the area west of the road fork north of Thelepte so as to be available for employment in the direction of the pass and also to the west. The 5th Bersaglieri Bn. will cover the sector heretofore defended by H.A.K. until the arrival of the reinforced 7th Bersaglieri Rgt. from Gafsa. The Armored Bn. of the Div. Centauro will be placed under the control of the battalion to repulse a possible enemy attack from the direction of the Tebessa road. Pertinent orders will be issued immediately by telephone and later ^{orally} ~~orally~~.

0600 hr the 33d Rec. Bn. is advancing in the direction of Kasserine.

0730 hr the remaining elements of the Kampfgruppe fall in. With poor visibility the 33d Rec. Bn. approaches the pass and is met by the fire of anti-tank guns and of a light battery. (Annex 6-8) The enemy is defending the pass with the point of main effort to the west. It is not possible to take the pass with the forces of the battalion. Therefore the battalion ^a withdraws

from the entrance of the pass to the southwest.(An.9)

In the meantime the Pz.Gren.Rgt.Africa has reached the assembly area south of the pass. Behind the regiment the artillery and the flak btry. ~~xxxxxxx~~ are going rapidly into position.

0930 hr the regiment starts in the direction of the pass entrance (Chambi).

The Corps C.P. has already been moved to the region 1 km northwest of the road fork west of Kasserine (B 2). With the support of the artillery the regimental attack makes good progress at first; there is a slight fog.

The 2d Bn. attacking on the right throws enemy security detachments back into the pass road and, toward noon, takes Hill 974 east of the pass. (B 3)

Then flanking fire from the vicinity of Hill 712 and from the north stops the attack. The 1st Bn.(left), which had started shortly after the 2d Bn., attacks over Wadi Zebbeun in the direction of Hill 712. The battalion sustains

strong fire from antitank guns, ~~xx~~ machine guns and artillery which cannot be eliminated by our artillery because of poor visibility. The enemy seems

to be strongly entrenched in the left sector. At some places 7.5 cm motor gun carriages are identified. As the region possesses the only crossing

to Hill 712 except for Wadi Zebbeun, and has no terrain obstacles, the com-

manding general decides to commit the armored battalion for the support of the ~~lx~~ battalion employed on the left and engaged in hard fighting, and for ~~the~~ re-

lieving the pressure on the right battalion. The armored battalion moves out of

at 1215 hr ~~from~~ the area west of the road fork west of Kasserine.

1300 hr O.B. at the C.P. He is oriented by the commanding general on the

development of the situation. The Corps intends to capture today the ~~xxxxxxx~~

stubbornly defended pass. The O.B. gives information concerning the intention

to carry out a main thrust with the 10th and 21st Pz.Divs. over Sbeitla,

Sbiba to the north. After the Kasserine pass is opened an advance toward

the west against Tebessa is intended to deceive the enemy. After the pass

is taken the Corps will take measures for leaving security detachments at the

pass and for moving ^{west} with the bulk of its troops over Sbeitla, Sbiba ~~to~~ to act as covering force later. The O.B. gives further information on the situation in the 21st Pz. Div., ^{the division,} ~~which~~ advancing over Sbeitla, has come to about 12 km of Sbiba, has been stopped there by a double mine belt and strongly occupied mountain positions, and is getting ready to renew its attack.

1520 hr the Kampfgruppe resumes the attack on the left flank. The armored battalion attacks over Wall Zebbeus on Hill 712. About 30 enemy heavy armored scout cars, some of them equipped with 7.5cm guns, withdraw ^{to the northwest} from the attack. The 1st Bn., Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa follows the attack of the Armored Battalion. As far as visibility permits the attack is supported by the concentrated fire of the artillery and heavy flak. The enemy offers stubborn resistance. The area between Hills 712 and 812, from which he conducts his defense, turns out to be rugged hill country with many ravines. At Hill 712 the attack of the armored battalion is stopped by a mine field (An. 10, B 4, Bx5). The 1st Bn., Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa ^{moves} ~~advances~~ up to the line of tanks, and at nightfall moves beyond then in the direction of Hill 812. Several times the enemy is observed moving back to the northwest. Engineers are employed to clear the mines in front of the armored battalion. However, the approaching darkness makes a further assault of the tanks impossible.

A company of the Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa (mountain infantry) had been committed in the direction of Hill 812 encircling from the south. No message is received from the company. The sound of fighting is heard from a direction south of Hill 812. According to prisoners' statements the company is surrounded.

In the 2d Bn., Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa committed on the right the attack did not go beyond Hill 974 because of strong ^{enemy} flanking fire from a westerly direction. From the road leading from the north to the pass and from the mountainous terrain north of Hill 974 the enemy launches several attacks against the battalion; they are all repulsed.

For the night it is ordered that the Pz.Gren.Rgt.Africa will pass to the defense in the line it has reached and will keep close contact with the enemy through combat reconnaissance. If a withdrawal of the enemy is observed pursuit will be launched immediately. The armored battalion moves back to the area southwest of Chambi. The 5th Bersaglieri Bn. ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ relieved during the day by the 7th Bersaglieri Rgt. in the Thelepte sector and the Armored Battalion of Div. Centauro move during the night to the area northwest of the Kasserine road fork. Rec.Bn.33 receives the order to move to the area 3 km east of Chambi and to act as covering force jointly with the 2d Bn., Pz.Gren.Rgt.Africa. Because the terrain is impassable the mission cannot be carried out. The battalion therefore remains in the area southwest of Chambi.

2000 hr The Corps C.F. is transferred to the east exit of Kasserine (B 6)

Evening report A 11 - 18, B 7, B 8

In the area of Hill 712 over 100 prisoners were taken. Pz.Gren.Rgt. Africa reports that according to prisoners' statements the pass is defended by 1500 Americans. (A 19)

Supplies, D.A.K., begins during the day to move the supply depot forward to the area Feriana, Thelepte B 9).

After nightfall the 2d Bn., Pz.Gren.Rgt.Africa succeeds in taking the dominant height 1191 west of the pass and in advancing along the road to the north as far as the region of point 700. The enemy attacking during the night the two battalions of Pz.Gren.Rgt.Africa is generally repulsed. He succeeds however in recapturing point 700 in a counterthrust. Contrary to the impression existing during the ^{late} afternoon that the enemy is retreating to the northwest, the Corps gain the impression that the enemy intends to continue holding the western and northern exits of the pass on 20 February.

2300 hr the Army order for 20 February is received. On 20 February the Corps

will open Kasserine Pass and advance to the northwest in the direction of Dj. el Hamra, open the passes there and pass to the defense with front to the west (A 20). Deviating from the intention announced this morning by the CG. the Army intends, after the pass has been opened, to draw the 10th Pz. Div. through it in the direction of Thala, Kalam Djerda.

Thereupon the Corps orders for 20 February: Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa ~~xxxx~~, with the support of the entire artillery and heavy flak to which a howitzer battery and a rocket projector battery arrived during 19 Feb. have been attached, will continue the attack and take Kasserine pass. Attack will be launched at 0700 hr. After opening the pass road immediate commitment of the reconnaissance battalion and the two armored battalions to the northwest is intended. These two units will ^{be} ready to march at 0800 hr. (pertinent orders issued 20 February 0105 hr and 0110 hr, B 10, 11).

On 20 February 1 light flak battery of the 135th Flak Rgt. will be brought up to Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa as reserve for ground operation. (B 12)

20 February 1943

During the night the enemy attempted at various ~~places~~ places to throw the attacking advanced elements of the Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa back by a counterthrust. The attacks were repulsed (A.1.)

In the morning hours the leading elements of the 10th Pz. Div. arrive in the Kasserine area. To avoid a concentration of forces the division is requested to remain east of Kasserine (p.2)

The attack which had been decided for 0700 hr is postponed 1 hour and ^{minutes} 30 because of poor visibility and the ^{fire} unreadiness of the entire artillery.

At 0830 hr the attack interrupted the previous day is resumed. In the deeply ^{west of point 712} ravines the 1st Bn., Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa makes only slow and

painful advance. The 2d Pz.Gren.Rgt.Africa cannot fall in to the attack ~~attack~~ as the enemy is advancing against Hill 1191 in battalion strength, ^{ing} ~~is~~ throwing back the security detachments placed there and ^{ing} ~~attacks~~ the 2d Bn. from the north.

0900 hr O.B. at Corps C.P. at Kasserine. He discusses the situation with the commanding general. As a result an order is issued to the 5th Bersaglieri Bn. to attack into the gap between the 1st and 2d Bns., Pz.Gren.Rgt.Africa over point 712 in the direction of Ogrine. The O.B. moves to the advanced Corps C.P. and issues the order for the immediate commitment of the Grenadier Coy. of the O.B. combat echelon and of the Grenadier Co. of the 33d Recon.Bn. on the left flank of the 1st Bn. Pz.Gren.Rgt.Africa. From the advanced Corps C.P. the O.B. goes with the commanding general to the C.P. of the 1st Bn. Pz.Gren.Rgt.Africa in the area west of point 712. The regiment commander reports on the ^{progress} ~~course~~ of the attack. The 1st Bn. is advancing slowly and with great pains in the difficult mountainous terrain by Hill 812 where the enemy in well consolidated ~~positions~~ and dominant mountain positions is resisting stubbornly. The possibilities of artillery support are limited by the terrain difficulties and especially by the fog. The enemy seems to be offering strongest resistance in the line Ogrine-point 812. For the reinforcement of the attack the O.B. orders the commitment of a battalion of the 10th Pz.Div. which had advanced out of the Sbeitia during the night. Later the order is supplemented to the extent that at 1630 hr the 10th Pz.Div. and Kampfgruppe ~~1~~ ^{4/15} ~~is~~ ^{now} ~~is~~ together (the 10th Pz.Div. with all elements arrived ^{up to} ~~is~~ now) will attack the pass positions (B 3,4). The 10th Pz.Div. will attack with 2 battalions over Hill 974 to the north and later turn westward in the direction of Ogrine. Left thereof the 2d Bn. Pz.Gren.Rgt.Africa and Bn.5 Bersaglieri will attack. The 5th Bn. Bersaglieri is advancing since 1025 hr from Hill 712 to the northwest (A.2, 3).

In the noon hours the 5th Bn. Bersaglieri and the 1st Bn., Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa are advancing slowly in the direction Ogrine - 812. The artillery is active on both sides.

At 1630 hr elements of the 10th Pz. Div. (^{Armored Inf. 1} 2 Battalions, 2 Artillery Bns) and Kampfgruppe D.A.K. again launch the attack on the entire front. They gain ground rapidly thanks to well placed fire of artillery and mortar. In the left sector the 1st Bn., Pz. Gren. Rgt., effectively supported on its right flank by the 5th Bersaglieri Bn., drives the enemy out of the pass to the northwest. The enemy is still holding out at the north exit of the pass with strong forces and also tanks. The commanding general therefore decides to launch the Armored Bn. Stotten against this enemy. In strenuous fighting the battalion succeeds in annihilating 12 enemy tanks and 51 armored personnel carriers. The attack is effectively supported by elements of the 10th Pz. Div. advancing over point 974.

At 1815 hr the enemy is ^{driven} ~~driven~~ north of point 700 (An.4). The battalion continues its pressure and reaches the north exit of the pass 7 km north of Chambi (An.5). Even before this enemy movements to the rear had been observed and engaged by our artillery fire. Div. Centauro's armored battalion, in readiness for pursuit, received the order to fall in before darkness to the northwest and reach Hir Brika (9 km. northwest of Chambi). The battalion advances to Hir Brika and pushes 3 km beyond without coming in contact with the enemy.

In compliance with the O.B.'s instructions the orders for the night and for 21 Feb. are issued after nightfall. The 10th Pz. Div. will take over the defense of the eastern part of the pass (east of Wadi Hatob) and some of its elements will attack during the night beyond this point to the north. The ^{will be} sector south of Wadi Hatob is protected by Kampfgruppe D.A.K. For that purpose the reinforced 5th Bersaglieri Bn. and the reinforced 1st Bn., Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa will be put in the advanced line. For the defense the 5th Bersa-

F. L. C.

was killed at
Bn. which has fought valiantly today (its commander fell in the front line)
will be placed under the control of Pz.Gren.Rgt.Africa.

Armored Bn. Stotzen will withdraw to the area south of Chambi for availability, while the 33d Recon. Bn. reinforced by an Army Eng. Bn., 1 light field howitzer battery and armored elements of Div. Centauro receives the order to start to march at midnight along the road to the northwest and advance as far as the passes at Dj. el Hamra and take possession of the main pass by surprise if possible. (p.6-11)

Evening reports An.6 - 12 p.12

Progress report p.13

Weak air activity on both sides because of poor visibility. Out of 4 attacking enemy planes 3 were shot down.

