

Bardia to Enfidaville

Administrative Instructions

All first-line units were to leave the assembly area with six days' rations and water, petrol for a minimum of 300 miles and ammunition up to scale. Second-line vehicles would have four days' rations and water, and petrol for 100 miles for all vehicles. One day's rations and water and petrol to top up vehicles would be available at the end of Stage I, and thereafter replenishment would be as the tactical situation permitted. Local water supplies, high in magnesium content, were not to be used for drinking. A special 'Golden List' was prepared for essential administrative personnel, and distinctive labels provided for the windscreens of their vehicles, so as to ensure their high priority in the advance. The list included personnel for the airfields round Gabes and for Sfax port, and for certain NZASC units which were to control supplies at Gabes and Sfax.

New Zealand Corps was to have priority during PUGILIST for the evacuation of wounded by air, three aircraft being made available. Two would each carry six lying and two sitting patients, and the third would carry eleven lying or twenty-four sitting. It was hoped to use suitable landing grounds near the Main Dressing Station, but otherwise one Field Ambulance would take patients to the landing ground and superintend evacuation by air.

Bardia to Enfidaville

NZ Corps Operation Order No. 1

On 16 March NZ Corps issued Operation Order No. 1. This gave briefly the Eighth Army plan—and the ‘Intention’ paragraph which reads: ‘NZ Corps will capture the airfields West of SFAX destroying any enemy forces encountered.’

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The groupings and order of march were:

2 NZ Divisional Cavalry, less B Echelon transport
KDG plus one troop artillery
8 Armoured Brigade Group, less B2 Echelon transport
Gun Group (4 NZ Field Regiment, 64 Medium Regiment, and those anti-tank and light anti-aircraft units not with other groups)
6 Brigade Group—normal, plus an extra anti-tank battery and machine-gun company
B Echelon Group
NZ Corps Headquarters and Signals
Reserve Group—portions of 27 (MG) Battalion and other subunits not allocated elsewhere
5 Brigade Group—normal, but with 1 NZ Ammunition Company under command for the march
Administrative Group, including NZASC units not with other groups

The advance would be in three stages. Stage I was a march of some 20 to 30 miles, on the night 19–20 March, commencing at 7 p.m. This would bring the leading elements of the Corps just short of Wadi bel Krecheb.

Stage II, a further advance of 40 miles, was to be carried out on 20–21 March with the same timings, but less Administrative Group, which would not move. The B Echelon Group would move as part of 6 Brigade Group in order to have protection with the closer approach to the enemy. At the end of this stage the head of the column would be some ten miles short of Tebaga Gap.

Prior to Stage II the French Group would capture El Outid and Bir Soltane, and maintain active patrolling to the north and northeast, while KDG provided flank protection along the right flank. There are one or two references in the order to the need for watching this flank, which was a long one.

All vehicles were to refuel at Stage II and be prepared to move forward at first light on 21 March for Stage III, ‘with the object of penetrating the Eastern flank of the enemy defences ... and capturing the objective PLUM’, which was the entrance to the Tebaga Gap. If this was not captured immediately it would be taken as soon after first light as possible. Divisional Cavalry and 8 Armoured Brigade were entrusted with the initial penetration of PLUM.¹

After the capture of PLUM the Corps was to advance on El Hamma (PEACH) and finally to a line of hills overlooking the coast road just north-west of Gabes (GRAPE). In addition,

