

22. On this front the Irregular companies had already paved the way for an advance by capturing Dukana, an important water-point north of the Chalbi desert, and they further proved their worth by the assistance they gave to the S.A. Division both in securing the Hobok-Gorai-El Yibo area, and in subsequent operations.

23. On 16th-18th January El Yibo and El Sardu were taken by 1st N.M.R. (2nd S.A. Inf Bde) and the enemy pushed over the border. 2nd Regt. Botha of 5th S.A. Inf Bde were sent to Turbi near the foot of the escarpment to prevent the enemy moving on to Marsabit. It remained there until Moyale fell.

24. On 31st January 1st S.A. Division, which had completed its concentration at Dukana, moved 2nd and 5th S.A. Infantry Brigades up to the frontier in preparation for an attack on Gorai, El Gumu and Hobok the following day. The move was made in M.T., armoured cars being used for a distance of 25 miles to break a way through the bush for the troop carriers after the road finished. The two brigade groups, with 2nd S.A. Brigade on the right, each moved in several parallel columns towards El Gumu. When 2nd S.A. Brigade struck the road El Gumu-Gorai it swung right-handed and moved against Gorai from the north, whilst 5th S.A. Brigade moved straight across country against El Gumu.

Gorai was strongly defended by the enemy, who had well-prepared positions, but after a sharp engagement the fort was occupied at 1645 hours by the 2nd F.F. Battalion. The thick bush in the area unfortunately prevented one company of this battalion, which had worked round N.E. of the fort, from cutting off the retreating enemy. The enemy did not abandon their positions until the armoured cars had smashed down the barbed wire entanglements round the fort and the infantry had gone in with the bayonet across 400 yards of open country. Our casualties were slight. In the meantime 5th S.A. Infantry Brigade had captured El Gumu with the loss of only one O.R. killed.

The resolute action of the armoured cars undoubtedly saved us many casualties at both Gorai and El Gumu, but the bush prevented pursuit.

25. On 2nd February 5th S.A. Infantry Brigade moved against Hobok along the road El Gumu-Hobok. Attempts to cut off the enemy's line of withdrawal to the north, along the Lac Bulal, failed owing to a bush fire which the enemy had started to cover his withdrawal. Once the brigade had worked round the bush fire, armoured cars made two more attempts to reach the Lac Bulal north of Hobok, but the country was so broken that the attempt had to be abandoned. After the enemy post had been heavily shelled by our artillery, and also bombed and machine gunned by aircraft, armoured cars crashed through the wire at 1715 hours, but found that the enemy had withdrawn leaving a considerable quantity of equipment behind.

26. In furtherance of the object of helping the rebellion another advance was made and on 7th February Ganciaro was occupied without opposition while on 9th February the 1st S.A. Irish (5th S.A. Inf Bde) with one company of 1st F.F. Bn occupied Banno after a sharp engagement with the garrison of two

Colonial Infantry Battalions, which withdrew into the mountains to the north. Four days later the enemy brought some guns and shelled our positions at Banno in order to cover the removal of a large dump of stores in the mountains immediately to the North of the fort. The fact that the enemy were able to do this showed the amount of trust which could be placed on the Shifta.

27. General Brink now asked whether, in order to secure his right flank and ensure a more reliable and shorter L of C, he could not carry out operations against the Moyale-Mega escarpment. This was an operation which I always had had in mind, and now that the Shifta had turned out to be nothing more than groups which merely harassed Italians and looted wherever they could, I gave the necessary permission.

28. The plan adopted was for the 5th S.A. Infantry Brigade to move direct from Ganciaro on to Mega. The 2nd S.A. Infantry Brigade was to make an enveloping movement round the north of the town to get astride the Mega-Moyale road where they would be able to prevent the escape of the Mega garrison on that route, or its reinforcement from Moyale. The brigade was then to carry out an attack from the east on Mega, in conjunction with that being carried out by 5th Infantry Brigade from the west.

29. On the 14th February the 2nd S.A. Brigade, leaving 1st N.M.R. in divisional reserve, broke off from the Ganciaro-Mega road due east across country to El Sod. The first part of the cross-country route took some time to traverse as the column had to wind about among the trees, through sand which was deep in places. After crossing the Mega-Iavello road the going became much better. One company of the 2nd F.F. Battalion was left on this road to prevent enemy movement along it in either direction. This company was attacked from the direction of Iavello by a strong enemy force of 15 tanks and motorised infantry which was evidently attempting to reinforce the Mega garrison. After a sharp encounter in which both sides suffered casualties, the enemy withdrew hurriedly towards Iavello. There is no doubt that the action of this company in preventing the arrival of these reinforcements had a material effect on subsequent operations at Mega.

On the morning of the 15th there were indications that the enemy were attempting to reinforce Mega from Neghelli, but they were dispersed by 2nd Infantry Brigade by artillery fire from El Sod. 2nd Infantry Brigade then recommenced their march on Mega, encountering very thick bush and sticky black cotton soil. The original intention for them to attack Mega directly from the east was found to be out of the question as the country was entirely open and exposed to the enemy artillery. Brigadier F. L. A. Buchanan, M.C., therefore continued with all his forces round to the south of the town but found the defile, through which the road in went, was very heavily mined and guarded by machine-gun nests.

Meanwhile the 5th S.A. Brigade had approached from the west, and on the 16th February attacked the high ground dominating the approaches to Mega from that side. They came under considerable artillery fire but fortunately it was ineffective owing to the high percentage of blinds. In the afternoon very heavy