Army order for the new set up of the chain of command. Accordingly the First Italian Panzerarmy has taken over the command in the south sector. All the elements of the First Italian Army and of the Fifth German Army which are at present engaged in the attacks ^{operations} in central Tunisia will be placed under the control of F.M. Rommel as Group Rommel; until further orders the First Italian Army is also under his orders (An.13, 14).

21 February 1943

Because of obstruction of the pass road the reinforced 33d Recon. Bn. was unable to launch its counterthrust at 0000 hr; it did so at 0200 hr (An.1). Sixteen kilometers north of the pass the battalion came upon an enemy group of 20 vehicles which, upon attack of the battalion, withdrew to the northwest. (An.2,3). The battalion continues to advance, destroys 1 armored reconnaissance car and 1 antitank gun and attempts to encircle enemy rearguard (an.4). At first the enemy withdraws, but at 0500 hr attacks ^{the battalion} with 50 vehicles including tanks (An.5) and at 0600 hr withdraws again to the northwest. (An.6).

In the pass position the night passed quietly. An order from A.O.K. ^{Hqs.} (Group Rommel) is received for 21 February. It concurs with the instructions issued orally and by telephone: to hold the pass position, and send strong reconnaissances in the direction of Dj. el ^{Hammur} ~~Hammur~~. The 10th Pz.Div. will attack with a combat group in the direction of Thala. The relief of the motor cycle battalion of the 10th Pz.Div. in the east part of the pass by Kampfgruppe D.A.K. will be prepared. The road Maserine - Thala will be the boundary between the 10th Pz.Div. and Kampfgruppe D.A.K. However after a talk with the 10th Pz.Div. the old boundary Wadi Hatob is ~~again~~ retained, a report being sent to A.O.K. (An.7, An.8). At daybreak the bulk of the Kampfgruppe begins to prepare for defense in the left sector of the pass. The Corps C.P. is transferred to point 735 just east of the Chabbi road fork. The commanding general sets out for the positions to talk over with the commanders ^{where to control} ~~the positions~~, ~~the~~ commitment of the units and cooperation with the artillery.

In front of the 33d Recon.Bn. the enemy who at first had fallen back, advances again at 0730 ^{to} against the battalion, but at 0830 ^{he} ceases to a standstill (An.9 -12, p.1).

At 1125 hr a report from 33d Recon.Bn. announces that the enemy has withdrawn the bulk of his forces behind the passes (An.13) but still has 100 vehicles in front of the north pass and 50 vehicles in front of the south pass. The report is forwarded to the Army immediately. Thereupon the O.B. orders at 1145 hr an immediate thrust of the entire Kampfgruppe D.A.K. on the 2 passes at Dj. el Hamra. Mission: open the ~~at~~ main pass (Krunquet or Sloughi) with artillery protection against a possible threat from the south pass (Krunquet as Zitouch). The necessary orders are issued immediately. The 33d Rec.Bn. receives the order to advance against the north pass and ^{it} take in a surprise raid; if the attempt fails the battalion will remain

there until the arrival of Kampfgruppe D.A.K. which will come forward out
bulk of the
of the pass at 1400 hr. The 10th Pz.Div. will move at the same time on
Thola (p.2-8). The raid of the 33d Rec.Bn. failed; the battalion went in-
to position north of the trail leading to the main pass at point 732 at
Wadi Hatob (An.14).

At 1400 hr the bulk of the Kampfgruppe moves in in the order named: 1
battalion of Pz.Gren.Rgr. Africa, artillery, 1 battalion Pz.Gren.Rgt. Africa,
tanks, 5th Bn. Bersaglieri. The foremost battalion joins the left flank
of the 33d Rec.Bn. at 1530 hr and prepares on both sides of the passes for
an attack to the northwest.

At 1630 hr the battalion reinforced by tanks of the Div. Centaure (An.15)
south of p.732 strong
launches the attack (p.9) which is checked by increasingly arty fire (p.10,11).
Our artillery, ready to fire in a very short time can only engage enemy vehicles
and advanced enemy positions. The positions of the enemy artillery (4 bttries)
^{have}
~~are~~ not been spotted.

Estimate of the situation at night fall:

The mission assigned at noon for the opening of one of the two passes
to Tebessa could not be executed, as the forces brought forward until the
afternoon were too strongly hindered by the effect of enemy artillery fire.

The attitude of the enemy leads to the conclusion that he no longer in-
tends to hold bridgeheads west of the passes. It can be assumed, however,
that he will defend the passes proper on 22 Feb. also.

The terrain between the positions we have reached and the north pass
(Kranguet as Sloughi) is very level, offers hardly any cover and can be viewed
exceptionally well from the dominant mountain positions on both sides of the
pass. The strength of our Kampfgruppe, especially of our infantry, indicates
that a frontal attack, as well as one from the northeast would be hopeless.
An attack from the south along the east ridge of Dj. Hamra is rejected because

of constant flanking threat. For a night ~~attack~~ surprise raid against the north pass the enemy forces seem too strong compared to the ones we can commit and the varied conformations of the terrain in the north pass too difficult.

A systematically planned attack against the south pass is also very difficult considering the comparatively weak combat strength of the Kampfgruppe, since strong flanking security detachments must be detached. However the terrain conditions there are more favorable, as Dj. el Adira stretching southeast of the south pass facilitates an approach and offers possibilities for observation positions. The protection of the south flank still remains a ~~difficult~~ ^{problem} since no forces will be available to make it secure, after the Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa has been committed to the attack against the pass ^{and} the 33d Rec. Bn. and 5th Bersaglieri Bn. are covering the north flank and the tanks are in position of readiness for an attack on both flanks. From a telephoned instruction of A.O.K. that the 530th Rec. Bn. which is in line in the south flank of the corps, ~~is~~ will attack via Wadi Cherchara on Ain bou Dries (9 km northeast of Bou Chebka) tonight or early in the morning (22 Feb.) it is assumed that ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ^{troops} in view of the low strength of the ~~forces~~ available a screening force to the left may be dispensed with. However the striking power of the Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa seems insufficient for a systematic attack by day.

The commanding general therefore decides to have the Kampfgruppe ready during the night of 22 Feb. for an attack against the south pass (Kranquet es Zitoun) with protection on the north flank, and while it is still dark to take possession of the south pass in a surprise raid. Suitable orders will be issued for the attack (p. 12~~14~~-15) (Missions for the units will be extracted from the order).

Evening reports An. 16 - An. 19 p. 16

Army order ~~of~~ for 22 Feb. (An. 20).

22 February 1943

received the order that the ~~mission~~ ~~is~~ ~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~carried~~ ~~out~~ ~~by~~ ~~the~~ ~~5th~~ ~~Bersaglieri~~ ~~Bn.~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~prescribed~~ ~~area~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~beginning~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~morning~~ ~~of~~ ~~23~~ ~~February~~ ~~1943~~.

to be thrown back to the ~~prescribed~~ ~~area~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~beginning~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~morning~~ ~~of~~ ~~23~~ ~~February~~ ~~1943~~.

During the night and also by day several ~~times~~ ^{Heavy} down pours. The 5th

Bersaglieri Bn. (reinforced by 2 Italian batteries 6.5cm and a German heavy antitank company) occupies positions in the prescribed area. Against the order of the Corps the motor vehicles are taken into the positions and left there. The Pz.Gren.Rgt. Africa and the artillery of the Kampfgruppe are regrouping. Because of terrain difficulties the march of the Pz.Gren.Rgt. Africa is ^{long} delayed. The regiment happens upon the enemy by surprise (p.1) and takes 8 guns and about 30 motor vehicles, but during the day ~~it~~ it loses them again. At day break it is found that during the night the regiment has gone out of its way and is now at Hill 812, 9 km. south-southeast of the ordered objective. ~~The~~ ~~regiment~~ ~~is~~ ~~opposed~~ ~~by~~ ~~the~~ ~~enemy~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~area~~ ~~of~~ ~~an~~ ~~area~~ ~~of~~ ~~about~~ ~~the~~ ~~strength~~ ~~of~~ ~~a~~ ~~regiment~~ ~~defending~~ ~~the~~ ~~pass~~ ~~road~~ ~~leading~~ ~~from~~ ~~the~~ ~~north~~ ~~on~~ ~~Aine~~ ~~bou~~ ~~Orie~~ ~~s~~. The 1st Bn., Pz.Gren.Rgt. Africa succeeds in capturing In the morning Hill 812 occupied by the enemy, but the regiment, supported by part of our artillery only and facing in an open terrain a superior enemy, remains in a dangerous situation, as the left flank in which the 500th Rec. Bn. was to be, is unprotected. In such a situation it is not possible to carry out the mission.

* In the right flank the situation develops as follows during the morning. The enemy disengaged himself. He seems to have some ^{infantry} security detachments opposite the 5th Bersaglieri Bn. In addition, before the front of the battalion several enemy tanks and ~~and~~ self propelled mounts are holding the positions under ~~the~~ fire (An.5). The defensive force of the battalion is poor. Moreover, considering the Italian mentality, it is doubtful whether the battalion is equal to further heavy duties. Accordingly the armored group (Bn. Stetten, Armored Bn. and assault guns of Div. Centauro)

receive the order that the enemy in front of the 5th Bn. Bersaglieri is to be thrown back to the pass entrance.

At 0930 the 33d Reg. Bn. reports 25 enemy tanks coming from the west, advancing 4 km north of our position (point 732 (An.6)). On the basis of this report on the new enemy group Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa receives the order to withdraw 1 battalion and put it in line north of the trail on a line with the Corps C.P. Mission: protection of the deep north flank (p.2).

The regiment reports by telephone that it is ~~losing~~ under very strong artillery fire, that to detach one battalion, is possible only at the risk of heavy losses, and ^{that} the line reached cannot be ~~extended~~ held with one battalion only. Thereupon the order is repealed. The artillery regroups according to the changed situation.

In the meantime pressure ^{on} the front of the 5th Bn. Bersaglieri has been eased by a tank attack of our own. (An.7, 8). Armored Bn. Stotten reports that 2 km ~~in~~ front ~~of~~ (3.5 km in front of the 5th Bn. Bersaglieri) tanks and infantry are in position. The battalion is under strong artillery fire; it is impossible to advance farther (An.9, 10).

Therefore at 1145 hr it receives the order ~~to~~ to withdraw to the position of the 5th Bn. Bersaglieri (p.3) and to remain in position there as reserve of the battalion.

At 1200 the 33d Reg. Bn. reports that the enemy group north of point 732/rapidly reinforced ^{has been} ~~by~~ 100 ~~more~~ motor vehicles, including 40 tanks (An.11, An.12, p.4). However the enemy group does not advance against the D.A.K. in the afternoon (An.13-15). ^{a few} ~~some~~ vehicles drive from Bou Rhanem to the northeast in the direction of the advance route of the 10th Pz. Div.; the division is informed of the fact (A.O.K. also) p.5, p.6)

During the noon hours the Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa ~~was~~ again under heavy

artillery fire. ^y The mortar batteries in position with the regiment loses
4 of its guns. Enemy counterattacks are repulsed.

At 1415 hr, on the basis of the development of the situation the commanding general decided to order a withdrawal on Kasserine pass for tonight. A.O.K. is instructed (p.7, p.8).

The G.S. officer in charge of Supplies and Administration, present at the C.P. is commissioned to report orally at A.O.K. on the development of the situation. Army approves of the Corps' intention and orders the occupation of the old pass position after the withdrawal. (An.16, 17).

1505 hr The orders for the withdrawal are issued (p.9 - 13).

1600 hr The Corps shifts its C.P. The commanding general ~~remains~~ remains until dark at the old C.P.

During the forenoon there was only weak air activity, but in the afternoon the ^{enemy} attacked several times with bombers and fighters in low-level flying. 4 machines were shot down.

At 1720 hr the Pz.Gren.Rgt.Africa reports an attack on the advanced (1st) battalion from the southwest (An.18), and later: ~~critical~~ critical situation there (An.19).

Flak Rgt. 135 and the artillery commander are instructed to relieve the pressure on the regiment ~~by~~ ^{through} concentrated fire. Shortly before dark ~~the~~ enemy tanks penetrate into the positions of the battalion. The bulk of the battalion withdraws in disorder at first, ~~but~~ ¹ but rally later. The 5th Bn. Bersaglieri is also attacked just before dark by some isolated tanks and abandon its positions leaving many motor vehicles and all ^{the} heavy weapons behind.

At 1900 hr new Corps C.P. at Hill 735 west of Chambi.

The withdrawal is made difficult by the muddy condition of the trails.

