

either country's organization, we coordinated their functions by the creation of a combined Movement and Transportation Section, where the British and American chiefs worked in intimate collaboration. Under the general direction of the Chief Administrative Officer, this combination functioned in complete harmony, and performed their complex duties in a manner which I cannot too highly praise. The success of their efforts is amply attested by the general record of the North African Campaign and by the special achievements that are referred to in the later pages of this dispatch.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

My original directive from the Combined Chiefs of Staff envisaged the attainment of our ultimate objective in three stages: first, the establishment of firm and mutually supported lodgments in the area of ORAN, ALGIERS, and TUNIS, on the North Coast, and of CASABLANCA on the West Coast; second, the use of those lodgments as bases to acquire complete control over all French NORTH AFRICA, and, if necessary, SPANISH MOROCCO; third, a thrust Eastwards through the LIBYAN desert, to take the Axis forces in the Western desert in the rear and annihilate them. Because of strict limitations in shipping and in naval support, including carriers, the latter two objectives were recognized in all discussions as possibly beyond the realm of practicability on a long term basis. The Prime Minister's frequent comment was, "Well, if the enemy rushes into TUNISIA, where he can probably forestall us if he so determines, where is a better place to kill Germans?" It was our plan, that at the same time that our objectives were being attained in North Africa air and sea operations were to be intensified against Axis installations. The aim was thus to insure communications through the Mediterranean, and to facilitate operations at a later date against the Axis on the European continent.

It was not intended that TUNIS should be captured in the initial assault. All the earlier campaigns of the war underlined the grave hazard of attempting to sail convoys into "bomb alley"—a very aptly named part of the Mediterranean which was dominated by the Axis air forces that were based on SICILY and SARDINIA. It would, moreover, be beyond the shipping and other resources available to us to include TUNIS in an initial assault.

The strategic problem that faced us was greatly complicated by political considerations outside the scope of strictly military planning. The reactions of the neutral countries of SPAIN, VICHY FRANCE, and FRENCH NORTH AFRICA itself were clearly to have a vital bearing upon the course of our endeavors, and were also perhaps to determine the nature of the enemy's counter-blows.

There was a lively danger that the Germans would strike through SPAIN at our vital line of communication through the STRAITS of GIBRALTAR. SPAIN was herself pro-Axis. She was a main center for Axis Intelligence activity, and there was more than a strong suspicion that urgently needed materiel was finding its way Northward across the PYRENEES. SPAIN was certainly making available to the Germans RADAR stations on both sides of the STRAITS, the Southern shore of which was in Spanish hands. The British and American Ambassadors had assured General Franco of our intention to respect SPAIN's rights and sovereignty, and there were indications that the chief anxiety of the Spanish leader was to maintain neutrality, for economic reasons. But it might well be that Axis pressure would prove too strong.

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It was to guard against such a possibility as this that the Combined Chiefs of Staff deemed it essential to capture CASABLANCA in the initial stages as an opening for an auxiliary line of communications, and decided that considerable forces should be held in readiness to seize SPANISH MOROCCO and hold it against a German onslaught.

It could be regarded as certain that the Axis would immediately occupy the whole of FRANCE and that their aim in doing this would be to forestall a landing by us on the coast of the MIDI, to establish air and submarine bases along the French Mediterranean Coast, and above all, to attempt to gain control of the French Fleet in TOULON. "What about the French Fleet?" was to bring an echo in British hearts of the catastrophic, anxious days of June 1940. We had to prepare, and with the greatest reluctance, to provide, if necessary, the same answer as had been given on that sorry occasion.

It seemed probable that the enemy would do all in his power to retain control of the SICILIAN CHANNEL by seizing TUNIS and BIZERTE before we could reach them. Our ability to get there first would depend upon three things: upon the distance between these two towns and our most Easterly lodgement; upon the strength of the forces that we could make sufficiently mobile to act offensively over a considerable distance; and upon the resistance, or lack of resistance, that was offered by the French to the respective invasions.