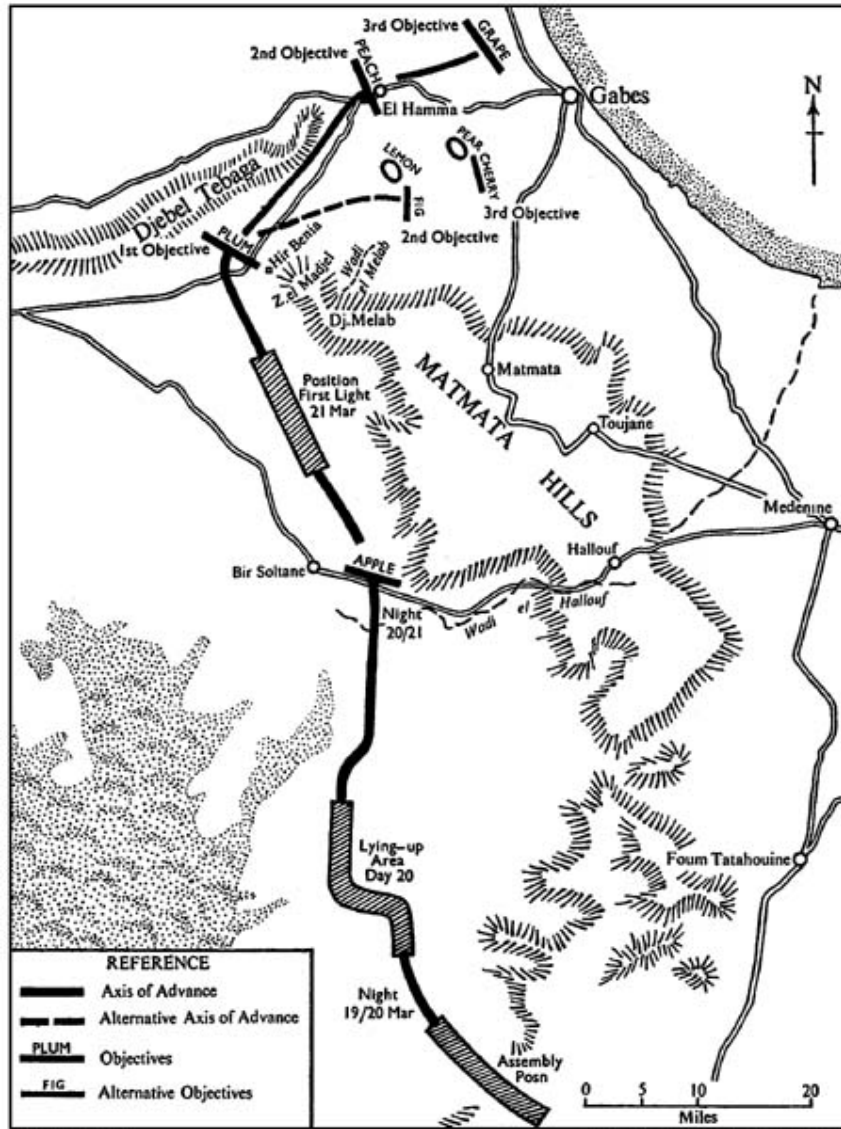
Montgomery and Freyberg agreed on a possible alternative advance from PLUM which turned more to the east and bypassed El Hamma well to the south, thereafter heading towards Gabes. This alternative would be acted upon on receipt of its codename, SIDEWINDOWS, from Montgomery. (It will be remembered that 30 Corps was to break in through the Mareth Line and advance along the main road and capture Gabes.)

After securing GRAPE, NZ Corps' next objective was the landing grounds west of Sfax, an operation not assigned to the Corps in the Army outline plan, but which the GOC explained at his conference would be carried out by continuing the outflanking move, with the French giving flank protection and 10 Corps, with two armoured divisions, driving on Sfax itself.

This plan, resulting from many discussions subsequent to the issue of the Eighth Army general plan on 26 February 1943, set the tasks awaiting NZ Corps.

The order contained instructions about wireless silence and recognition of 'own troops', and laid down 'ground to air' and 'target marking' signals, pointing out that the operation would be closely supported by the Desert Air Force.

The part to be played by NZ Corps, within the Eighth Army plan, was that by the night 20–21 March, the night of the 30 Corps attack on the main Mareth position, the Corps would have bumped the enemy at the Tebaga switch line, made evident the seriousness of the threat from this flank and so have attracted the uncommitted German reserve, and by further vigorous activity would prevent a counter-attack against the 30 Corps break in the line. Thirtieth Corps, protected on its open flank by 10 Corps, which was to begin operations in the Matmata Hills, would then start 'rolling up' the Mareth position from east to west. Continuing its advance, NZ Corps would establish itself on the objective northwest of Gabes, commanding the coastal road, which by then would have become the only withdrawal route for the Axis forces not already destroyed or escaped. Tenth Corps, supported by NZ Corps, would then exploit through Gabes to Sfax, for it was hoped that the complete defeat of the enemy, followed by rapid exploitation, would prevent a delay at Wadi Akarit. In the terms of Montgomery's general plan published on 26 February, the final objective for PUGILIST was Sfax. 'Once operations have begun on night 20–21 March they will be conducted relentlessly until Sfax has been reached.'