At some places only cross-country motor vehicles can manage the quagmire without help. As Pz.Gren.Rgt.Africa is unable to ~~maintain~~ ^{get into} covering position

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

at Hir.Ouled Dif in time, the Corps orders the 33d Rec.Bn. and Armored Bn. Stotten to cover the withdrawal. Col.Wolz, commander of the 135th Flak Rgt. has the mission to regulate the withdrawal march on the main withdrawal trail, and the commander of the Pz.Corps Signal Bn. is entrusted with the traffic regulations at the narrow pass road of Kasserine pass (p.14-19). At the bad places on the road to the rear towing parties will keep the traffic going. For the protection of the west entrance of the pass until the arrival of Pz.Gren.Rgt. Africa the commanding general is putting the 3d Co. 7 (10 Pz.Div.) and D.A.K. artillery training staff in line. The 10th Pz.Div. will be instructed.

At 2130 the 33d Rec.Bn. and Armored Bn.Stotten report that the 5th Bn.Eersaglieri is scattered. The battalions are the last elements to break contact with the enemy (An.20, 21). At 2300 hr a report is received from Pz.Gren.Rgt.Africa according to which the regiment after the withdrawal of rear guards has broken contact with the enemy. (An.22).

At 2330 hr the 33d Rec.Bn. which is ~~continuing~~ acting as rear guard in the Hir.Ouled Sif region reports that at no point is the enemy following (An.23).

Evening reports An.24-26, p.20

The attempts of Kampfgruppe D.A.K. to open the passes east of Tebessa on 21 and 22 February miscarried as a result of the superiority of the enemy who had brought forward new forces. The conduct of operations was made more difficult through the accidental splitting of forces which occurred on 22 February. The 21st Pz.Div. (Skiba) and the 10th Pz.Div. (south of Thala) were fighting hard defensive action on 22 February against newly brought up (British) forces. In the evening the 10th Pz.Div. is also beginning to withdraw on Kasserine pass. On 23 February the Corps expects that the enemy will attempt to recapture Kasserine pass. The defensive power

of D.A.K. is deemed ~~xxxx~~ adequate if all elements are in position on time. Therefore measures will be taken to assure the withdrawal of the entire Kampfgruppe during the night.

The new Chief of Staff, Lt. Col. Nolte, U.S. arrives at the C.P. in the evening of 22 February.

23 February 1943

During the day weather clear and cloudy by turns; no fog. The Kampfgruppe withdrew to Kasserine pass during the night. After the initial jams went the movement ~~xxxx~~ on evenly though slowly. Almost all the guns and vehicles which had stuck in the mud could be salvaged. The 33d Rec. Bn. which has reported several times that the enemy is ~~not~~^{was} in pursuit, leaves at 0300 hr the area Hir Ouled Sif, the last unit to withdraw (an. 1-3).

At dawn the last elements are moving into the pass position (An. 4-9. p. 1).

At 0745^{hr} the commanding general arrives at the advanced C.P. There he receives the orders for the intended movements:

1. The attack in Central Tunisia is finally broken off. Gruppe Rommel will withdraw. The elements will start to march to the Mareth position as rapidly as possible.

2. After being relieved in the pass position by the 10th Pz. Div. D.A.K. will withdraw to the area Thelepte, Feriana. Mission: to relieve Div. Centauro which will move to the Gafsa area, and to cover the Thelepte area until completion of the demolitions of road and stations Thelepte and Gafsa.

3. Today the following troops ~~will be released~~^{will be released} in the Mareth position: regt. Hqs. and 2d ~~Brig.~~^{Brig.} ~~1st~~^{1st} Art. Bn., Mortar Btry, 1/71 elements ~~of Div. Centauro~~^{of Div. Centauro} and elements of Div. Centauro

of the 1st Btry., 190th Arty will be released.

4. Further withdrawal from Thelepte on Gasa only upon order.

5. ~~Demolitions and mine laying~~ Demolitions and ~~mine~~ mine laying will be ~~performed~~ ^{carried out} on railroad, roads and airfields all along the way to the rear.

While the commanding general is still at the advanced Army C.P. the Chief of Staff regulates the arrangement of the Kampfgruppe in the pass position.

After the commanding general and the chief of staff ~~have~~ returned to the Corps C.P. the orders for the march were issued. Kampfgruppe will depart at 1300 hr in small groups at long intervals. The relief of the reinforced Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa by the 1st Bn., 10th Pz. Div. will be arranged with the 10th Pz. ~~Rgt~~ Div. (p.2-9).

1300 hr O.B. to the ^{head} Commanding General (tele): Div. Centauro is being attacked by the enemy and is under strong enemy fire. Transfer to Thelepte to be accelerated, elements to be sent there immediately.

The 33d Rec. Bn. and the 1st Bn., 8th Armored Rgt. receive the order to move immediately on Thelepte (B 10-12, An. 10).

In the forenoon the enemy felt forward with tanks and scout cars against the positions. From 1100 hr the harassing fire of heavy, long-distance artillery lies on the Chambi region. Enemy units of combat planes, twin engines planes and fighter bombers attack the march movements several times in the afternoon.

1345 hr The Commanding General leaves for Thelepte.

1500 hr The Commanding General arrives in Thelepte. There the situation is altogether calm (p.13)

1520 hr Conference at the C.P. of Div. Centauro. Present: Commanding General, 1st Ord. Officer, Commander 33d Rec. Bn., Commander and Oper. officer of Div. Centauro.

1. Situation before the front: calm; scattered artillery harassing fire

on advanced security detachments. The division was not attacked.

2. Relief: In Thelepte and in Gouboul pass the elements of the division in position there may depart ^{with} Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa or 33d Rec. Bn. are ready for defense (presumably at 2100 hr). Elements which have pushed to Oglet Bou Haya can depart at 2400 hr (completion of the movements on the Kasserine-Thelepte road).
3. After arrival in the Thelepte area the 1st Bn., 8th Pz. Rgt. will remain at first at the northeast edge of Thelepte.

1535 hr The Commanding General to O.B. by telephone: the Commanding General reports on the situation and the progress of ^{the} relief.

At 1715 hr reports of Italian units are received through various channels; they mention 25 vehicles, tanks among them, which are approaching the positions at Oglet Bou Haya. (An. 11, 12, p. 14) A reconnaissance by the 1st Bn. 8th Pz. Rgt. discloses that they are our own troops, driven away by the fire of Italian artillery.

The march of the Corps is disrupted several times by bombing attacks.

At 2015 hr the Pz. Gren. Rgt. Africa has moved in the new positions north of Thelepte (An. 13-15).

The relief of Div. Centauro goes on systematically.

Evening reports An. 16-21, p. 15

At 2400 hr the Army Eng. Bn. begins mining the Kasserine - Thelepte ^{road} (An. 22, 23, p. 16, 17).

24 February 1943

During the night enemy guns which have been brought forward lay harassing fire on the Feriana-Thelepte road. Two attempts ^{by} of enemy reconnaissance patrols to penetrate in the Gouboul pass were repulsed. The mining of the Kasserine-Thelepte road is continued (An. 1, 2, p. 1, 2).

Gruppe Rommel announces that F. M. Rommel has taken the high command of "Heeresgruppe Afrika" D.A.K. is placed under the direct control of the Heeresgruppe (An. 3). In modification of the instructions issued on the previous day the Army Group gives the order for the defense of the Fériona area and for withdrawal on Gafsa only if hard pressed by the enemy (An. 4). On the basis of this order the Commanding General requests the retention of the 1st Bn., 8th Pz. Rgt and 1st Bn., 190th Arty in the Fériona area (p. 3). The request is denied. (A. 5) The 1st Bn., 8th Pz. Rgt. and 1st Bn., 190th Arty. (less 1 battery) receive the order to withdraw via Gafsa into the Maroth area (p. 4, 5). D.A.K. reports the defense cannot be carried out with the forces available (p. 6).

II Corps, Report of Operations, 1 January-15
March 1943

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:By Authority of :
:CG, II Corps. :
:Initials R.J.G. :
:Date: 2 May 1943.:

SUBJECT: Report of Operations.

TO : The Adjutant General, U. S. Army, Washington, D.C.

- SECTION I - THE SATIN TASK FORCE
- SECTION II - OUSSELTIA VALLEY - SENED DIVERSION
- SECTION III - SIDI BOU ZID - GAFSA
- SECTION IV - KASSERINE VALLEY THRUST
- SECTION V - ADMINISTRATIVE

2 May 1943.

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Report of Operations II Corps from 1 January 1943 to 15 March 1943 is hereby submitted in compliance with paragraph 10, AR 345-105:

SECTION I - THE SATIN TASK FORCE

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1. Hq. II Corps, under verbal authority AFHQ, was selected to plan and execute operation SATIN. The initial studies for operation SATIN prior to 1 January 1943 were prepared by Fifth Army under the direction of AFHQ.

2. The II Corps staff assembled for the planning of Operation SATIN at 2400 hours, 31 December 1942 at the Alexander Hotel, City of Algiers. Upon its arrival at Algiers, the staff was given the mission of preparing three plans; "A", "B", and "C". Final choice as to which of the three plans: "A", "B", or "C", to be put into effect was to be made by the C-in-C, AFHQ. Plans "A", "B", and "C" all required an initial concentration of the SATIN TASK FORCE in the TEBESSA - KASSERINE area. In Plan "A", the SATIN TASK FORCE was to seize and hold the Port of SFAX, prepared to operate northwest in the direction of SOUSSE. In Plan "B", the SATIN TASK FORCE was to seize and hold GIBES, prepared to operate north toward SFAX. In Plan "C" the SATIN TASK FORCE was to advance on and capture KAIROUAN. After securing KAIROUAN, the force was to advance on and capture SOUSSE, being prepared to destroy the port, bridges, utilities, etc., if forced to withdraw.

3. The SATIN TASK FORCE was directly under the command of AFHQ as of 1 January 1943. For this operation, the force consisted of the following major units:

- Headquarters II Corps
- 1st Armored Division plus 701st TD Bn.
- 443rd CA Bn. (-1 Plat. Btry A) and 2nd Bn., 16th Med. Regt. attached.
- 26th RCT plus 5th F.A. Bn. and 501st TD Bn. attached
- XII Air Support Command.

Supporting troops consisted of the French Constantine Division.

4. D-Day for the execution of the SATIN OPERATION was tentatively set for 22 January 1943. Prior to D-Day, the enemy rushed reinforcements and

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supplies to Tunisia via TUNIS, BIZERTE, SOUSSE and SPAX. Enemy reinforcements were arriving at the rate of approximately 800 per day, principally by air. Supplies were shipped by sea and some supplies were trans-shipped from SPAX and SOUSSE to TRIPOLI for the use of ROUHEL'S AFRIKA CORPS which was hard-pressed by the British Eighth Army. The enemy's intention at this time was to keep the eastern coast plains from TUNIS to TRIPOLI open for a joining of the TUNISIAN forces and the AFRIKA CORPS. A north and south range of mountains, known as the EASTERN DORSALE, overlooks this coastal corridor. Prior to D-Day the enemy's defense of the EASTERN DORSALE in the proposed SATIN TASK FORCE zone of action was based generally on the occupation of a series of detached positions commanding the four main approaches at FOUDOUK, DJEBEL KRACHEM, MAKHASSY, and EL GUETTAR. Behind these outposts, as of 10 January, at BOU THADI and at LA FOUCONNERIE, were approximately two battalions of mixed German and Italian troops. These battalions were capable of reinforcing the outposts within 12 hours. Enemy reinforcements continued to arrive at the rate of approximately 800 per day.

5. On 5 January 1943, the SATIN Staff moved from ALGIERS to CONSTANTINE to continue plans of the SATIN Operation. While the plans were being drawn from 1 January to 17 January, troops under the SATIN TASK FORCE were moved to initial concentration areas behind the British First Army. These areas were as follows: 1st Armored Division in the areas TEBOUSOUK and OUED SEGUIN; 26th PCT in the areas GUELIA and AIN M'LILA; and service troops in the areas CONSTANTINE and TEBESSA. These concentrations were preparatory to concentration in the TEBESSA - KASSERINE area. A secondary mission of guarding the lines of communications for the British First Army was assigned to the SATIN FORCE troops in these areas. A small infantry and paratroop force under Colonel Raff was at this time operating in the GAFSA - EL GUETTAR area.

6. While the above concentrations were going on, a reserve of 10 days' supplies of all classes was built up in the TEBESSA - KASSERINE area prior to D-Day. Supplies were drawn from the British First Army and from the ORAN and ALGIERS areas. The SATIN TASK FORCE assumed the responsibility for administration east of the line TEBESSA - HORSOTT.

7. An engineer depot was established in the vicinity of TEBESSA prior to D-Day. Water supply was the responsibility of commanders concerned, with information as to available water supply points being furnished by the Engineer Officer. Water distributing points were established after D-Day by the Water Supply Company.

8. Initially, an evacuation hospital and medical supply depot were established in the vicinity of CONSTANTINE. One medical battalion was established under Corps control in the vicinity of TEBESSA and a second medical battalion was attached to the 1st Armored Division.

