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the initial assaults would be politically as well as militarily un-
fortunate; 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 neces-
sity 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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P L A N S

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 com-
posed of the 16th, 18th and 26th Regimental Combat Teams, a Combat Com-
mand 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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After accomplishing their initial missions, the Western and Center Task Forces were to establish and to maintain communications between CASABLANCA and ORAN; and to build up land and air striking forces ready to occupy SPANISH MOROCCO, if this should be necessary.

The Eastern Task Force was charged, in the first place, with seizing ALGIERS and the airfields at ELIDA and MAISON BLANCHE. The assault force was to consist of the 39th and 168th Regimental Combat Teams, the British 11th and 36th Brigade Groups, and the 1st and 6th Commandos, composed of both British and American troops. It was to be transported from the United Kingdom in ten Infantry assault ships or combat loaders, four personnel ships, two cargo vessels, two landing ship carriers (derrick hoisting), and sixteen motor transport ships. To establish the impression that the whole enterprise was American, it was to be commanded by Major General Charles W. Ryder, Army of the United States, and was to be during the assault phase directly under my orders. At a suitable time the units concerned were to pass to the command of Lieutenant General K.A.N. Anderson, General Officer Commanding the British First Army, who was to thrust Eastwards to capture the airfield at DJIDJELLI and the port of BOUGIE, and ultimately to advance into TUNISIA. As the method of accomplishing this was to depend upon whether or not the French resisted, alternative plans were made to facilitate the achievement of the ends that we had in view.

The assaults on ALGIERS and ORAN were to take place simultaneously at an hour to be decided by me. While it was hoped that the timing of the assault on CASABLANCA would coincide with those on ALGIERS and ORAN, it was recognized that differences in weather conditions might make this impossible. Accordingly, it was arranged that the decision with regards to the assault on CASABLANCA was to be left to General Patton.

To the two Navies fell the vast and complex task of escorting the various convoys to their destinations, protecting them from possible intervention by hostile surface ships and submarines, and giving direct fire support to the assaulting forces; initial air support, too, was to be given from Aircraft Carriers until landing grounds had been captured and the air forces had been established ashore.

The United States Navy was to be responsible for carrying out these duties in support of the Western Task Force; and the Royal Navy was to be responsible in a similar way with respect to the operations inside the Mediterranean. Naval Command of the Western Task Force was assigned to Rear Admiral (now Vice Admiral) Henry K. Hewitt, who had his flag on the cruiser AUGUSTA. The battleship MASSACHUSETTS, two cruisers, and five destroyers were to form the covering group; the battleships TEXAS and NEW YORK, three cruisers, and twenty destroyers were to be the fire group and anti-submarine escort; and the Aircraft Carrier RANGER, three auxiliary carriers, an anti-aircraft cruiser and nine destroyers were to constitute the Aircraft Carrier group. Eight minesweepers and four submarines were to complete this formidable force.

To keep watch and ward over the Italian and Vichy French fleets, the Royal Navy planned to have in readiness a strong force, called Force "E" which was to consist of the battleships DUKE OF YORK and MEMORN and RODNEY, the aircraft carriers VICTORIOUS and FORMIDABLE, four cruisers, and fifteen destroyers; three submarines were to patrol off TOULON, five off the STRAITS of MESSINA, and as many as were available along a line running Northwest from TRAPANI in SICILY. To guard the Western approaches to the STRAITS of GIBRALTAR, a force of two cruisers and three destroyers was to patrol off the AZORES.

Escort for the Center Task Force was to be provided by one convoy destroyer, eight fleet minesweepers, two sloops, six corvettes, and two cutters. Also, fire support was to be provided by the battleship RODNEY, temporarily detached from Force "E", and by two cruisers, two anti-aircraft ships, twelve destroyers and one aircraft carrier. The aircraft carrier FURIOUS and two auxiliary aircraft carriers were to provide air support.

To the Eastern Task Force were assigned our convoy destroyer, seven fleet minesweepers, three sloops, and seven corvettes as escort, four cruisers, three auxiliary anti-aircraft ships, one monitor, and twelve destroyers as fire support, and the Aircraft Carrier ARGUS and one auxiliary aircraft carrier as air support. To each Task Force was assigned a flotilla of eight minesweepers to be sent out at the earliest opportunity.

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The passage of such an abnormal number of ships through the STRAITS could not be hidden from the enemy. But in an attempt to deceive him as to their destination, it was planned that at dusk the night before the landings, every ship was to be steaming along the line of advance to MALTA. The hazardous and costly efforts in the past to run convoys to that heroic island was thus to pay a rich dividend indeed if the enemy could be persuaded that this was such another on a grand scale.