PLAN FOR OPERATION PUGILIST. NEW ZEALAND CORPS' ASSEMBLY AREAS, AXIS OF ADVANCE AND OBJECTIVES

Bardia to Enfidaville

9 April—to the Sfax-Faid Road

This advance penetrated into a gap between the right flank of *1 Italian Army* (as represented by the German rearguards) and *10* and *21 Panzer Divisions*, now collecting themselves after their withdrawal from Maknassy and El Guettar. It took the enemy by surprise, disrupted his line occupied only the evening before, so that he still had troops wandering about south and east of Toual ech Cheikh.

At first light it had been intended that 28 Battalion should consolidate on the feature, but while Lieutenant-Colonel Bennett was on reconnaissance Brigadier Harvey passed word that the enemy was moving northwards and 8 Armoured Brigade was already pushing on. The 28th Battalion therefore reverted to the command of 5 Infantry Brigade, and rejoined the column.

King's Dragoon Guards went into the lead, covering the whole front, moved rapidly, and were on the road from Sfax to Faid by 11 a.m., although they could not block it firmly at this time. The 8th Armoured Brigade followed up to the northern slopes of Djebel et Telil, and was on a line from there to the north end of Sebket Mecheguigue. Tactical Headquarters 2 NZ Division was at this time (midday) just south of Telil. For a while the GOC considered sending part of KDG with extra artillery round the west side of the Sebket to outflank enemy tanks which could be seen to the north, but about this time 2 Armoured Brigade came up the east side of the Sebket and prolonged 8 Armoured Brigade's line to the west.

The gun group—4 Field Regiment and 64 Medium Regiment—was then called forward and deployed on the south and east slopes of Telil, and was there joined by 111 Field Regiment from 8 Armoured Brigade. The gun area was protected by 31 Anti-Tank Battery on both the front and flanks, A Troop being on the left.

About 2 p.m., just as the *portées* of A Troop had unloaded and were driving away, some thirteen tanks appeared at very short range from a depression to the west, heading straight for the gun positions. For a moment it was thought they were American, but they opened fire on the *portées* and A Troop went into action. One gun stopped a Mark IV Special before it was put out of action, and the No. 1 of another gun, Bombardier Keating,¹ despite casualties to his gun crew, got his gun firing and accounted for two and possibly three tanks, even though for part of the time he had to do all the loading, laying and firing himself. Staffs Yeomanry then appeared and forced the enemy to withdraw. The 4th Field Regiment had adopted 'tank control' and was ready to repel boarders, but in the end the enemy did not come close enough. One quad of 111 Field Regiment was destroyed, and damage caused to guns of 31 Anti-Tank Battery. In addition to the tanks knocked out by A Troop, 64 Medium Regiment destroyed two by shellfire, and Staffs Yeomanry another two. The 2nd Armoured Brigade on the left joined in and helped to drive the enemy away to the north.

Despite all reconnaissance, it appears that the enemy tanks had been bypassed, and had waited until a good target offered. They came either from *21 Panzer Division* or from an extra tank battalion with the division. The whole force appears to have had about thirty-seven tanks, of which twenty-five attacked 2 NZ Division, while twelve were on the front of 2 Armoured Brigade. But good anti-tank defence had foiled the attack.

Meanwhile Divisional Cavalry was watching odd enemy vehicles, including tanks, in the area south-east of Telil, some miles behind the 2 NZ Division spearhead. As the day wore on these enemy forces became an embarrassment, and finally 26 Battalion was ordered to send out a mobile patrol of carriers, mortars, anti-tank guns and machine guns. This patrol in the end surprised two enemy tanks, destroyed one and drove the other away, and by this time it was dark.

By last light the enemy was still on the Sfax–Faid road, but his tanks had all moved off to the north. The enemy had now heard the alarming news that First Army had broken through towards Kairouan, so threatening the rear of all his forces facing Eighth Army. Orders were at once given by *Army Group Headquarters* for *1 Italian Army* to go straight back to a line north of Sousse, but a combination of a shortage of petrol and a desire to have a little longer to remove ammunition stocks from Sfax led Bayerlein to lay down a withdrawal to a line running east from Sebkret mta el Rherra, leaving rearguards to cover Sfax. Bayerlein's words on this date are, 'The troops (some of them tired out, some of them separated from their units) disengaged from the enemy with great difficulty, and retired to the new line, followed up closely by the enemy.'