9. The SATIN TASK FORCE ammunition supply point was established at TEBESSA and maintained a stock of four units of fire. Forward ammunition supply points were established close behind combat troops throughout operations and a one-unit-of-fire level maintained. The Provisional Ordnance Group provided balanced ordnance maintenance service to all units. Ten days' Class I and Class III supplies were assembled in TEBESSA and a signal depot established prior to D-Day.

Report of Operations, Hq. II Corps, 2 May 1943 (Continued).

10. Effective dark, 17 January, SATIN FORCE troops began movement from CONSTANTINE - GUELIA area to TEBESSA - KASSERINE - SBEITLA area. 3rd Bn., 26th Inf., reinforced, was in GAFSA area and 2nd Bn., 26th Inf. at KASSERINE.

11. Enemy ground forces during 17 January to 21 January in the sector of the line FONDOUK to GABES (inclusive) were estimated to be equivalent to one strong division composed of Italian Infantry and armored elements reinforced by minor elements of German infantry and armored forces. The scale of enemy reinforcements remained constant at about 800 per day. Armored strength in this area was about 100 to 115 light and medium tanks exclusive of the tank strength of the 10th Panzer Division which was north of KAIROUAN. On 21 January, incidentally, one day prior to SATIN D-Day, the enemy successfully disrupted the French front, secured PONT DU FAHS and penetrated down the PONT DU FAHS - ROBAA VALLEY. AFHQ immediately ordered a postponement of the execution of SATIN Operation. Due to the above, General Ward, commanding the 1st Armored Division, initiated a reconnaissance by direction of General Fredendall and recommended that the SATIN Plan be carried out as of the 22 January as planned with minor alterations to meet the changed situation.

SECTION II - OUSSELTIA VALLEY - SENED DIVERSION

1. A directive issued 1200 hours, 21 January, by AFHQ, signed by General Truscott was received. A summary of this directive was as follows: "Following measures will be implemented immediately to check German offensive. Elements First Army under British command will operate southeast and south in direction ROBAA and OUED EL KEBIR northeast of ROBAA to cut off and block enemy advance. General Robinett's Force (CC"B", 1st Arm. Div.) is placed under command General Juin for operations east or west of GRANDE DORSALE as situation requires. This force will be employed as complete unit under General Robinett and not split into detachments. General Juin will notify all concerned as early as possible of mission assigned to this force. General Fredendall will reconstitute reserve including armored units and artillery in area SBEITLA to be employed under his command in support of French sectors FONDOUK and PIGEON. Operations are being coordinated with General Juin."

2. To meet this threat from the north, CC"B" was dispatched to the OUSSELTIA VALLEY. 2nd Bn., 26th Infantry (plus 33rd FA Bn.) marched to MAKTAR night 21-22 January. General Ward reconstituted a force from the 1st Armored Division at SBEITLA similar to CC"B", night 21-22 January, prepared to attack FONDOUK 23 January and observing FONDOUK, MAKHASSY and approaches to GAFSA from GABES. With the dissolution of the SATIN FORCES, the junction of the AFRIKA CORPS and the enemy forces in Tunisia became inevitable.

3. Colonel Fechet, commanding infantry troops in OUSSELTIA VALLEY area, assembled his force in the vicinity of MAKTAR. The 2nd Bn., 26th Infantry and 33rd FA Bn. reached MAKTAR by daylight, 22 January. The 1st Bn., 16th Inf., marched from GUELIA to MAKTAR night 22-23 January. Combat Command "A" had assembled in the vicinity of SBEITLA by daylight, 22 January.

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Report of Operations, Hq II Corps, 2 May 1943 (Continued).

4. In compliance with letter, AFHQ Advanced Command Post, dated 24 January 1943, the II Corps (SABIN FORCE) was attached to the British First Army and the Commanding General, British First Army, General Anderson, made responsible for the employment of American troops in accordance with general policies made known by the C-in-C. In accordance with 1st Army Instruction No. 11, Commanding General, II Corps, assumed command of ground troops of all three nationalities operating south of the general line all exclusive MORSOTT - TIALA - SBIDA all inclusive DJ TROZZA - FONDOK - SIDI AMOR EL KENANI thence exclusive of SOUSSE and north of the general line exclusive the line of the CHOTTS to GABES. The mission of II Corps as defined by AFHQ was the protection of the right flank of the Allied Forces in Tunisia.
5. In addition to the American Infantry and Armored Forces in the OUSSELTIA VALLEY, there were approximately two Bns. of French Infantry in position on DJEBEL BARCOU. These troops were also placed under the command of Colonel Fechet. General Robinett was in command of the armored units.
6. On 26 January, the 26th CT attacked KAIROUAN PASS in the OUSSELTIA VALLEY and took 400 Italian Prisoners. 16th RCT less 1st and 2nd Bns. and 7th FA Bn. bivouaced east of MAKTAH. CC"B" was in contact with the enemy and holding along the KAIROUAN-OUSSELTIA road. Patrols to MAUSOLLEE and KARACHAUN contacted the British at MAUSOLLEE.
7. During these operations in the OUSSELTIA VALLEY, the enemy clearly controlled the skies. He usually made raids over our positions at 0800 hrs., 1200 hrs., and 1500 hrs. In one raid alone, six of our trucks were lost.
8. On the 28th of January, 26th CT vicinity of OUSSELTIA engaged enemy forces east of the pass through the EASTERN DORSALE and took 70 Italian prisoners.
9. On 30 January by 1300 hours, the OUSSELTIA VALLEY had been cleared of enemy troops to the OUSSELTIA - KAIROUAN road and the eastern slope of BEK ZEROUS. Enemy positions were reported on the north slope of DJEBEL TOUILA. The enemy left many scattered and unmarked mine fields behind him indicating that he had no intention of resuming his push through the PONT-DU-FAHS, ROBLA and OUSSELTIA VALLEY. The enemy, fearing an allied counterthrust up the OUSSELTIA VALLEY dug defensive positions covering the northern exit from the valley.
10. While the forces under Colonel Fechet and General Robinett were assembling in the ROBLA - OUSSELTIA area, patrols from the Italian garrison at MOKKASSY became active in the SENEZ STATION area.
11. On 24 January, the 1st Armored Division less detachments made a reconnaissance in force from GAFSA toward MOKKASSY. This force advanced halfway between SENEZ and MOKKASSY, made contact with the enemy and captured three trucks, 20 German PW's and 130 Italian PW's. The 1st Armored Division lost two medium tanks, two were killed and three wounded. By the 28th of January, there was increased enemy activity in the EL GUETTAR area. The French outpost there had been attacked by a small German motorcycle patrol.
12. As the OUSSELTIA VALLEY had been cleared of the enemy, CC"B" was withdrawn and moved to BOU CHEBKA during the night 23-29 January and the Stack

Force (CC"C") consisting of one battalion of medium tanks, one battalion infantry, and one battalion field artillery, moved to GAFSA to reinforce the 3rd Bn., 26th Infantry, which was still garrisoning GAFSA. The 26th RCT (-2 bns.) moved to SBEITLA.

13. On the 30th of January, the Germans initiated an attack against the French positions at FAID. CC"A" under General McQuillan, and the 26th RCT (-2 bns.) marched from SBEITLA to reinforce the hard-pressed French garrison at FAID. The XII ASC bombed and strafed enemy columns attacking FAID continuously. As of 1700 hrs., 30 January, the small French force garrisoned at FAID were reported to be still holding FAID, but the enemy had infiltrated units to the south and rear of the French positions. By daylight, 31 January, CC"A" reached its forward assembly areas west of FAID and launched an attack against the enemy positions at FAID. At last light on the 31st, the north prong of CC"A"'s attack had reached the enemy positions which were dug in the foothills north of FAID. The south prong of CC"A"'s attack had advanced north from REBHON along the east side of DJEBEL BOU DZER and had reached the village of FAID. Throughout the 1st and 2nd of February, CC"A" and the 26th RCT attacked to restore the FAID positions. Little progress was made. The enemy remained in possession of the high ground commanding FAID PASS. CC"A" had some forces to the south of this pass while the French also still retained a few positions south of the pass. On the 3rd there was a lull in the fighting in the vicinity of FAID and General McQuillan regrouped his troops for another assault on FAID. This assault failed to restore the FAID positions. Active contact with the enemy was maintained. The 26th RCT (-2 Bns.) was withdrawn from this position on 9 February and on the 10th the responsibility for the defense of the FAID approach was assigned to General Ward, commanding the 1st Armored Division.

14. The defense of the FAID approach by General Ward will be treated separately under Section III of this report. In the meantime, as this battle of FAID was in progress, the forces stationed at GAFSA began an attack against MAKNASSY.

15. Due to the increased activity in the vicinity of EL GUETTAR on the 28th of January, CC"C" under Colonel Stack moved from BOU CHEBKA to GAFSA. When CC"A" marched on the 30th of January, to relieve the hard-pressed French at FAID, CC"C" also marched toward FAID from GAFSA to reinforce the French garrison. As CC"C" was marching, however, orders were received from 1st Army to attack and seize MAKNASSY. CC"C", therefore was turned south at SIDI BOU ZID along the road to MAKNASSY and the 1st Armored Division less CC"A", CC"B", and the Stack Force but reinforced by the 1st Bn., 168th Infantry, moved from BOU CHEBKA to GAFSA, closing there at daylight 31 January. From GAFSA CC"D", commanded by Colonel Maraist, and consisting of a battalion of medium tanks, a battalion of the 168th Infantry, and a battalion of armored field artillery, advanced on MAKNASSY. Reconnaissance elements of this force passed STATION ZANTHOUGH at 0745 hours, 31 January without contacting the enemy. As of 1700 hours, CC"D" was attacking enemy positions at SENED. This position had been reinforced by 18 truckloads of enemy infantry during the afternoon. By dark, reconnaissance elements had reached within 8 miles of MAKNASSY. The XII ASC, meanwhile, bombed enemy concentrations at BOU THADI and at MAKNASSY, reporting many enemy vehicles damaged. During the night 31-1 February, the 2nd Bn., 168th Infantry and the 175th FA Bn. reinforced CC"D" for a coordinated attack on SENED at daylight. By 0916 hours, CC"C" had arrived at the DJ ENIZILA PASS and was heading south to join CC"D". CC"D" attacked STATION SENED at 1100 hours and had captured STATION SENED by 1405 hours. Patrols from CC"C" and

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Report of Operations, 1st II Corps, 2 May 1943 (Continued).

CC"D" met in the DJERBEL PASS as of 1440 hours. By dark, CC"D" had captured SEED and the 168th RCT had organized the high ground two miles east of STATION SEED for defense. Over 100 PW's were taken in the vicinity of SEED. Throughout the day, enemy dive-bombers repeatedly attacked our troops between GAFSA and SEED.

16. Although the enemy had definitely given up any idea of attempting to come through the OUSSELTIA VALLEY again after his almost disastrous defeat by CC"B", air reconnaissance reported enemy concentrations east of the MAIROUNI - OUSSELTIA pass and inexperienced troops who were unduly alarmed by their proximity to the enemy greatly exaggerated reports of enemy ground and air activity. Based on these reports, therefore, a message from 1st British Army received at 1419 hours, 1 February, directed that engagements at SEED and MUKHASSY areas be discontinued as soon as possible, that an effort be made to clear up enemy positions in the FAID area, and that the maximum possible force be concentrated in a mobile reserve position in the area of HADJEB EL AIOU. In compliance with this order, CC"D" moved from BOU CHEBKA to HADJEB EL AIOU immediately, and later from HADJEB EL AIOU to ILKTAR during the night 2-3 February. (1st Armored Division less CC"A", CC"B", CC"C", and CC"D" moved to SBEITLA night 2-3 February.) During the night 3-4 February, all forces except a reinforced infantry battalion (3rd Bn., 26th) were withdrawn from the GAFSA area.

17. The frequent redistribution of forces and the long marches caused thereby had a great influence on the outcome of the operations described in Section III of this report. CC"B" and the 1st Armored Division shifted to the north. During the night 3-4 February, the 168th CT gave up its hard-won positions at SEED and moved to SBEITLA. CC"D" withdrew from the MUKHASSY area and moved to BOU CHEBKA. By the 4th of February all the remaining elements at SEED had withdrawn to GAFSA. The 1st Bn., 17th FA moved during the night 3-4 February to BOU CHEBKA and 1st Bn., 168th Infantry moved from GAFSA to FERLANA. The following moves were made during the night 4-5 February: 168th Infantry (-one battalion) from GAFSA via FERLANA, BOU CHEBKA to SBEITLA. 1st Bn., 17th FA, from BOU CHEBKA to SBEITLA. 1st Ren. Troop from SIDI BOU ZID to ILKTAR to join the 1st Infantry Division, 1st Derbyshire Yeomanry from KALLA DJERDA to SIDI BOU ZID, B Btry and D Btry, 213th CA were moved from GAFSA to SBEITLA. During the night 7-8 February, the following moves were made: 1st Bn., 168th Infantry, moved from SBEITLA to FERLANA. 168th Infantry (less 1st and 2nd Bns.) and 2nd Bn., 17th F.A. moved from SBEITLA to SIDI BOU ZID, and the 1st Derbyshire Yeomanry moved from SIDI BOU ZID to GAFSA. During the night 8-9 February, the 26th RCT (less 2 Bns.) moved from SIDI BOU ZID to FERLANA and the 1st Ranger Battalion arrived in the TEBESSA area. During the night 9-10 February the 1st Ranger Battalion, Btry C, 213th CA Regt., and Co. B, 805th TD Bn. moved to GAFSA. During the night 10-11 February the 805th TD Bn. moved from BOU CHEBKA to FERLANA.