To bring this great concourse of shipping to its appointed tasks on time, after the vessels had refueled in the narrow waters of GIBRALTAR and after they had played a part in the deceptive advance towards MALTA, involved an intricacy of planning and coordination, an assumption of efficiency and seamanship unparalleled in the history of naval warfare.

Throughout the whole North African campaign we had in our plan of operations but one ultimate objective, our operations were to be under but one commander, and they were to be controlled by a staff of dual nationality. However, in the initial stages the ground forces concerned were to be divided into two distinct groups, both with regards to locality and objective, and with respect to nationality. After the landings, the Center Task Force was to turn Westwards to link up with the Western Task Force and was to form a single, wholly American Army, ready to meet the threat of a German attack through SPAIN. The Eastern Task Force on the other hand, was quickly to be transformed into the British First Army, and was to strike Eastwards toward TUNISIA.

It was decided to follow this natural line of demarcation even in respect to the Air Forces. The 12th U.S.A.A.F. was to form a Western Command, with headquarters at ORAN. Similarly the R.A.F. squadrons that were assigned to the operation were to form an Eastern Command, with headquarters at ALGIERS. With a view to the achievement of a maximum in flexibility in air power, to the reinforcement on occasion of each command from the other, and to necessary concentrations in strength in certain parts of the theater of operations, truly, all units in our operations were to be subject to my centralized direction and control.

Though the initial assaults were to be supported by seaborne aircraft, it was essential that the maximum possible strength of fighter aircraft should be available as soon as landing grounds had been seized. It was therefore planned to fly from GIBRALTAR 150 fighters to each of the ORAN and CASABLANCA areas, and 90 to the ALGIERS area within three days of the attack. Thereafter, the build-up was to reach, at the end of seven weeks, a total, in all types of aircraft, of 1,244 in the Western Command, and 454 in the Eastern Command.

These aircraft were to be responsible in providing air cover to shipping and to ground forces, and in protecting bases and communications against air attack; also, in conjunction with the naval forces, they were to protect convoys against attack by submarines or surface raiders; and, finally, they were to provide air cooperation and support for land operations subsequent to the assault phase.

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Once adequate bases had been secured, strategic air forces for the bombing of possible Axis installations in SPAIN, and, ultimately, in the rest of the Mediterranean area were to be built up. The rate at which this could be done was to be limited by the number of squadrons of suitable types which could be made available in the United States and in the United Kingdom. The R.A.F. was already heavily committed in other theaters of war, both in fighter and bomber strength, and it was clear from the outset, that United States air forces would have to be provided on a considerably larger scale than British.

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Throughout the planning stage, the scale of the initial assault, the speed of the subsequent build-up of the Allied Forces, and their essential maintenance needs were conditioned by shipping factors, such as the availability of assault craft and of shipping, the size and frequency of convoys, and the discharge capacity of the ports in North Africa. Such factors as these necessarily formed the framework round which the plan for the landing in NORTH AFRICA had to be built; and, from the outset, the most accurate assessment of logistical and transportation possibilities was a primary task of the planning staffs. Personnel, transport, and supplies for maintenance purposes had to be cut to or even below the barest essentials to retain the minimum necessary striking power and mobility for the assaulting forces.

Early in October, two new details of considerable importance were woven into the general plan. The first was a decision to employ a battalion of parachute infantry to be flown all the way from ENGLAND, to seize the airfields of RAFARAOUI and LA SENIA, South of ORAN. This entailed a flight of some twelve hours by the unarmed transport aircraft, which were then to be obliged to land only a short time after they had dropped their load of troops. The operation was to be carried out by the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Parachute Infantry, in aircraft of the 60th Troop-Carrier Group.

Secondly there was woven into the general plan early in October a decision in favor of direct frontal attacks against the ports of ALGIERS and ORAN. In both cases the nearest main landings had to be a full day's march distant from the objective of the attack and it was feared that this delay might afford time for the blocking of these two vital ports, and the sabotaging of shipping and harbor installations. The Royal Navy, therefore, planned operations for forcing the entrance of both ports by two small warships, and at each undertook to break the boom, and to discharge military landing parties some 500 or 600 strong to secure the port intact.

P R E P A R A T I O N S

For the plans as finally approved, there were not in the United Kingdom sufficient forces, British or United States, available with the necessary amphibious training. Combined Operation Headquarters therefore arranged a program to afford in the short time available to the inexperienced formations with the assault ships and craft which could be spared, the best training possible. This training took place at the Combined Training Center in Western Scotland. A new United States Naval Base was rushed to completion in the same area, and several Regimental Combat Teams were put through a short course there. Furthermore, certain American combat teams were trained with Royal Naval Craft and crews and it was planned that these forces of the two lands were to operate together.

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