Towards last light 2 Armoured Brigade took over from 8 Armoured Brigade on Djebel et Telil, and the latter side-slipped a few miles to the east, with KDG in company and Divisional Cavalry just behind, all in preparation for another night move to the Djebel bou Thadi. The infantry of the Division was by this time well stretched out beyond Djebel Toual ech Cheikh, with 26 Battalion from 6 Brigade slightly displaced to the east as a safety precaution. Practically the whole day's advance had been through crop lands and olive groves, and the going was heavy.

Poor visibility had limited the operations of the air force, and in any case targets were becoming rare. The enemy made a few raids on 2 NZ Division, but casualties and damage were slight.

Bardia to Enfidaville

10 April—Cross-country Journey

The idea of a night advance, and indeed of any advance due north, was abandoned quite early, and at 3.40 a.m. on 10 April was replaced by an advance by 2 NZ Division to the north-east towards La Hencha (on the main road north of Sfax), with the object of cutting off the troops opposing 30 Corps in Sfax. The 4th Light Armoured Brigade would come up on the left of 2 NZ Division, and farther left would be 1 Armoured Division and 'L' Force.

So at 6.30 a.m. the GOC held a conference about the day's move. King's Dragoon Guards, Divisional Cavalry and 8 Armoured Brigade were to lead, on an axis via Triaga and La Hencha. The change in plan delayed the start until 9 a.m., and in any case at 8.15 a.m. word was received that Sfax had been entered, almost inevitably, by 11 Hussars of 7 Armoured Division. However, the plan was not altered, and the advance continued, but contacts with the enemy were confined to brushes with the tail of his rearguards. Air reconnaissance discovered little south of Sousse; nevertheless the enemy's demolition parties were active, and KDG reached La Hencha at 11.30 a.m. just as the main road to the north was blown—and badly blown—where it crossed a marsh. All that could be done was to send a few shells after retreating MT. King's Dragoon Guards ended the day deployed on an arc from the main road north of La Hencha to the coastal road at Djebiniana, where it was in touch with 7 Armoured Division.

Divisional Cavalry made no contact with the enemy, but managed to penetrate off the roads through the gap between Sebkret mta el Rherra and Sebkret mta el Djem, despite the very enclosed nature of the country. They ended the day at El Djem itself, well in the lead.

Staffs Yeomanry, by dint of much cross-country work, also got through the gap between the two sebkrets, to within seven miles of El Djem, but was then almost out of petrol because wheeled transport was held up at the large 'blow' north of La Hencha.

Sappers of 6 and 7 Field Companies worked on this all afternoon, and indeed through the following night. Meanwhile other engineers were sent during the day to report on landing grounds north-east of Telil. The party was bombed just as it was leaving one ground, and two men were killed and eight wounded. This episode showed the importance that both sides attached to advanced landing grounds, we to use them, and the enemy to stop us. It is again an example of the active part played by the engineers.

The gun group was partially deployed south of La Hencha and got off some rounds at straggling enemy transport. Infantry had no action of any kind, and most unit diaries comment on the pleasant move among green crops and wild flowers and under olive trees.¹

By the end of the day 10 Corps was in a long arc from Djebiniana through La Hencha, north of Sebkret mta el Rherra, north of Djebel bou Thadi and Djebel Kordj to Kefer Rayat. The only forward element of 30 Corps was 11 Hussars, which in its usual style had a patrol on the coast as far north as Chebba. From now on, however, Eighth Army operated with one corps only, leaving Headquarters 30 Corps planning the next stage, the invasion of Sicily. In any case it was time to give some thought to the administrative position, for the army was still

dependent on supplies from Tripoli, now some 300 miles away. It was an urgent matter to get the port of Sfax into order.