SECTION III - SIDI BOU ZID - GAFSA

1. With the Afrika Corps rapidly falling back from TRIPOLI to join Von Arnim's forces in TUNISIA, and the Allied line over-stretched in its attempt to prevent the junction of these two forces, it became apparent that the enemy was going to make a final thrust to disrupt the Allied time table. On the 5th of February, a large number of enemy vehicles were reported 15 miles east of GAFSA on the GAFSA - GABES Road. On the 9th, seven or eight enemy tanks from

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Report of Operations, II Corps, 2 May 1943, (Continued).

the direction of MAIMASSY approached to within four or five miles of GAFSA and heavy motor movements were observed on the GUM TREE ROAD. Four or five Italian armored cars and one motorcycle approached MDILLA and drove the french back slightly to the north.

2. To investigate the enemy's intentions in the vicinity of GAFSA and FAID, active reconnaissance was initiated by our forces. A light mobile force supported by air was dispatched from GAFSA to investigate the strength of the enemy in the vicinity of ZARHOUGH. This force moved as far east as STATION SERED without contact with the enemy. A small mobile force sent from GAFSA easily restored the situation at MDILLA. The enemy met our patrols in the vicinity of FAID with a withering fire. Elements of the Afrika Corps were identified in this area.

3. As stated in Section II of this report, on 11 February the responsibility for the defense of the FAID position was assigned to General Ward, Commanding the 1st Armored Division. The scheme of defense was to hold the two key terrain features, DJ. KSAIRA on the south and DJ. LESSOUDI on the north by organizing infantry islands of resistance on these two positions. These positions were not mutually supporting for antitank and small arms fires. A mobile reserve was held in a position of readiness in the vicinity of SIDI BOU ZID. During the night 11-12 February, the 701st TD Bn. (A and B Cos.) arrived at SBEITLA and came under the command of the 1st Armored Division for the defense of the FAID positions. During the afternoon of 13 February the C-in-C visited the FAID positions and had a conference with General Anderson, British First Army Commander.

4. At daylight on the 14th of February, the enemy attacked our positions in front of FAID. The positions on DJ. LESSOUDI were attacked by artillery fire, infantry, and approximately thirty enemy tanks. The FONDOUK and GAFSA areas were quiet. As of 0920 hrs. the 3rd Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment with two batteries, 91st FA Bn., launched a counterattack and became heavily engaged with enemy tanks between SIDI BOU ZID and DJ. LESSOUDI. By 1300 hours, the 3rd Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment, had suffered 50% tank casualties. By 1700 hours enemy tanks had overrun "B" Battery, 91st FA Bn., northwest of the DJ. LESSOUDI position. Enemy infantry moved from FAID to SIDI BOU ZID in trucks and the position on DJ. LESSOUDI was completely surrounded by the enemy. The 3rd Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment was pushed back southwest of SIDI BOU ZID with both flanks threatened from the north and the south. The XII Air Support Command successfully attacked enemy tank and truck columns throughout the day. As a result of these operations, and after repeated requests, the Army Commander ordered the 2nd Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment from CC"B" at KASSERINE to the 1st Armored Division at FAID.

5. Due to the critical situation at FAID, the force of American and French troops at GAFSA was withdrawn to positions in the vicinity of FERLINA during the night of 14-15 February. At daylight on the 15th, the 1st Armored Division launched a counterattack between DJEBEL HAMRA and DJEBEL LESSOUDI. The 168th Infantry still held the heights of DJEBEL LESSOUDI and DJEBEL KSAIRA. The Commanding General, 1st Armored Division, was directed to effect the withdrawal of these troops to positions defending the KASSERINE PASS. By 1535 hrs., the 2nd Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment had reached the outskirts of SIDI BOU ZID attempting to take the town and effect the relief of the 168th Infantry.

Report of Operations, Mq. II Corps, 2 May 1943 (Continued).

150 men from the 2nd Battalion, 168th Infantry, on DJEBEL LESSOUDI managed to withdraw to DJEBEL KAIRA. The 3rd Battalion, 168th Infantry, still held DJEBEL KAIRA. Contact was lost with both the 168th Infantry and the 2nd Bn., 1st Armored Regiment, which was near SIDI BOU ZID. Patrols were unable to get through from these forces or to them. The enemy organized a strong defensive position north and south through SIDI BOU ZID. Enemy tanks west of SIDI BOU ZID withdrew towards SIDI BOU ZID. As of 1220 hours on the 16th, about 50 enemy tanks attacked in the vicinity of DJEBEL KAIRA. Our armored forces lost approximately 86 medium tanks in their attempt to relieve the infantry holding DJEBEL LESSOUDI and DJEBEL KAIRA.

6. A directive from the Commanding General, 1st British Army, dated 15 February 1943, directed that forces holding the high ground west of FAID be withdrawn and the pass at KASSERINE organized for defense. A force consisting of the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, and the 19th Combat Engineer Regiment organized a new defensive position four miles east of KASSERINE. After repeated requests, CC"B" was released by 1st British Army to II Corps as of 1800 hours, 15 February, with permission to move CC"D" from HAKTAR to SBEITLA.

7. From the 17th to the 19th of February, II Corps completed its withdrawal to the general line DJ BOU DJELLAL - DJ BOU GAFER - DJ CHEBRI - DJ SEMMI - SBIBA. The XII Air Support Command evacuated both airfields in the vicinity of THELEPTE. The 1st Armored Division withdrew from SBEITLA to an area southeast of TEBESSA. The 894th TD Bn. arrived and went into bivouac in the vicinity of BEKKARIA. The 26th Armored Brigade (less 1 Regt. Group) (British) came under control of II Corps in the vicinity of TILLA as of 0600 hours, 19 February, with the provision that they were not to be committed to action without the authority of the Commanding General, First British Army. Other new arrivals in the II Corps were the 58th C.M. Mortar Co. (British), AT and "L" Co., 39th Infantry, and the 56th Rcn. Sqdn (British), all of which were immediately dispatched to reinforce the troops holding the KASSERINE PASS positions.

SECTION IV - KASSERINE VALLEY THRUST

1. The WESTERN DORSALE, a range of mountains 20 miles west and parallel to the EASTERN DORSALE, formed a cross compartment through which the enemy would have to pass in an operation against the Allied right flank. KASSERINE PASS, SBIBA PASS, the DERNIA PASS above THELEPTE, consisting of three approaches across DJ. DERNIA, and the EL ABIOD PASS were the four main approaches across the WESTERN DORSALE in the II Corps zone of action. In a clockwise direction from KASSERINE PASS, DJ CHEBI, south of the pass, DJ NOUEZA and BOU DRIES south and west of the pass, DJ KAIRA, about 20 miles west of the pass, DJ EL MEFRED and DJ BIREMI, north and west of the pass, and DJ SEMMI form the sides of a bowl around the corridor cut by the OUED ILTEB. Two main roads, separated by the OUED ILTEB, cut through this bowl and meet in the pass. One road leads northwest to TILLA and the other approximately west to TEBESSA. Since there had been several days' rain prior to the 20th of February, the OUED ILTEB was unfordable and communication between the TILLA road and the TEBESSA road was impracticable at any point other than at the fork of these two roads within the pass. Since the rain had filled the KASSERINE bowl with mud, only full-tracked vehicles were able to operate across country.

Report of Operations, Hq. II Corps, 2 May 1943 (Continued)

The 26th Infantry (-2 Bns.), reinforced, organized defensive positions on the north side of KASSERINE PASS across the road leading to THALA while the 19th Engineer Regiment, reinforced, organized positions on the south side of the pass astride the road leading to TEBESSA. The first Armored Division from its position southwest of TEBESSA covered the EL ABIOD position. American and French troops which had been withdrawn from G.F.S.A organized defensive positions defending the three approaches across DJ DERMLA. The 6th Armored Division (less 26th Armored Brigade) (British) with the 18th Infantry attached, organized positions to defend the SBIRA approach.

During the night 19-20 February, enemy infantry infiltrated to positions on the high ground north and south of KASSERINE PASS. From these positions, which overlooked the defensive positions in the pass, the enemy brought small arms and mortar fire directly on our defensive positions. At daylight on the 20th, enemy infantry supported by artillery attacked the defensive positions across KASSERINE PASS.

The 3rd Bn., 6th Armored Infantry, was ordered from THALA to reinforce the troops in KASSERINE PASS. The 894th TD Bn., likewise, moved up to reinforce Colonel Stark's forces in KASSERINE PASS. The 26th Armored Brigade (British) moved to a position along the THALA - KASSERINE road preparatory to supporting forces holding KASSERINE PASS.

5. Due to small arms and mortar fire from the high ground overlooking the 26th Infantry positions, the 26th Infantry withdrew up the road towards THALA. This withdrawal exposed the north flank of the 19th Engineer Regiment which was disposed astride the road leading to TEBESSA.

6. The enemy appeared to be directing his main effort up the THALA Road. On the TEBESSA Road he appeared to be making a secondary effort using Italians encouraged by supporting German Battalions behind them.

7. CC"B" moved up to DJ HERRA and prepared to counterattack to restore the situation on the south side of the pass. The situation at the pass, however, had deteriorated to such an extent that General Robinett, commanding CC"B", had to immediately set about to establish coordination and control of the troops falling back from the pass on the TEBESSA Road. At daybreak on the 21st, CC"B" held a 4,000 yard front astride the TEBESSA Road about eight miles east of DJEBEL HERRA. The 16th Infantry held positions on BOU DRIES. Due to the outstanding leadership of General Robinett, who assumed command of all troops along the TEBESSA Road, he had the situation well under control by daybreak of the 22nd.

8. While General Robinett was engaged south of the OUED MATEB, Brigadier Dumphy met the main German attack with his 26th Armored Brigade (British) ^{REPORT} of the OUED MATEB. The 26th Armored Brigade (-1 armored regimental group) as stated above, arrived at THALA during the night 18-19 February. Brigadier Dumphy reported to Hq II Corps at 0100 hours on the 19th. After learning the situation, he visited Colonel Stark who was in command of all the forces in the pass. He arrived at Colonel Stark's CP at 1630 hours and learned that the battle had been in progress since daybreak. Although Colonel Stark's CP was under direct small arms fire at this time, Colonel Stark claimed that the situation was well in hand and that all of his troops were in position. He

Report of Operations, Hq II Corps, 2 May 1943 (Continued).

did admit, however, that he was having slight difficulties with communications.

9. Brigadier Dumphie immediately returned to THALA where he reported to British First Army that the situation was very poor at the pass and requested permission to employ his force to restore the situation. 1st Army granted him permission to employ not more than one motorized company, 1 armored squadron, one troop of AT guns, and one troop of artillery. This force moved to a position astride the THALA road along a ridge about two miles northwest of the pass during the night 19-20 February. This force was further reinforced in this position by the 3rd Bn., 6th Armored Infantry. After the 26th Infantry left their positions in the pass, this composite American and British force held this covering position along the ridge astride the THALA Road until dark, 20 February. The armored squadron lost all of its tanks. The 3rd Bn., 6th Armored, suffered very heavy casualties. During the afternoon of the 20th, the remainder of the 26th Armored Brigade moved up to a covering position about 13 miles south west of THALA. General Fredendall paid a personal visit to this position at this time and placed Brigadier Dumphie in command of all troops British and American in this area. During the night 20-21, Brigadier Nicholson arrived to coordinate the action of CC"B" and the 26th Armored Brigade. A meeting of General Robinett, Brigadier Dumphie, and Brigadier Nicholson at THALA was arranged. In order to get back to his troops prior to daylight, General Robinett had to leave before Brigadier Nicholson arrived. Brigadier Dumphie and General Robinett, however, had agreed to a plan of action before General Robinett left THALA. Brigadier Nicholson arrived in THALA at 0245 hours and approved the plans already made by Brigadier Dumphie and General Robinett. According to this plan, General Robinett was to restore the situation south of the OUED KATEB while the 2nd Bn., of the 5th Leicesters, who had arrived early that night, prepared defensive positions astride the road three miles southwest of THALA. The 26th Armored Brigade was to delay the enemy and prevent him from reaching the Leicesters position before 1800 hours, 21st of February. Colonel Stark was to form a straggler point at THALA for all American troops and send them up from this point to reinforce the Leicesters' position.

