

All the same I view the destruction of 150th Brigade and the consolidation by the enemy of a broad and deep wedge in the middle of your position with some misgiving. I am sure, however, there are factors known to you which I do not know.

3. I feel myself

(a) that if the enemy is allowed to consolidate himself in his present positions in the area Bir Hacheim—Sidra—Harmat—Mteifel, our Gazala position including Bir Hacheim will become untenable eventually, even if he does not renew his offensive.

(b) that, situated as he is, he is rapidly becoming able to regain the initiative which you have wrested from him in the last week's fighting. This cannot be allowed to happen.

4. I agree with you entirely that you cannot let your armour be defeated in detail and that you cannot risk it against his now strongly defended front north and south of El Harmat. Therefore he must be shifted by other means and quickly before he can begin to act against the exposed southern flank of 50th Division or against Bir Hacheim, or in an attempt to cut your supply line east of El Adem, all of which seem possible courses for him to adopt.

5. I feel that the quickest and easiest way to shift him is by an offensive directed towards Temrad, so as to threaten his bases, coupled with threats from Segnali and the south against his lines of supply.

His tanks cannot be in two places at once, and you still have some infantry tanks with which to support your infantry and protect your artillery of which you should have a good deal now. It is, I think, highly important that you should keep at least one infantry division concentrated and complete in mobile reserve, so that you have at your disposal a really strong weapon with which to strike. I am a little perturbed by the apparent dispersion of 5th Indian Division, but I daresay it is more apparent than real.

6. I repeat that in my opinion you must strike hard and at once if we are to avoid a stalemate, that is unless the enemy is foolish enough to fling himself against your armour. I wish he would but I don't think you can count on this at present.

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Letter from the Commander, Eighth Army, to the Commander-in-Chief, M.E.F.

Main H.Q., Eighth Army,

3rd June, 1942.

1. Your special message reached me in the middle of last night. Thank you so much for it. I agree almost entirely with all its contents, but there are one or two points I would like to make.

The two alternatives appear to me to be:—

(a) to resume the offensive as early as possible directed on the line Tmimi—Afrag;

(b) to deal first with the *Cauldron*.

Of these two alternatives it had been my intention to resume the offensive and leave the armour to mask the *Cauldron*, and I left this H.Q. at 5 a.m. this morning for a conference with the Corps Commanders to get this fixed up. For various reasons, with which I am dealing, replacements in armour are not coming through as quickly as they should. This is due

to the crews not being collected together quickly enough; that is most serious. It will be righted to-day; but the net result is that I now feel that our armour may not be able to contain the enemy while the offensive is in progress, and the enemy's armour may therefore be a real danger to me, being able to continue supplies forward and against the rear of the Gazala—Alem Hamza position.

2. I was, as you are, most keen to carry out the offensive with the right shoulder forward, but the enemy in his present position makes it extremely difficult to form up a division behind our present frontage between Gazala and Alem Hamza without fear of its preparations being interrupted. For this reason I had to discard that plan.

3. My next idea was to make a very wide turning movement with the 5 Indian Division south of Hacheim directed on Afrag; but, after the information I have had from the Corps Commanders to-day respecting the strength of our armour, I cannot risk this.

4. It is absolutely essential that we should wrest from the enemy the initiative which he is now starting to exercise, and this must be done at the soonest possible moment. In the circumstances I have decided that I must crush him in the *Cauldron*; and the plan for doing this will be a pincer movement, one arm coming from the north with 69 Infantry Brigade supported by "I" tanks, the other from the east to be carried out by 5 Indian Division supported by 4 R.T.R. and 22 Armoured Brigade for exploitation. This latter will, of course, be the main thrust, the one from the north I would not bring further south than Sidra (3641). Much of the preparatory reconnaissance and work for the main thrust has already been covered by the operations of 10 Infantry Brigade, and I am reassured in my belief of the feasibility of this operation being carried out by night by the fact that Messervy is of opinion that it is quite feasible. I hope by this means to drive a wedge through the enemy's anti-tank defences under cover of darkness and seize the ground in the vicinity of Got el Scerab, and this will enable me to exploit with armour through this corridor into the rear of the enemy and close the gaps behind him. Once it is completed we will return to the offensive generally on the lines of the right shoulder forward.

5. I am going at once into the question of a raiding force to threaten the Martuba and Derna landing grounds, and I am sorry that I had not understood your intention in regard to this matter.

6. The operation I have decided to undertake is the one which can be put into action quickest and will therefore wrest the initiative from the enemy in the shortest possible time.

7. De Guingand takes this letter and can give you more details of my plan.

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*G.H.Q., M.E.F. Operation Instruction No. 128.
Defence of Cyprus.*

1st July, 1942.

Major-General F. I. S. Taker.

1. *Introduction*.—This Operation Instruction supersedes G.H.Q., M.E.F. Operation Instruction No. 114, dated 18th March, 1942, and