The 6th Armoured Division of 9 Corps was now fighting hard at the gates of Kairouan, and this was the enemy's greatest danger. The *21st Panzer Division* had already been moved there and now *15 Panzer Division* was sent back to the defile between Sebkra Kelbia and Sebkra de Sidi el Hani, so blocking the direct road from Kairouan to Sousse. Rearguards south of this line were provided by *90 Light Division* on the coastal strip and *164 Light Division* farther inland. It was commonly remarked that Eighth Army would be chasing '*90 Light*' to the end of time.

The *15th Panzer Division* had supplied the rearguards opposing 2 NZ Division, but had now moved to its new task. Except for some small unarmoured elements, the Division was not again to meet *21 Panzer Division* which, with *10 Panzer Division*, was transferred to the First Army front.

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General Freyberg to the Prime Minister

27 May 1943

I have the honour to report as follows on the operations in Tunisia. In my last cabled report sent from near Gabes on 5 April (No. 204) I described our 'left hook' which turned the Mareth Line. This short account, which I began in Tunis just five weeks later, tells the story of the part played by your Division in the last phase of Eighth Army's long advance and in the final great battle fought by British, American, and French forces to smash the Axis bridgehead and end the North African campaign.

On being turned out of the Mareth Line the enemy withdrew to a position on Wadi Akarit, closely followed by the New Zealand Division and the 1st British Armoured Division. It soon became clear that the enemy would endeavour to hold this line since any further withdrawal would open the way for Eighth Army to join hands with American forces advancing from Gafsa.

The position was naturally strong, with the sea on one side and impassable salt marshes on the other. A full-scale frontal attack was therefore necessary, and three infantry divisions, the British 50th, 51st (Highland), and 4th Indian, were deployed for the assault. At this stage the New Zealand Division was withdrawn into reserve and, with the British 1st Armoured Division, was given the role of breaking through once a breach was made.

From a nearby hill I watched Eighth Army concentrate for the attack. Continuous lines of transport were coming up the roads and over the entire landscape as far as the eye could see, tanks, guns, and trucks of a motorised army were assembled.

On 6 April the attack was launched. After heavy infantry fighting a bridgehead across the Wadi was won and the New Zealand Division, led by armoured cars of the King's Dragoon Guards, light tanks of the New Zealand Divisional Cavalry, and heavy tanks of the British 8th Armoured Brigade, followed through. As soon as there was room to manoeuvre we opened out into desert formation and advanced north, harassing the retreating enemy and cutting off considerable numbers. What remained of the Italian Saharan Corps, with General Mannerini and his complete staff, were amongst the prisoners.

On 7 April British armoured cars on our left met American troops advancing on Maknassy and the junction of Allied forces from the east and west, which the enemy had fought so long to prevent, was effected. With every hour our grip on the Tunis bridgehead was tightening.

Near Sfax, with more room to manoeuvre, we planned another left hook. The enemy, however, anticipated this danger and retreated fast, leaving valuable installations and stores in the Sfax area intact. Sfax was occupied on 9 April and Sousse on the 12th. Our advancing forces met

with little opposition, apart from the usual enemy rearguard artillery and sporadic attacks from the Luftwaffe, temporarily able to operate more freely because we had advanced beyond range of our own fighter cover. The advance continued as fast as ways could be found through very different country from the desert to which we were accustomed. We drove through beautiful olive groves and fields bright with scarlet poppies, yellow chrysanthemums, and marguerite daisies, and made fragrant by purple sweet night-scented stocks. This part of our move was memorable. The French people greeted our troops with great enthusiasm, throwing flowers to our men as they passed through towns decked with the flags of the Allies.

Advancing north of Sousse we were faced by the formidable mountain chain which forms a natural rampart protecting Tunis from the south and west. Here the forces of Arnim and Messe (who had succeeded Rommel) were preparing to meet the Allied assault. Heavily reinforced, the enemy held all the important passes and dominated every way of approach to Tunis.

In front of this natural stronghold Eighth Army deployed, linking up with other armies under the command of General Alexander, the entire force including most powerful air forces and the Navy operating as a single war machine under the direction of General Eisenhower.¹ The encircling Allied forces were in four main groups: the American Corps switched from the Gafsa front was in the north, then the British First Army, then General Giraud's French Army, and lastly in the south the Eighth Army. The plan was to make the main attack on the First Army front where the ground favoured the use of tanks. Eighth Army's operations were planned to pin as many enemy troops as possible on the southern sector and thus help the main thrust in the north.