10. About 0730 hours on the 21st of February, a German force of all arms could be seen from the 26th Brigade's positions forming astride the THALA Road prepared to attack north. The approximate strength of this enemy force was as follows: 30 tanks, about 20 SP guns, 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ -track infantry vehicles, and 2 companies of infantry in trucks who dismounted and advanced by foot. This enemy concentration was shelled by the artillery of the 26th Armored Brigade. The enemy SP guns engaged the forward tanks of the Brigade and knocked out four. At 1500 hours, the enemy attacked straight up the road. The tanks of the 26th Armored Brigade fought a delaying action back to THALA and lost 20 tanks knocking out only a small number of German tanks. The 26th Armored Brigade, however, managed to maintain the required delay. The last tank passed through the Leicesters' position at 1930 hours. Five TD guns of the 805th TD Bn. under Lt. Col. Foreman were the only American troops who fought in this delaying action and in the defense of the Leicesters' positions. Although most of the 805th TD Bn. had been lost in previous fighting, Colonel Foreman by his superior leadership, managed to keep these remaining guns together and they gave an excellent account of themselves throughout the remainder of the battle. The 26th Armored Brigade rallied behind the Leicesters' position. By 1945 hours, machine gun fire inside the Leicesters' positions

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Report of Operations, II Corps, 2 May 1943 (Continued).

indicated that the enemy had broken through these positions. The artillery of 9th Division, however, by marching continuously for four days and nights in the last stages of their march from CASABLANCA, arrived in the THALA area and had gone into supporting positions of the 26th Armored Brigade by daylight. Orders from Brigadier Nicholson were received to hold the positions of the 26th Armored Brigade at all costs.

11. To relieve the situation confronting CC"B" and the 26th Armored Brigade, the 16th Infantry launched a counterattack in the vicinity of BOU DRIES and cleared BOU DRIES of the enemy. This counterattack and the sudden increase in artillery fire caused by the arrival of the 9th Division Artillery, caused the enemy to pull back before his line of retreat through the pass was cut behind him. At 1915 hours on the 22nd, the enemy began a general withdrawal towards the pass. Artillery concentrations harassed his movement through the pass by interdiction fire throughout the night.

12. CC"A" moved from BOU CHEBKA to HAIDRA during the night 22-23. From the 23rd of February to the 25th of February, the enemy continued his withdrawal from the KASSERINE bowl, leaving many mines and booby traps. Patrols were pushed out to maintain contact. By daylight on the 24th however, CC"B" had lost contact with the enemy. Fires were observed in KASSERINE and FERLANA during the night 24-25 February. By the 25th, CC"B" and the 26th Armored Brigade had regained control of the high ground north and south of the pass and by 1458 hours the Reconnaissance Company of the 13th Armored Regiment entered the pass. The advance of the forward elements was greatly hampered by mines.

13. During the period 26 February to 16 March in compliance with First Army Operations Instruction Number 19, dated 24 February 1943, II Corps reorganized and consolidated its positions along the WESTERN DORSALE with the 34th Infantry Division on the north, the 9th Infantry Division on the south, and the 1st Armored Division in a position of readiness on the south flank. The 1st Infantry Division began its concentration in the BOU CHEBKA area.

SECTION V - ADMINISTRATIVE

1. Status of strength - Appendix "A".
2. Casualties and prisoners - Appendix "B".
3. Replacements - Appendix "C".
4. Evacuation - Appendix "D".

For the Commanding General:


F. W. LIES,
Lt. Col., U. S. G. D.,
Actg. Adjutant General.

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APPENDIX "A" TO REPORT ON OPERATIONS, HEADQUARTERS II CORPS, 2 MAY 1943.

Status of Strength of Command by Division and Separate Units on 1 January
or on date they came under II Corps control.

	<u>Off.</u>	<u>WO</u>	<u>ANC</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>Total</u>
Headquarters II Corps	70	13			83
Headquarters Company, II Corps	7	2		420	429
202d M.P. Co.	4			178	182
1st Armd. Div. (-2 Bns.)					
Hq & Hq Co., 1st Armd Div.	65	10		206	281
81st Rcn Bn.	43	1		726	770
Serv. Co., 1st Armd. Div.	7	1		244	252
441st Signal Co.	6	2		167	175
16th Armd. Engr. Bn.	44	2		655	701
47th Armd. Med. Bn.	43	2		281	326
1st Armd. Maint. Bn.	38	12		864	914
1st Armd. Sup. Bn. (-Co B)	11	1		220	232
Hq. 13th Armd. Regt.	8			170	178
Rcn. Co., 13th Armd. Regt.	2			187	189
1st Bn., 13th Armd. Regt.	27	2		393	422
2d Bn., 13th Armd. Regt.	20	1		468	489
Serv. Co., 13th Armd. Regt.	6	1		159	166
Maint. Co., 13th Armd. Regt.	4	1		108	113
2nd Bn., 1st Armd. Regt.	27	2		590	619
3d Bn., 1st Armd. Regt.	27	2		590	619
Rcn. Co., 1st Armd. Regt.	9			193	202
Maint. Co., 1st Armd. Regt.	7			181	188
Serv. Co., 1st Armd. Regt.	5	2		184	191
1st Bn., 6th Armd. Inf.	24			535	559
2d Bn., 6th Armd. Inf.	23	1		627	651
3d Bn., 6th Armd. Inf.	6			78	84
Hq. Co., 6th Armd. Inf.	16	2		125	153
Serv. Co., 6th Armd. Inf.	6	3		142	151
27th Armd. F.A. Bn.	34	1		629	664
91st Armd. F.A. Bn.	40	3		702	745
68th Armd. F.A. Bn.	37	3		696	736
Train. Hq & Hq Co., 1st Armd. Div.	12			135	147
Cannon Co., 39th Infantry	5			117	122
5th F.A. Bn.	22	2		608	632
601st T.D. Bn. (-1 Co.)	30			509	539
701st T.D. Bn. (-Cos. B & Dots)	23			370	393
1st Bn., 213th C.A.	37			683	720
106th C.A. Bn.	35			807	842
443d C.A. Bn.	35			807	842
26th Inf. (-3d Bn.)	109	5		2047	2161
33d F.A. Bn.	25	2		480	507
Co. C, 1st Engr. Bn. (1 Plat)	1			48	49
Co. C, 1st Med. Bn.	3			107	110
1st Rcn. Troop	9			170	179

Appendix "A" to Report on Operations, Hq. II Corps, 2 May 1943 (Continued).

	<u>Off.</u>	<u>WO</u>	<u>AWO</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>Total</u>
2d Bn., 26th Inf. (Reinf.)	37			901	938
Co. B, 701st T.D. Bn.	1			194	195
Btry C, 105th CA	4			127	131
Det. of Patroops, 509th	2			84	86
53d Signal Bn.	41	1		946	988
Det., 203d Sig. Depot Co.	1			50	51
128th Sig. RI Co.	3			83	86
55th SI Sect. (Brit.)	3			22	25
51st Med. Bn.	28	1		472	501
1st Sect., 2d Med. Sup. Dep.	3			30	33
77th Evac. Hosp.	47		51	317	415
48th Surg. Hosp.	48		57	273	378
9th Evac. Hosp.	47		52	307	406
2 Surg. Teams	6			6	12
1 Orthopedic Team	2			2	4
1 Shock Team	1			2	3
2d Bn., 16th Med. Regt.	32			516	548
Det., 85th QM Co.	4			148	152
Co. A, 205th QM Bn.	3			124	127
Co. D, 244th QM Bn.	3			215	218
1st Bn., 28th QM (-B & C)	11			282	293
93d QM Co. (Rhd)	4			108	112
Hq & Hq Det., POG	8			39	47
Hq & Hq Det., 55th Ord Bn.	8			30	38
30th Ord. Co. (HM)	7			213	220
Co. D, 87th Ord. Bn.	7			191	198
78th Ord. Co.	5			168	173
66th Ord. Co.	5			180	185
Hq & Hq Det., 42nd Ord. Bn.	8	1		39	48
109th Ord. Co.	5	1		123	129
3485th Ord. Co.	7			191	198
Det., 450th Engr. Depot Co.	6			188	194
518th Engr. WS Co.	5			137	142
761st Engr. RR Co.	5			256	261
19th Engrs. (C)	54	2		1384	1440
Det., 62d Engr. Topo Co.	1			5	6
105th CA (-Btrys A & D)	23	2		374	399
688th CA Btry	5			73	78
689th CA Btry	5			73	78
690th CA Btry	5			73	78
694th CA Btry	5			73	78
Hq & Hq Det., 188th Ord. Bn.	4			11	15
3488th Ord. Co.	7			183	190
53d Ord. Co.	5			136	141
Det., 162d Sig. Photo Co.				3	3
Det., 163d Sig. Photo Co.	1			3	4
Det., 175th Radio Repair	1			10	11
Det., Co. B, 829th Sig. Bn.	1			8	9
1st Bn., 168th Inf.	30			910	940

Appendix "A" to Report on Operations, Hq. II Corps, 2 May 1943 (Continued).

	<u>Off.</u>	<u>WO</u>	<u>ANC</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>Total</u>
175th F.A. Bn.	35	2		565	602
168th Inf. (-1st Bn.)	107	3		1949	2059
Co. C, 109th Med. Bn.	5			86	91
Det., Co. C, 109th Engr. Bn.	1			53	54
Det., 805th T.D. Bn.	8			350	358
1st Ranger Bn.	31			476	507
2d Bn., 17th F.A.	31	2		596	629
5th Repl Bn.	19			161	180
Replacements Unassigned	19			547	566
2d Plat., Co. B, 95th QM Btry	2			82	84
1st Plat., Co. A, 301st QM Bn.	1			60	61
2d Plat., Co. D, 60th QM Ldry	1			70	71
1 Plat., 47th QM (GRS)	1			27	28
1st T.D. Group Hq.	16			123	139
2d Bn., 591st Engr. B. Regt. (-F)	20	1		423	444
1st Bn., 36th F.A. Regt.	26	1		616	643
Btry A and Det., B, 1st F.A. Obsn Bn.	4	1		79	84
34th Division:					
Hq., 34th Division	48	10		233	291
Hq. Co., 34th Div.	8	2		126	136
MP Plat.	3			73	76
34th Sig. Co.	10	1		247	258
34th Cav. Ren. Troop	8			186	194
133d Inf. Regt. (-2d Bn.)	107	6		1976	2089
135th Inf. Regt.	140	6		2850	2996
34th Div. Artillery	16	2		130	148
125th F.A. Bn.	30	2		524	556
151st F.A. Bn.	33	2		487	522
185th F.A. Bn.	34	3		557	594
109th Engr. Bn.	32	2		680	714
109th Med. Bn.	30	4		437	471
109th QM Bn.	13	1		206	220
Det., 804th T.D. Bn.	2			43	45
226th QM Saly. Coll. Co.	4			161	185
536th APU	1			11	12
692d CA Btry	4			71	75
261st QM Prov. Trk. Bn.	4			128	132
1st Infantry Division					
Hq. 1st Inf. Div.	49	8		96	153
Hq. Co. 1st Inf. Div.	10	2		205	217
M.P. Plat.	4			91	95
1st Sig. Bn.	14	1		278	293
1st Recon Troop	9			186	195
1st Ordn. Co.	9	1		157	167
1st QM Bn.	11	2		213	226
1st Engr. Bn. (-Co C)	26	2		540	568
1st Med. Bn. (-Co C)	31			378	409
109th Inf. Regt.	147	5		3330	3482
109th Div. Artillery	117	6		2579	2702

(14)

Appendix "A" to Report on Operations, Hq. II Corps, 2 May 1943 (Continued).