The whole question of probable French reaction to our enterprise was extremely complex, in spite of the effective exploratory work by Mr. Robert D. Murphy and other members of the American Consular Service. It was known that German propaganda had used the incidents of MERS EL KEBIR, DAKAR, SYRIA, and MADAGASCAR to inflame French opinion against the British, who were accused of treacherous imperialism at the expense of FRANCE. America, on the other hand, had escaped this opprobrium. The diplomatic and trade contacts which she had maintained with Vichy were some slight solace to a people steeped in the despair and bitterness of defeat, clinging with pathetic loyalty to Petain, the self-appointed symbol of the Spirit of France.

It had therefore been decided that the expedition should appear to be predominantly American, and that the necessary contribution of the British services should be played down, at least in the initial stages. The assaults were to be all-American, and no British troops were to land for at least a week, in order to allow time for President Roosevelt to negotiate with the French.

NORTH AFRICA had never been occupied by the Axis, and there was lacking in the land, therefore, that spur to hatred of the Boche which Metropolitan FRANCE had felt all too keenly. But the activities of the Axis Armistice Commissions, which were steadily depriving the population of everything except the barest necessities of life, and also stripping the armed services of the greater part of their equipment, were beginning to stir true Frenchmen from their apathy; if loyalties and emotions were still confused, there was reason to hope that resistance to us would be no more than a gesture to the Gallic sense of honor, and that resistance to the Axis would materialize in an effort of the French to retain the shadow of their Liberty.

Whether the French greeted us as liberators, or resisted our violation of their neutrality, it was clearly imperative that we should make an impressive display of strength; half measures would fail to inspire confidence on the one hand, or would encourage resistance on the other. Moreover, there was a greater chance of SPAIN maintaining her neutrality if she knew that strong forces were at hand

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to counter any sign of hostility. The strength and direction of enemy reaction could only be determined in the event, but the stakes were so high that it might be expected to be considerable.

Thus the strategic conception of sweeping the **AFRICA**, and establishing Allied control from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, necessitated an operation on a scale of such magnitude that, once initiated, it would have to be followed through with all the forces and shipping that the situation demanded. It would be the major Allied operation of 1942 and 1943, a substitute for an expedition across the English Channel which had originally been planned, but which had been abandoned in June as strategically unsound at that stage of the war. More particularly, it would be the first major United States operation of the war against **GERMANY**. Anything approaching failure would have a most damaging effect upon the moral of all whose hopes had been buoyed by the entry of the United States into the war. It was clear that the seven divisions originally estimated by the Chiefs of Staff in June would be inadequate, and it was decided that an eventual build-up of at least ten or twelve divisions must be contemplated.

The pressing problem was, however, not eventual but immediate strength. In early plans in which the aim was to strike as near **TUNIS** as the enemy air threat would permit it was envisaged that there should be, in addition to three major assaults at **CASABLANCA**, **ORAN** and **ALGIERS**, two small scale assaults on **PHILIPPEVILLE** and **BONE**. But by August 13th, detailed examination of available resources made it clear that this program was too ambitious. One limiting factor was the original decision that only American troops should be used in the assaults. There were available only ten Regimental Combat Teams, two Armored Combat Commands, and a Ranger Battalion. Of these few had, as yet, received the requisite amphibious training.

An even more serious limiting factor was the shortage of naval escorts, combat loaders, landing craft, and trained crews. Both the United States and Royal Navies had cut to the bone on all other commitments; it was even agreed that the shipping used in convoys to **RUSSIA** should, at the appropriate time, be diverted to the African operation. There was no hope of "borrowing" from the Pacific Fleet, so that the American contribution at sea could involve no more than the ships which were already in the Atlantic or building.

