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MILITARY ATTACHE, TANGIER
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Enclosures
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MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DIVISION
WAR DEPARTMENT GENERAL STAFF
MILITARY ATTACHE REPORT ALGERIA

Country Reported On

Subject Algerian Coast.
Brief Descriptive Title

I. G. No. 1170

Source and Degree of Reliability:

Report of Vice Consul Knight. Reliable.

Summarization of Report

When Required

In Comments on Current Events Enter Item Headings Here

Following is a memorandum prepared by Vice Consul Knight concerning geographical features of Mediterranean coast from Port Say, Algeria (near the Spanish Zone border) to Mostaganem, Algeria:

"Points inspected: Nemours, Beni Saf; entire coast from Cap Falcon to Mostaganem by bicycle. Balance from the air.

1. Port Say to Nemours - uninterrupted cliffs; no beaches.
2. Nemours - between main port and ^{long?} fishing port is a beach of about 300 to 400 yards. (Nemours is at the head of a narrow valley (Taina) encased between mountains of about 400 feet at the mouth and more immediately inland). Two roads lead out of Nemours, both are on solid foundation, and both traverse rugged mountains and poor country, easily defended.
3. Nemours to Beni Saf - uninterrupted cliffs, wild and very sparsely settled country. No lateral means of communication for 30 miles inland except one very difficult mule train following roughly line of coast. A road was started from both ends about 4 years ago and extends a few kilometers from both points, but work now is stopped with 3/4 of distance not even begun.
4. Rackgoun - at mouth of Tafna river, with 2-lane good tar road leading to Tlemcen and along coast to Beni Saf. Heights dominate this spot and road to Tlemcen following Tafna encased in very narrow valley at spots.

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5. Beni Saf - good beach for about 800 yards immediately west of port. There are two roads: (1) To Raahgoun and then same as mentioned under 4 up valley of Tafna; (2) Tarred road (about 10-12 feet surfaced) to Guiard where it branches for Ain Khial and Ain Temouchent. No valley from Beni Saf. Both roads climb steeply at town outskirts.
6. Beni Saf to Les Andalouses - rocky coast with cliffs and range of hills back of it increasing in height to the eastward (starting at 500 feet to 1500 ft) There are 3 small beaches all surrounded by cliffs and heights: (1) at the mouth of the Mekrais, (2) NW of Er Rahel, (3) at Moul el Bahar. NOTE: These are seaside resorts for small towns immediately in hinterland and are connected with them by narrow roads (gravel). From the Mekrais to Moul el Bahar the hills in the back country are rather rolling.
7. Les Andalouses to Mers el Kebir. Many beaches, but continuous mountain range (1000 to 1600 ft.) in semi circle from Les Andalouses to Oran, completely separate coastal plane from hinterland. Beaches abut on general low (50 to 100 ft.) but steep incline.
8. Mers el Kebir to Oran. Beaches but back of new jetty. Completely dominated by coast defenses at Fort du Saenton, Dunkerque. New defenses being established on Santa Cruz mountain.
9. Oran to Kristel. No beaches. Unbroken sheer cliff rising from 100 ft. at Oran proper to 500 ft. just west of Kristel. Kristel is 100% native fishing port and ringed in by the Djebel Khar.
10. Kristel to Arzew. Rocky wild coast. Mountainous hinterland. No coast road.
11. Arzew to G. Clemenceau. Practically uninterrupted beach. In general the plain comes down to the sea by gently sloping hills. The best spots:
 - a. Immediately SE of Arzew. One of the gentlest rises (to about 250-275 ft in one kilometer). Excellent paved road network leading to St. Denis du Sig, Ste. Barbe du Tielat and Oran. Several paved lateral connections as well.
 - b. At Port aux Poules immediately west of mouth of Maeta outlet. Gentlest rise of all to hinterland. Coast road and one lane tarred road leading south; after 10 kilometers joins C-5, two lane road from Arzew to St. Denis du Sig. NOTE: From Port aux Poules to the bridge over the Maeta this stream follows the coast immediately back of rather high sand dunes.
 - c. Immediately east of the Maeta bridge, gentle slope about like "a" increasing in steepness fairly

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continuously until Mazagan. One-lane tarred road into G.C.-81 (2-lane tar) going to Perregeaux. Narrow gauge (1m) railroad roughly parallels the above road from Maata to Perregeaux. (Roadbed in good shape).

12. G. Clamencean to Mostaganem. Beaches scarcer. Country becomes mountainous with steep hills and some cliffs along sea coast.

General about No. 11.

A. Maata Marshes form a triangle of about 12 x 12 x 12 kilometers with point on the sea. From July to first of November rains practically entirely dried up. Edges which were carefully examined in August seemed dry and hard enough for landing of light and medium planes.

B. Road network. Excellent throughout this region which is rich and prosperous as well as flat until well south of main rail line at Ste Barbe du Tlelat, St. Denis du Sig and Perregeaux.

C. Railroads. This plain is better served by railroads than any other area in Algeria. In addition to normal French gauge system there is a complete narrow gauge system.

D. Population. Much more French racially than at Oran and west of Oran. From several conversations with peasants of region it is felt there is much sentiment in favor of Anglo-Saxons and even de Gaulle. Difference made sharp contrast with region west of Oran (Ain Femorchent, Rio Salado) which is much more Spanish and pro-collaboration.

E. No coast defense except four 105s north of Fort du Nord at Arzew.

Comment. If the country between seacoast and Mascara (60 kilometers) is held, all practical land east-west communications between Tunis and Dakar are cut except for small roads following the E.W. depressions of the Saïda mountains. This section is the only stretch of the Department of Oran where the coastal range disappears completely.

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Algiers, Algeria.

August 9, 1942.

Memorandum for Mr. Murphy by Boyd and Knox.

Subject: Landing areas.

For Algeria, the indicated regions would be in the Mostaganem to Arzew sectors, the Tipaza to Cherchell region, Sidi-Ferruch and a short space to the East of Algiers, in the Djidjelli part and from Bone to La Calle (near the Tunisian frontier).

These places are selected not only from the point of view of easy landing beaches (where in most cases fairly deep water extends up to a gently shelving sand beach region), but also with regard to the hinterland, facile of access to the dominating ridges which almost invariably border the Algerian coastline. Once these heights are secured - and multiple simultaneous landings would render these operations successful - access to the south and the cutting off of all lateral defensive communications would become an almost automatic concomitant.

Much information, often partial or scattered in character or hidden in other memoranda has already been sent forward to the Department. It is proposed to gather and recapitulate this subject matter, together with all late data at our disposal, and send in forward in concise form. We shall endeavor to obtain the same information from the Moroccan and Tunisian offices.

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