	<u>Off.</u>	<u>WO</u>	<u>ANC</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>Total</u>
1st Infantry Division (Continued):					
Div. Arty.	14	2		146	162
7th F.A. Bn.	27	2		589	618
32nd F.A. Bn.	33	2		588	623
13th F.A. Brigade:					
Hq & Hq Co.	15	1		92	108
1st F.A. Obsn Bn (-S & F Section)	16			330	346
17th F.A. Regt. (-2d Bn.)	34	1		589	624
36th F.A. Regt. (-1st Bn.)	31	2		709	742
178th F.A. Regt.	67	3		1295	1365
813th T.D. Bn.	37			849	886
894th T.D. Bn.	37			852	889
9th Infantry Division:					
Hq., 9th Infantry Division	42	8		98	148
Hq. Co., 9th Infantry Division	7	3		162	172
M.P. Plat.	3			86	89
9th Signal Co.	13	1		350	364
15th Engr. Bn.	35	1		716	752
9th Mod. Bn.	38			473	511
9th QM Bn.	14			228	242
709th Ord. Co.	10			146	156
47th Inf. Regt.	169	5		3450	3624
39th Inf. Regt.	129	3		3252	3384
60th Inf. Regt.	152	2		3088	3242
Division Artillery	24			210	234
26th F.A. Bn.	28	2		597	627
34th F.A. Bn.	31	2		611	644
60th F.A. Bn.	34	1		568	603
84th F.A. Bn.	34	2		547	583
9th Rcn. Troop	6			211	217
107th CA Bn.	39	2		752	793
62d Engr. Topo Co. (-Det)	4			115	119
427th Engr. Co. (DT)	4			105	109
Co. B, 601st Engr. Cam. Bn.	5			77	82
1 Plat., Co. B, 205th QM	1			51	52
Section Shoe Repair, 218th QM Co.	1			33	34
751st Tank Bn.	36	2		730	768
2619th QM Prov. Trk. Bn.	20			284	304
14th Ord. Co.	5	1		140	146
Btry B, 431st CA Bn.	6			147	153
Det., 6th Chem. Co.				25	25
175th Engr. Regt. (-Det)	32	3		617	652
Cos. B & O, 263d QM Bn.	6			448	554
Co. A, 70th Tank Bn.	6			105	111
899th T.D. Bn.	38			851	889
776th T.D. Bn.	38			895	933
<hr/>					
15 March, Corps Total	4410	228	157	83492	88287

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APPENDIX "B" TO REPORT ON OPERATIONS, HEADQUARTERS II CORPS, 2 MAY 1943.

1. Prisoners captured by II Corps units during period 1 January to 17 March, 1943.

<u>German</u>		<u>Italian</u>	
<u>Off.</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>Off.</u>	<u>EM</u>
2	71	5	548

2. Casualties of II Corps during period 1 January to 17 March, 1943:

<u>Officers</u>				<u>Enlisted Men</u>			
<u>K</u>	<u>V</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>K</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>C</u>
22	72	199	3	170	552	2228	29

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APPENDIX "C" TO REPORT ON OPERATIONS, HEADQUARTERS II CORPS, 2 MAY 1943.

Replacements by branch received by II Corps units during the period 1 January - 15 March, 1943:

	<u>OFF.</u>	<u>EM</u>
Infantry.....	187	4074
Field Artillery	34	789
Medical	15	193
Dental	2	
T.D.	1	115
Engineer	5	231
Q.M.		199
C.A.	6	52
Ordnance		107
Armored Force	28	858
Cavalry	12	69
Military Police		31
B I		5
Signal		23
	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL	290	6746

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APPENDIX "D" TO REPORT ON OPERATIONS, HEADQUARTERS II COMS.

Medical Activities During Period 1 January to 17 March, Inclusive.

1. During the period 1 January to 21 January, corps medical units were concentrated in the Constantine area. These units were the 9th Evacuation Hospital, 77th Evacuation Hospital, 48th Surgical Hospital, 51st Medical Battalion, 2nd Battalion, 16th Medical Regiment, and the 1st Advance Section, 2nd Medical Supply Depot. During this period, only British hospital facilities were available and all hospitalization was in British hospitals.

2. Upon arrival in the Tebessa area, the 9th Evacuation Hospital was established 12 miles south of Tebessa. The 48th Surgical Hospital established one hospitalization section at Feriana, the other section moving to vicinity of Thala. The 77th Evacuation Hospital was held in reserve until 14 February, when it established lightly 12 miles south of Tebessa. The 1st Advance Section, 2nd Medical Supply Depot, was established 10 miles south of Tebessa.

3. During the period 16 February to 20 February, all medical installations were withdrawn to vicinity of Aine Beida. During this withdrawal it was necessary to move approximately 700 patients with the hospitals because of lack of evacuation facilities to the rear.

4. Supply. The initial medical supplies were adequate and there was no difficulty in maintaining an adequate supply of class one supplies, that is, those supplies contained in medical maintenance units. It became necessary early in the operation to alter the maintenance unit in order that a more nearly balanced stock would be available in the depot. The greatest difficulty in supply was encountered in replacing items of organizational equipment for hospitals and field units. It was necessary to augment the T/BA equipment of hospitals materially, in order that they might function efficiently at near full capacity.

5. Hospitalization. The two 750-bed evacuation hospitals and the 400-bed surgical hospital were adequate for the troops initially involved. The two 750-bed evacuation hospitals were placed on a 15-day policy in order that as many patients as possible might be returned to duty in the forward area. This policy was abandoned towards the end of the period when troops in the area were increased. The 48th Surgical hospital received the majority of casualties and rendered the initial operating treatment. This unit was on no fixed policy. Clearing platoons of Corps Medical Battalions were utilized extensively in the forward areas with surgical teams attached. These units performed excellently and filled the gap between division units and the more fixed hospitals in the rear.

6. Evacuation. Evacuation from forward units was accomplished by the 51st Medical Battalion and the 2nd Battalion, 16th Medical Regiment. This latter unit was placed entirely in support of the 1st U.S. Armored Division, while the 51st Medical Battalion covered evacuation from clearing platoons to hospitals. Evacuation to the Communication Zone was entirely by air until 16 February, when air evacuation completely failed due to unfavorable flying conditions. The British First Army then furnished a section of the 6th Motor Ambulance Corps for evacuation by road to the 61st Station Hospital at El Guerah. This unit remained with the Corps during the remainder of this period, and covered all rearward evacuation by road.

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Panzer Armee Afrika (Rommel), War Diary (Ex-
tracts), 17-22 February 1943

T.C.

From the 21st Pz. Division to

Pz. A.O.K.

2359 h. 17 February 1943

by messenger

The fight for Sbeitla is harder than expected. Defense well organized; about 50 enemy tanks. Seven-hour tank fight. Sbeitla firmly in our hand. Bulk of tanks now at 7279 (Sbeitla) Result: number of prisoners increased to 54 officers, 1660 men; 12 tanks, several self-propelled mounts, 6 personnel transportation wagons, 2 guns destroyed. Intention: defense of Sbeitla, mopping up in 7237/7263 (road Si bou Zid to 30 km southwest). Point of main effort of reconnaissance 5372 (Sbiba, 35 km north of Sbeitla) and 7716 (Kasserine). Tank situation: 65 ready for action.

Source:

Anlagenband 9 zum Schlachtbericht der Pz.Armee Afrika Ia.
12.2.43 - 23.2.43
34 375/11

German-Italian Pz.Army C.P.
18 February 1943

To Comando Supremo

to Pz.A.O.K.5 for information

On the basis of the enemy situation as of today, and presupposing that the supply situation of the Fifth Pz.Army is adequate, I suggest an immediate enveloping thrust of strong forces from the southwest on Tebessa and the area north of it. I also recommend, if necessary for the purpose, the attachment and rapid move forward of the 10th and 21st Pz.Divs. to the Thelepte-Feriana area.

Rommel

Sources:

Anlagenband 9 zum Schlachtbericht der Pz.Armee Afr. Ia
12.2.43 - 23.2.43
34 375/11

CONFERENCE on 19 February 1943 - at 0945 hrs.

Field Marshal	Kesselring
General	v. Arnim
Major General	Ziegler
Brigadier General	Gause
Lt. General	Gandin
Colonel	v. Quast
Aide	O.B.S.

The general describes briefly the tactical and supply situation and states his view on the order from Commando Supremo concerning the Gruppe Rommel attack. The commander-in-chief ^{Arnim} emphasizes that the main objective must be Bone. To this end, the first attack objective is Le Kef (see written plan). If the attack ordered is to succeed it should be executed promptly; as a matter of fact, it should have been launched 2 days ago already. The objective ordered by Commando Supremo - the penetration between Le Kef and Tebessa - promises little success; the attack will also get farther away from the supply base. The attack, accompanied by a covering action, should move with all force toward the north, a direction not expected by the enemy, and in a manner that would steadily shorten the routes of supply. Hence, commitment of the 21st Pz. Div. from Sbeitla toward Le Kef, of the 10th Pz. Div. from Pichon toward Le Kef. The main effort should not be laid on Tebessa, not even in the direction of Tebessa.

Although Field Marshal Kesselring does not side in with the plans proposed with all peremptoriness, he concedes that this operation has very many advantages and a prospect of success.

The question of adjustment in the chain of command, the frontier, or the boundary between Gruppe Rommel and 5th Pz. Armee is not clearly solved

CONFERENCE on 19 Feb. 1943 - at 0945 hrs. (cont.)

by Field Marshal Kesselring. The project of Field Marshal Kesselring that Regt. Buhse should be commanded by Rommel did not ~~KESSELRING~~ ^{get the} consent from the other officers.

The amount of supply and motor vehicles, considered absolutely necessary if the operation is to be executed at all and requested by the commander-in-chief, appear high to the Field Marshal; however, an increase in the bringing up of supply and motor vehicles is promised.

Source: KRIEGSTAGEBUCH IV

Pz. A.O.K. 5, Ia
from 1,2 - 28, 2, 43

29 777/7

TC

German-Italian Panzer Army C.P.
19 February 1943

Telephone Message to

A.O.K. 5 Advanced C.P.
Lt. Col. Pompton

Order for Operation "Sturraflut"

1. The forces under the command of Field Marshal Rommel or ^{the over} newly placed under his orders (10th Pz. Div., 21st Pz. Div., Kampfgruppe D.A.K.), exploiting ~~the~~ former success, will immediately push forward over the general line 7279 - 5127 northward in the deep flank and rear of the British forces standing in front of the north Tunisian front.
2. To that effect the following is ordered:
 - a. The 21st Pz. Div. will leave the area of 7279 at 0800 h. 19 Feb. proceed along the high road leading northward and will reach the road junction about 75 km north-northwest of 7279.
 - b. The 10th Pz. Div., after receiving pertinent orders, will immediately leave the Fichou area and reach by the shortest route the Sbeitla area at the disposal of Field Marshal Rommel. It will remain there in readiness and upon order of Field Marshal Rommel and according to the development of the situation will be committed either behind the 21st Pz. Div. in the direct^{ion} of La Kef or over Kasserine in a general northwesterly direction.
3. Field Marshal Rommel's C.P. will be transferred at noon 19 Feb. to Feriana south. Radio communication with the 10th Pz. Div. will be assured.

Rommel

Source:
Anlagenband 9 zum Schlachtbericht der Pz. Armee Afr. Ia
12.2.43 - 23.2.43
34 375/11

Operations Section

German Italian Panzer Army C.P.
19 February '43 0445 h.

to

Div. Dentauro

New situation. The 7th Bers.Rgt. will start to march to Feriana immediately. Upon arrival there, ^{it} will pass under the control of D.A.K. The regimental commander will proceed in advance to the C.P. of the D.A.K. at Feriana south. There he will receive further orders.

Operations Section

German Italian Panzer Army C.P.
19 February '43 0451 h.

to

Div. Centauro

All the elements of Div. Centauro heretofore committed southeast of south of Gafsa will move as rapidly as possible to the Gafsa area. There they will organize for defense.

Source:

Anlagenband 9 zum Schlachtbericht der Pz.Armee Afr. Ia
12.2.43 - 25.2.43
34 375/11

German Italian Panzer Army C.P.
19 February 1943

Order for German African Corps (by telephone to Lt.Col.Stolbeck)

1. New situation. The forces under Rommel's command or ~~xxxx~~ who will be shortly under Rommel's command (10th Pz.Div., 21st Pz.Div., Kampfgruppe D.A.K.), exploiting the advantage gained up to now, will attack as rapidly as possible over the general line 7279 - 5127 northward in the deep ~~xxxx~~ flank and rear of the British forces standing opposite the northern Tunisian front.
2. To that effect the ~~plan~~ following is ordered:
 - a. At 0800 h. 19 Feb. the 21st Pz.Div. will move out of the area 7279, follow the high road to the north and gain the junction about 75 km north-northwest of 7279.
 - b. The 10th Pz.Div. starting immediately from the Fichen area, at first at the disposal of Rommel, will reach area 7279. Further commitment from there is reserved.
 - c. Kampfgruppe D.A.K. (less the Bersaglieri Bn and the artillery battalion of the Div. Centauro) will start immediately and reach area 7716, will move into position of readiness shortly and will then gain without delay the mountain pass northwest of 7716. Further commitment from there according to the development of the situation by special order of the Army.
3. The Bersaglieri battalion and the Artillery Bn. of Div. Centauro will at first remain in the area 7741 for security and reconnaissance to the north and the northwest. Relief during 19 Feb. through the 7th Bers.Rgt. arriving from Gafsa is provided for. Upon arrival in Feriana south the 7th Bers.Rgt. will be placed under the control of D.A.K. After relief through the 7th Bers. D.A.K. will issue the necessary orders for the movement of Rgt./the Bers.Bn. and Arty.Bn. of Div. Centauro ~~will~~.

After removing the former point of main effort of reconnaissance the Recon.Bn.33 is placed completely at the disposal of D.A.K. for the new mission.