In the light of these limitations our strategy had to be reconsidered. Two alternative plans were suggested. The first was to thrust eastwards into the Mediterranean as planned, and to hope that the threat from **SPAIN** would either not materialize or not have time to develop before **CASABLANCA** had been seized by a force advancing overland from **ORAN**; in the initial stages we should have to rely upon a heavy concentration of aircraft to keep open the Straits. This plan, it was estimated, would give us a reasonable chance of gaining the **TUNIS** prize, but would obviously leave our line of communication dangerously insecure. Eventually its only difference from the original plan was the omission of the **CASABLANCA** attack, with the intention of working hard toward that port from the **ORAN** region. It was admittedly risky. I personally favored taking the chances implicit in the plan.

The second plan was to confine the assaults to **ORAN** and **CASABLANCA**, thus securing a firm base from which eventually to move Eastwards. This plan, it was believed, would have the merit of avoiding undue risks, would remove the direct threat to America of an Axis occupation of **FRENCH WEST AFRICA**, and would bring American ground forces into early action. But it would rule out any possibility of our seizing **TUNIS** before the enemy; and with it, the chance of our achieving any really important offensive objective. Moreover, the omission of **ALGIERS** from

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the initial assaults would be politically as well as militarily unfortunate; not only was it considered the "soft spot" from a military point of view, but its capture was calculated to have a greater effect upon the inhabitants of NORTH AFRICA than the capture of any other city.

There was another great disadvantage in committing half the force to an attack upon the Atlantic seaboard. Conditions for landing were estimated to be unfavorable four days out of five during the late autumn. There was thus the strong possibility that our armada would find itself waiting the weather, having lost the immense advantage of surprise and giving the Axis precious days to make its counterstrokes.

Both plans were exhaustively examined and both were considered unsatisfactory. On September 6th a final decision was made that aimed at avoiding the risks of the first alternative, but without giving up hope of gaining TUNIS quickly provided we were favored by good fortune. However, the primary and basic purpose of the expedition remained always the same: to lodge ourselves securely in Northwest Africa. In late planning whenever scarcity of resources brought into conflict the necessity for obtaining the Northwestern ports surely and quickly, and the great desirability of carrying along troops and equipment suited to long, overland fighting, the latter invariably had to give way. It was decided that the assaults on PHILIPPEVILLE and BONE should be abandoned; combat loaders with a lift of 5,000 men were to be transferred from both the originally proposed CASABLANCA and ORAN forces to form the nucleus of an ALGIERS force; and the remainder of that force was to be made up by British troops. The political desirability of an all-American assault, though still valid, was outweighed by the necessities of sound strategy.

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By the terms of my directive, the date on which the initial assaults were to be launched was to be determined by me. The earlier it could be, the better, both on broad political and strategic grounds, and because of probable deterioration in weather conditions, both in the Atlantic and in the mountain passes of ALGERIA and TUNISIA. The vital need for tactical surprise pointed to a choice of a new-moon period. The final decision to attack on November 8th was not taken until the middle of September. Previous attempts to anticipate the date by three weeks, or a month, had been frustrated by the time needed to assemble and to fit out the necessary shipping, to train the assault troops and landing craft crews in amphibious operations, and to complete the equipment of the American forces in the United Kingdom.

Taking into account all these considerations and decisions, the Outline Plan was issued on September 20th.

Planning for the Western Task Force, which was to sail direct from the United States to capture CASABLANCA, had necessarily to be carried out in WASHINGTON. Its commander, Major General (now Lieutenant General) George S. Patton, Jr., paid a brief visit to LONDON for coordination. The assault force of five Regimental Combat Teams, 1 Armored Combat Command and one Armored Combat Team, were to be transported in twelve combat loaders, ten auxiliary combat loaders, six cargo ships, and one sea train.

The Center Task Force, under the command of Major General Lloyd R. Fredendall, whose primary mission was to capture ORAN, was to be composed of the 16th, 18th and 26th Regimental Combat Teams, a Combat Command from the 1st Armored Division, and the 1st Ranger Battalion, all of which were to be transported from the United Kingdom in thirteen Infantry landing ships, seven personnel ships, three Landing Ship, Tanks, one gun landing ship, and twenty-three motor transport trucks.

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