

re-equipment of formations and units for operations, and secondly the release of large quantities of stores to form landing reserves and beach maintenance packs. It was only the provision of certain items such as mine detectors and light base plates for the mortars of assault flights that occasioned difficulty. The emergency calls for stores after the operation had started were, it is believed, largely due to the inability of the army to distribute the stores locked up in the landing reserve and maintenance packs rather than to the insufficiency of the reserves.

95. Very large quantities of ammunition were provided for the maintenance of the Eastern Task Force. Although some difficulty was experienced in providing smoke generators, the demands were eventually met.

96. The main factor which delayed the preparation of the formations and units was the provision of vehicles. In addition to the 5th Division, which was completed on arrival from Persia and Iraq Command in April, the 231st Brigade from Malta was fully equipped, and the 50th Division was given 1,500 vehicles and 400 motor cycles. No. II Mobile Naval Beach Defence Organisation was also completely equipped, as its own transport from the United Kingdom arrived too late. These, and numerous administrative units, were prepared in Egypt, whilst in Tunisia the 51st Division was equipped partly by stripping other formations, but largely by Allied Force Headquarters.

97. The issue of vehicles was in the main completed by early June, together with the provision of a small immediate reserve of four hundred vehicles in Tripoli. A request from Allied Force Headquarters for assistance was met by the despatch of 2,970 vehicles by road from Egypt in the six weeks after 21st July.

98. The requisite number of Royal Army Service Corps units was made up from all sources in the Middle East, including a certain number of recently arrived units from Persia and Iraq Command. The Royal Army Service Corps Mobilisation Centre at Tahag was required to re-equip approximately 80 per cent. of the units, which involved a total of about 4,500 vehicles. Since many of these vehicles had been operating in the desert for some considerable periods, the repair programme was extensive. It was found quite impossible for the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers to cope with the Royal Army Service Corps vehicles in addition to those of all other arms. Accordingly a grouped workshop, comprising the Royal Army Service Corps workshops platoons belonging to the units being re-equipped, was formed at the Royal Army Service Corps Mobilisation Centre. Six hundred and fifty new vehicles were issued to the Royal Army Service Corps, and with these and the repair facilities of the grouped workshop, all units were re-equipped completely.

99. In addition to being provided with transport by Middle East Command, Eighth Army was issued with about a hundred and sixty armoured and scout cars. After re-equipping, formations moved with the following vehicles and guns, most of which were issued from the Delta: 2,136 "A" vehicles, 29,800 "B" vehicles and 1,604 pieces of artillery.

100. Besides equipping the artillery in its component of Eastern Task Force, Middle East

Command despatched twenty-two 105 mm. self-propelled equipments to the 11th Honourable Artillery Company Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery, at the request of Allied Force Headquarters. These were provided at the expense of units in my command which were not taking part in the attack on Sicily.

101. No difficulty was experienced in equipping the light anti-aircraft units, but heavy anti-aircraft presented a different problem. All the equipment held by Eighth Army units had travelled some 2,000 miles and was in various stages of disrepair. The stocks in the ordnance depots were barely sufficient to cover normal casualties. The majority of guns and Radar equipment in transit to Middle East would not arrive in time, and the defence required for the concentration areas in Egypt and the Levant, and for the Suez Canal, made it impossible to withdraw much equipment from the units remaining in the Middle East. The only remaining source of supply was Persia and Iraq. All available serviceable guns and Radar equipment were despatched by land and sea from there, arriving in time to complete the re-equipment of all heavy anti-aircraft regiments with new or practically new guns. However, owing to the scarcity of Radar equipment, all units had to sail with only one gunlayer, Mark II, per battery.

102. No difficulty was experienced in the equipping of units with signal stores except those specially designed for combined operations. In the Tripoli area, units and formations were supplied from three signal parks and an advanced ordnance depot, and in the Delta direct from base ordnance depots. Owing to the fact that the ship conveying certain of the special combined operations' signal stores from the United Kingdom broke down, many of them did not arrive until the expedition was due to sail. This involved a considerable amount of improvisation. As a consequence none of the special stores were issued until 24th May, one week before the last day on which units could accept delivery, which severely handicapped the training of operators in these new types of equipment. A certain amount of difficulty was also caused by the arrival of battle batteries in unserviceable condition. Fortunately a second consignment arrived, which eased the situation.

103. The re-equipping of the force for Sicily involved a heavy programme of production, as well as of planning, manpower allocation, and distribution of equipment and stores. In particular, many stores required for the landing and assault, and a very large number of petrol and water containers, were manufactured locally, whilst, to equip the assault and follow-up forces to the maximum possible extent with returnable containers, all base and line of communication troops were provided with bulk and non-returnable containers, and as many captured containers as possible were back-loaded from Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. As a result of these efforts the assault and first follow-up convoys were completely equipped with small returnable containers, although subsequent convoys were only equipped with fifty per cent. returnable and fifty per cent. non-returnable containers.

104. During the preparatory period Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Base workshops were fully employed in turning out