4. Howitzer Btry, 2d Bn., A.A.F 1 and 1st Co., Rocket projector Egt. 71 will move during 19 Feb. to D.A.K. at 7741 south and will be placed under its orders at arrival.

Kasta A.O.K. will be detached immediately from D.A.K. and is again placed directly under the control of the Army.

5. ~~xxxx~~ At On 19 Feb. noon, Rommel's C.P. at 7741 south.

Rommel

Source:

Anlagenband 9 zum Schlachtbericht der Pz.Armees Afr.Ia
12.2.43 - 23.2.43
34 375/11

Intelligence

T.C.
German-Italian Pz. Army C.P.
20 February '43

Radio Message to

O.K.H. Army G.S., Section Fremde Heere West III*

German General in Rome

Intelligence Evening Report

North Front:

The enemy opposed violent resistance to our attacks at Sbiba and at the pass northwest Kasserine.

At Shiba, the enemy who received constant reinforcements especially in artillery, was able to put a stop to the attack of the 21st Pz.Div. from his improved, dominant positions; the division had gained little ground and was forced to pass to the defensive.

Opposite Kampfgruppe D.A.K. the enemy succeeded at first, with the support of new forces brought from the north, in holding his very advantageous pass positions northwest of Kasserine. But after the commitment of elements of the 10th Pz.Div. he was thrown back in heavy fighting and had to give up the pass. He lost several hundred prisoners, many weapons and matériel.

Northwest of Thelepte the enemy was able to repulse with strong artillery an attack launched by weak forces of the Div. Centauro.

Very weak air activity because of poor visibility. Out of 4 enemy planes attacking from the northwest of Kasserine 3 were shot down.

2. Impression made by the enemy:

Committing all his available forces

/the enemy is endeavoring to hold his new switch position in the hills

~~west~~ northwest of Sbeitla---Kasserine---Thelepte. He keeps on bringing reinforcements at Sbiba and northwest of Kasserine. Enemy counterattacks are expected on 21 Feb. at Sbiba, northwest of Kasserine and northwest of Thelepte.

*Branch of the Intelligence Service dealing with Western Allies.

3. According to statements of the British Intelligence Service, elements of the 1st British Garde-Brigade may be assumed to be at Sbiba. Since British tanks Mark VI were also ascertained there the commitment of elements of the British 6th Panzer Div. in this area can be reckoned with.

Prisoners of the 9th Inf., 9th American Inf.Div. were ^{located} ~~located~~ Northwest of Kasserine.

According to reliable information the rest of the Combat Command of the 1st American Panzer Div. has been ascertained anew in the area southeast of Tebessa.

Source:

Anlagenband 9 zum Schlachtbericht der Pz.Armees Afr. Ia
12.2.43 - 23.2.43
34 375/11

70

Operations Section
to
21st Pz.Div.

German Italian Pz.Army C.P.
21 Feb. '43 2210 h.

Defense in the present main line of resistance.

In case the enemy withdraws over Sbiba, pursue with elements; bulk/for new ^{ready} assignment.

Kasta O.B. will attack from Thala on Rhodia in the rear of the enemy at Sbiba.

To the 10th Pz.Div.

Defense in the area Thala-Kalaa Djerda. Local assault on Jadjerouine around Le Kof.

To ~~the~~ D.A.K.

Continued thrust to capture Pass el Hamra. Wide south envelopment during the night of 21/22 if necessary.

To 590th Arty.Bn.

Attack over 7790 on 7782 and 7762. Hold the passes.

To Div. Centauro

Withdraw from action south of the passes. During the night the old area around Feriana---Telepte will be gained and defended, road fork Oglet bu Haya will be mined. Reserve will be held in readiness for mobile commitment.

To Commanding General, Air Force Corps Tunis

Today's reconnaissance results received after 1600 h. only. Continued reconnaissance in the entire Tunician area and timely reports are of decisive importance for further decisions.

Rommel.

34375/11/25
Payer Army Africa

Radio Message from
Intelligence Section
to

German-Italian Panzer Army C.P.
21 Feb. 1943

O.K.H. Army Gen.Staff, Fremde Heere West III
German General in Rome
O.B.Süd

Evening Report, Intelligence

1. North fronts

At Sbiba the enemy continued to get reinforcements. A total of 11 batteries was identified. A tank thrust from the west in the afternoon was repulsed and 6 enemy tanks were destroyed.

In the forenoon northwest of Kasserine pass an attack of enemy armored forces was repulsed in the area of 5666. The enemy opposed violent resistance to our noon attack in a northern and northwestern direction. He brought forward the 26th Pz. Brigade of the British 6th Pz. Div. against our 10th Pz. Div. in line toward the north. In hard fighting this brigade was thrown back in the direction of Thala and lost almost 40 tanks. The enemy was successful in bringing to a stop the attack of Kampfgruppe D.A.K. against the pass 3 1/4 east of Tebessa; he was in strong positions on the surrounding hills and his artillery fire checked the attack 8 km east of El Hamra. He contested his positions successfully against an assault of weak forces of Div. Centauro on heights 20 km northwest of Thelepte.

2. Enemy intentions:

~~When during the forenoon~~ ~~the enemy~~ ~~attempted~~ ~~to~~ ~~hold~~ ~~the~~ ~~line~~ ~~of~~ ~~heights~~ ~~El~~ ~~Hamra~~ ~~(32~~ ~~km~~ ~~west~~ ~~of~~ ~~Tebessa)~~ ~~--~~ ~~Dj.~~ ~~Nogueza~~ ~~(7799)~~. For the purpose he brought forward additional American forces from the area of Tebessa and southeast thereof and also the 26 British Pz. Brigade.

3. According to reliable information Combat Command B of the 1st American

Pz.Div. was transferred from the area southeast of Tebessa to the region of
Haidra (34 km northeast of Tebessa).

4. Captured papers indicated that enemy forces at Kasserine pass are as follows:

- 1 bn. of the 26th Inf. (1st Amer. Inf. Div.)
- 1 bn. of the 168th Inf. (34th " " ")
- 1 bn. of The Rangers
- 1 French bn. of the Div. Constantine
- 2 cos., 13th Pz. Rgt. (1st Amer. Pz. Div.)
- 1st Co., Derbyshire Yeomanry (6th British Pz. Div.)
- 33d Arty. Bn. (1st Amer. Inf. Div.)
- 68th Pz. Arty. Bn. (1st Amer. Inf. Div.)
- 175th Arty. Bn.
- 16th Pz. Eng. Bn. (1st Amer. Inf. Pz. Div.)
- 1 bn. 228th Royal Engineers
- 1 co. 19th Amer. Eng. Rgt.
- 1 co. 805th Antitank Bn.
- 6 Flak batteries

Sources:

Anlagenband 9 zum Schlachtbericht der Panzer Armee Afr. Ia
12.2.43 - 23.2.43
34 375/11

Operations Section

TC
German Italian Panzer Army G.P.
22 February '43 0030 h.

to

German General in Rome
O.B.S. Führungsabtlg u. Arbeitsstab
O.K.W./W.F.St.
O.K.H. Army G.S.

Day report 22 February '43

I. General

A continuation of the attack appears to be pointless on account of the continuous reinforcements of enemy forces during 22 Feb., the adverse weather which renders the terrain impassable outside of the hard surface roads, and the increasing difficulties of committing mobile troops in the unfavorable mountain region; also because of the poor combat value of the troops.

Therefore the Army, after causing the enemy heavy losses and ~~breaking~~ ^{breaking} up his concentration, in agreement with O.B.Süd ordered in the afternoon a cessation of the attack and a withdrawal of the attacking troops.

Additional ground for the decision was the fact that the situation at the Mareth front makes a rapid shift of the mobile troops of both armies necessary to give the enemy, who is not yet ready for the attack, a swift blow in his assembled forces and thereby force him to delay it. During the night of 22/23 Feb. the Army will ~~withdraw~~ ^{withdraw} the 10th Pz.Div. and Kampfgruppe D.A.K., mining the roads and the trails, first to the pass position north of Kasserine, and then in additional bounds will have all units including the 21st Pz.Div. and Div. Centauro reach the point of departure of the operation.

In view of the weak forces and the necessity of concentrating all mobile elements for an operation out of the Mareth position, this position is held to be the most favorable.

II. Particulars

The 21st Pz.Div. held its position south of Sbiba. Enemy apparently further reinforced; however no enemy attack.

10th Pz.Div.

The armored battalion, which in the evening hours of 21 Feb. had broken through at Thala, was caught in the back by strong enemy forces and was forced to evacuate the village. Strong enemy forces (elements of the 6th British Pz.Div. and of the 46th British Inf.Div.) were occupying the dominant ridges on both sides of Thala. The prepared attack on the Thala hills was not carried out on account of the continuous reinforcements in enemy infantry ~~and artillery~~ and artillery from a western and northern direction. Several enemy attempts at attacks were repulsed with losses for him. At night fall the ^{division} disengaged itself from the enemy and reached Kasserine Pass after mining the road.

Kampfgruppe D.A.K. in the morning hours had launched an attack on the pass position of Dj. el Hamra. As a result of strong artillery effect of the enemy and the flanking on 3 sides from dominant mountain positions the attack did not succeed. The Kampfgruppe had to pass to the defensive and repulsed several violent enemy counterattacks which were still in progress at night fall. The withdrawal and reaching the positions in the Kasserine Pass were carried out during the night.

The attack of the Artillery Bn. 530 to open the passes north of Thelepte ~~area~~ launched from a northern direction could not ~~be~~ go forward on account of strong enemy action and marshy roads, and had to be broken off.

Div. Centauro without important engagement in defensive positions in the Thelepte-Periana area.

Air situation During the entire day constant Jabo and low-level attacks in the area Dj. el Hamra and south of Thala. Five enemy planes were downed by anti-aircraft fire. Despite adverse weather conditions our Luftwaffe supported the operations effectively.

Results of 19-22 Feb. engagements according to reports as yet incomplete:

T.C

845 prisoners (mostly British)
66 tanks
74 motor gun carriages and scout cars
48 antitank guns
10 guns

numerous motor trucks, heavy and light infantry weapons captured or destroyed.

8 planes downed by anti aircraft fire.

Source:

Anlagenband 9 zum Schlachtbericht der Panzer Armee Afr. Ia
12.2.43 - 23.2.43
34 375/11

Radio Message from
Intelligence Section

German-Italian Panzer Army C.P.
22 February 1943

to
O.K.H. Army G.S., Section Fremde Heere West III
German General in Rome
O.B. Süd

Evening Report, Intelligence Service

1. North front

There is no change in the picture presented by the enemy at Sbiba.

Toward noon strong enemy forces with tanks were assembled in readiness for a counterattack on our positions 5 km southeast of Thala, but the attack was not launched.

The enemy initiated several strong thrusts with tank support against our Kampfgruppe southeast of Dj. el Hamra but was repulsed for the most part. He really succeeded only pushing back the left flank of this Kampfgruppe toward the east. The enemy attacks in this area were supported by strong artillery which had at its disposal outstanding observation positions on the surrounding hills.

- No important action northwest of Thalepte.

Our air reconnaissance, spotty because of bad weather, disclosed that new enemy forces were brought forward on the Le Kef--Kalaâ Djerda road to Thala, and from Tebessa to the east-northeast.

2. Picture presented by the enemy:

The enemy continued to bring forward reinforcements to stop our advance over the Kasserine pass to the north and northwest or to launch a counter-attack to recapture Kasserine pass.

Reliable information, prisoners statements, captured papers and ground reconnaissance disclose the following picture of the enemy distribution of forces in before our attack front at the present time:

a. At Sbiba elements of the 1st British Guard Brigade, and elements of

the 6th British Pz.Div., at least 4 battalion strong, 1 armored battalion and 11 batteries.

- b. At Thala 26th Pz.Brigade of the 6 British Pz.Div., 139th Inf.Brigade of the 46th British Inf.Div., as well as elements of the 1st and 9th American Inf.Divs.
Djebel
- c. In the ~~area~~ el Hamra sector Combat Command B of the 1st American Pz.Div. AS WELL AS elements of the 1st and 9th American Inf.Divs.
- d. In the area southeast of Tobessa Combat Command A of the 1st Amer. Armored Div.

According to reliable information on 21 Feb. all units of the First British Army were given the order that there will be no falling back out of the present position and that no man may leave his post without an express order.

3. During the fighting of 19/22 Feb. on the north front of the Germ.-Ital. Pz.Army, reports as yet incomplete announced the following success:

Prisoners: 845

Captured or destroyed: 66 tanks
74 gun motor carriages and armored personnel carriers
48 antitank guns
10 guns

and numerous motor trucks, heavy and light infantry weapons. In addition 8 planes were shot down.

Source: Anlagenband 9 zum Schlachtbericht der Panzer Armee Afr. Ia.
12.2.43 - 23.2.43
34 375/11