The enemy position opposite us was in great depth. The forward line lay at the base of steep hills with positions on spurs and peaks rising behind it. These highlands, rising out of a plain as flat as a billiard table, gave the enemy a commanding position with perfect observation over the country across which we had to attack. Surprise

¹ General of the Army D. D. Eisenhower, Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces in North Africa, 1942–44; Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force in Western Europe, 1944–45; commanded United States occupation zone, Germany, 1945; Chief of Staff, United States Army, 1945–48; Supreme Commander, Allied Powers in Europe (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) 1950— could only be obtained by assembling our attacking troops at night, which entailed bringing our artillery forward on to the plain on the night of the attack. The guns had to remain silent until zero hour, and we knew that if we did not gain our objectives they would be overlooked and would not be able to remain forward in daylight to support the infantry. Further difficulties for the attackers were two deep wadis, an old Roman viaduct, a minefield laid in barley fields, and giant cactus hedges, all of which had to be dealt with by our sappers and infantry before the vehicles with supporting arms could be got forward.

At midnight on 19 April Eighth Army began the Allied general offensive which for the next three weeks raged along the whole front. This attack was carried out by the New Zealand Division and the 4th Indian Division. We were on the coastal sector with the Indian Division on our left. We attacked with the 6th Brigade on the right (under the command of Brigadier Gentry) and the 5th Brigade on the left (under Brigadier Kippenberger). Our objectives were Takrouna feature and a long spur to the east of it. Following behind our infantry were tanks

of the British 8th Armoured Brigade (under Brigadier Harvey) ready to go through at first light.

At the appointed hour the infantry went forward behind a heavy artillery barrage from our field and medium artillery and guns of other formations (under our CRA, Brigadier Weir). On the right the 6th Brigade made good progress, meeting only slight opposition, and German troops from the 90th Light Division left Enfidaville village without fighting. On the left, however, the 5th Brigade met fierce resistance. Takrouna was a rocky crag surmounted by a village, which from the plain below looked like some medieval castle. It had been turned into a fortress bastion of the enemy's Enfidaville line and, as we learnt later from prisoners, it was considered by the enemy to be impregnable. The fighting here was as hard as any experienced in the whole campaign. Most intense fire was met, many officers became casualties, every commanding officer in the 5th Brigade was wounded, communications broke down, and it was impossible to get clear reports of the situation. It was a night of anxiety for everybody. Could the guns be left out on the plain? Were the infantry supporting weapons getting forward? Reports came in that the infantry were advancing yard by yard and eventually we learnt that a small party from the Maori Battalion had scaled the cliff and gained a foothold in Takrouna village, while the 21st and 23rd Battalions were holding firm on either side of the feature. The 21st Battalion on the left had almost reached its objective but was withdrawn before daylight because its position was untenable with Takrouna untaken.

Throughout the next day, despite heavy fire, the flanks held, while in the village on the pinnacle of rock house-to-house and hand-to-hand fighting went on. Our foothold there vastly improved our artillery position by giving valuable observation over enemy positions, and despite the heavy artillery fire which blasted the top of the rock our OP^L officers remained there all day to direct the fire of our guns.

During the night of 20 April our line was consolidated and the 6th Brigade linked up with the sorely pressed 5th Brigade. All night grim fighting went on in Takrouna village, and next morning an enemy pocket was still holding out obstinately in the top houses of the village. It was finally sniped by a 25-pounder gun. Lower down on the west of the hill, Takrouna village remained firmly held. This position was battered by artillery all day on the 21st, and towards evening parties from the 21st and 28th (Maori) Battalions stormed the village, taking remnants of the garrison prisoner. Two field guns, ten small pieces, 72 machine guns, and many light machine guns and 732 prisoners were captured—a clear indication of the strength of the position.

The capture of Takrouna feature left us firmly established on a line which constituted an immediate threat to the rest of the enemy's Enfidaville line. Eighth Army's role at this stage was to maintain pressure all along the front and keep a large enemy force fully engaged on our sector. On 24 and 25 April the 6th Brigade (under Brigadier Parkinson), with tanks of the 8th Armoured Brigade in support, carried out two night advances and captured several more features which increased still further the dent in the enemy line. The enemy reacted violently but, despite counter-attacks and very intense artillery and mortar fire, our salient was firmly held.

