

14. It is essential to hide from the enemy the date and direction of our intended offensive.

Deduction.—Deception must be most thorough and continuous, and feints and demonstrations to deceive the enemy as to the objective of any possible offensive by us must be carefully planned and carried out beforehand.

15. *Plan.*—The plan in outline is first to carry out three preliminary deceptive operations; one against Tmimi (already done), one towards Tengeder, and a third against the area Temrad—Tmimi, and then:—

Phase A.—To move one infantry division with heavy tanks against the enemy positions in the area Temrad—Tmimi. This advance must be deliberate and ground secured must be consolidated, the object being to pin the enemy to his ground and distract his attention from Phase B. This feint attack should if possible be preceded by a reconnaissance in force.

Phase B.—Concurrent with the latter part of Phase A, to move one infantry division with heavy tanks in support and establish two or three defensive areas, each to be held by a brigade group. The object being to establish strongpoints and pivots of manoeuvre for our armoured forces, should the enemy armour strike south against them.

Note 1.—If the enemy armour can be induced to attack us on ground favourable to us during Phase B this will be all to the good. In fact, the closer to our main Gazala position he attacks us the better, provided we are ready to receive him. The location chosen for the striking force near Ben Gania is of no special value as a battleground. The only reason for going there is to threaten Bengasi, and so make the enemy move against us. If he moves before we get there, we may achieve our object, which is to destroy his armour, with a smaller expenditure of effort.

During Phases A and B, therefore, our armoured divisions will be placed so as to be able to engage the enemy armour on ground and in conditions favourable to themselves, should it move against our infantry engaged in these operations.

Note 2.—The infantry engaged in Phase A, once Phase B is completed, will either consolidate ground gained and keep up pressure on the enemy to their front, or withdraw to the Gazala position and harass the enemy with mobile columns, as may seem best. It must not become involved to an extent which will entail the intervention of our armoured forces to extricate it.

Note 3.—During this phase forward landing grounds should be established.

Phase C.—On completion of Phase B, to move a third infantry division with some heavy tanks to secure an advanced base near Ben Gania from which Bengasi can be threatened.

Note 4.—During Phase C, the armoured divisions will be centrally placed so as to be able to engage the enemy armour under favourable conditions, should it move against the new advanced base or against the infantry holding the defensive areas covering the line of supply.

Forward landing grounds should be further developed.

Phase D.—To build up reserves of supplies in the Ben Gania area to admit of a move by the striking force on Bengasi or against the enemy, in the area Antelat—Saunnu, or if the situation invites it, against Mechili.

Note 5.—Provision should be made for the rapid move of a small but powerful raiding force against Bengasi soon after the occupation of the advanced base near Ben Gania. The object being to provoke the enemy to move against the striking force in the advanced base area.

Note 6.—Throughout these phases an infantry division and one or more brigade groups will hold the Gazala—Tobruk—Bir Hacheim defences to guard against a break-through by enemy armoured forces aimed at dislocating our system of supply and control.

Giarabub will also be held by a detachment to prevent enemy based on Siwa raiding our communications east of Tobruk and to carry out raids against enemy communications south of Bengasi.

Note 7.—Subsequent action must depend on enemy reaction to our opening moves, but this does not imply surrendering the strategical initiative to him. So long as we threaten his lines of communication, the strategical initiative remains with us. On the other hand, we hope the enemy will take the local tactical initiative and attack us on our ground instead of our having to attack him on his. This is the result the plan sets out to achieve, and, as already explained, the earlier in the operation the enemy can be made to do this the better it should be for us.

16. *Forces needed.*—The forces required by this plan are:—

(a) For holding attack on north—One infantry division, one heavy tank bde.

(b) For protection forward line of supply—One infantry division; one battalion heavy tanks.

(c) For holding Gazala—Tobruk—Bir Hacheim area—One infantry division; one infantry bde. group, one battalion heavy tanks.

(d) For holding Giarabub and raiding forward—Some infantry and armoured cars.

(e) For protecting forward landing grounds—One motor brigade group.

(f) For striking force—Two or three armoured divisions; one infantry division.

TOTAL.—Two or three armoured divisions, depending on strength of enemy armoured forces in forward area; one motor brigade group, four infantry divisions, two infantry brigade groups.

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No. 117*. Northern Front.

29th April 1942.

General Sir H. M. Wilson, Commander, Ninth Army.

Lieut-General E. P. Quinan, Commander, Tenth Army.

This Instruction covers the action to be taken by Middle East Forces in the event of

* Supersedes G.H.Q., M.E.F. Operation Instruction No. 112 of 23rd February 1942—Appendix 10.