Meanwhile, in the north the First Army attack had been launched on 23 April, and after extremely heavy fighting on the following days important heights were captured and the enemy's line bent back. At the end of the first week of our offensive no weakness had been

revealed in the enemy defences on either the First or Eighth Army fronts, and we had nowhere captured the enemy main line of resistance. Our losses had been severe and it was obvious that more heavy blows would have to be struck before we could break through. On the Enfidaville front the nature of the country made it impossible to gain a penetration of more than a few miles in any single successful attack, but on the First Army front the topography was more favourable. It was at this stage that the Allied forces were regrouped for an all-out attack on the First Army sector by two infantry divisions and two armoured divisions, assisted by simultaneous advances in the north and south by American and French forces. The New Zealand Division was relieved from the Takrouna front to support French operations in the direction of Pont du Fahs.

The new attack in the north could not have been unexpected, but under the weight of the combined blow of infantry and armoured divisions of the First and Eighth Armies, supported by very powerful artillery and air support, the enemy defences crumpled. From north to south the Allies advanced. The collapse was so sudden that Commanders suspected a trap, but it soon became clear that the enemy had become completely disorganised. Tunis and Bizerta were occupied and our armoured divisions swept across the base of the Cape Bon Peninsula before the enemy could regroup to face them.

On the southern flank of this attack, the New Zealand artillery had been very active supporting the French, and the 5th Brigade had made three night advances, capturing prisoners and equipment. In an enemy counter-attack on this front a company of the 28th (Maori) Battalion were surrounded and had to fight their way out. Next morning they counter-attacked, retook the position, and captured 75 prisoners—a characteristic operation to end the New Zealand Division's part in the battle.

The Allied success in the north had made the position of the large force of positional infantry on our front most precarious. On 11 May we sent a letter back with a German prisoner to General Graf von Sponeck, Commander of the 90th Light Division, pointing out that further resistance was useless. He refused to surrender unconditionally but did so next day when his headquarters was attacked from the rear by the British Armoured Division. On 12 May we picked up a wireless message to us from Marshal Messe, commanding the enemy First Army, which included the 90th Light Division, 164th Division, and 20th Italian Corps. Emissaries from both the German and Italian commanders came into our lines, and Marshal Messe, complete with his staff, surrendered unconditionally to me on 13 May. With him came General Liebenstein, commanding the German 164th Division. Resistance now ceased and white flags appeared everywhere. Many of the prisoners from the enemy First Army were collected by British forces striking south from Cape Bon Peninsula, but another 31,558 were taken on our Corps front. For many days prisoners, both German and Italian, were marching back to prisoner-of-war cages in the rear.

So ended the battle for North Africa, with a disaster for the enemy comparable to Stalingrad. The Tunis bridgehead, which the Germans had boasted would be held, was in our hands, and over 200,000 prisoners and great numbers of guns, tanks, and other weapons and equipment of all kinds were captured. The presence of ships of the Royal Navy actually in the Gulf of Tunis and continuous sweeps of Allied bombers successfully discouraged any attempt at evacuation by the Italian Navy, which did not put to sea. The whole Axis force in the Tunis bridgehead will be reported in Germany and Italy killed, wounded, or prisoner of war.

At the conclusion of this North African campaign I want to place on record the deep admiration I feel for the magnificent qualities and great work done by all ranks under my command. We have been fighting continuously for almost a year, battle after battle, with little respite, on hard rations and short supplies of indifferent water. The endurance and courage of all ranks under conditions of great discomfort and peril have been beyond praise and their resource, good humour, and wisdom have made them ideal material for a fast-moving, hard-hitting force such as ours. The Division has never faltered or failed in any of the difficult and hazardous missions it has been set, and no one realises as I do how much they have achieved. No commander has ever been better served.¹

¹ New Zealand casualties in North Africa from 22 Nov 1942–17 Sep 1943 were:

Killed	372
Died of wounds	93
Died on active service(includes deaths through sickness, accident, &c.)	74
Wounded	1534
Prisoners of war(includes 11 wounded and prisoners of war and 2 died of wounds while prisoners of war)	47
Total	2120

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