

Iraq to the Persian system. The construction of this railway extension and the terminal lighter wharf will be given the highest priority.

16. In order to facilitate transportation of base construction material by the Karun River, landing facilities for stores at Ahwaz will be improved to the maximum possible extent.

In order to save transportation on the link Ahwaz-Andimeshk, it may be advisable to consider the transfer of certain installations now planned for Andimeshk to Ahwaz.

Maximum dispersion may be sacrificed to economy of material and in the interests of rapid construction.

17. An advanced base area will be reconnoitred, for which the Sultanabad area appears most suitable.

As building will have to be reduced to a minimum, it is important to obtain existing buildings as workshops and stores for spares or small stores. If these are not obtainable at Sultanabad, Teheran may have to be considered as an alternative, though it is not so well placed as Sultanabad. A full report will be rendered, after reconnaissance, with your recommendations including a detail of construction required, estimated completion date and proposed reserves to be held there.

C. J. Auchinleck.  
*C.-in-C., M.E.F.*

APPENDIX "A" to G.H.Q., M.E.F.  
OPERATION INSTRUCTION No. 118.

*Forces likely to be available in Middle East by 1st August or later.*

(Referred to in para. 4.)

1 Armd. Div.	2 S. A. Div.
7 Armd. Div.	4 Ind. Div.
10 Armd. Div.	5 Ind. Div.
31 Ind. Armd. Div.	6 Ind. Div.
1 Army Tank Bde.	8 Ind. Div.
32 Army Tank Bde.	10 Ind. Div.
1 Armd. Bde. Gp.	Polish Div.
9 Armd. Bde. Gp.	1 F. F. Bde. Gp.
22 Armd. Bde. Gp.	2 F. F. Bde. Gp.
3 Ind. Motor Bde. Gp.	3 F. F. Bde. Gp.
50 Div.	Greek Bde. Gp.
9 Aust. Div.	Sudanese Bde. Gp.
N. Z. Div.	Desert Bde.
1 S. A. Div.	

*Possibly due from overseas and ready 1st August or later (Not to be relied on).*

8 Armd. Div.  
Two Inf. Divs.  
251 Ind. Armd. Bde.

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*Letter from the Commander-in-Chief, M.E.F., to the Commander, Eighth Army.*

Cairo, 20th May, 1942.

I am sending you this by Corbett, as I feel that you should know how I think the enemy may attack you. I have had my ideas put on the enclosed maps in order to make them clearer.

Corbett is thoroughly in my mind and can explain any doubtful point to you.

Do not think I am trying to dictate to you in any way, but this coming struggle is going to be so vital that I feel that you must have the benefit of our combined consideration here, though I realise we cannot be so conversant with the details of the problem as are you and your staff.

2. As you already know, I feel that there are two main courses open to the enemy:—

(i) To envelop our southern flank, seizing or masking Bir Hacheim en route, and then driving on Tobruk. This would probably be accompanied by a strong diversion with plenty of artillery, dive-bombers and smoke against your northern flank, aided possibly by landings from small craft in rear of the Gazala inlet, with a view eventually to clearing the coast road to Tobruk.

(ii) To put in a very heavy attack on a narrow front with tanks, artillery, dive-bombers, smoke and lorried infantry against the centre of the main position, with the object of driving straight on Tobruk. This would probably be helped by a feint against Bir Hacheim in which the Italian tanks might well be used with the aim of drawing off the main body of your armour to the south, and so leaving the way open for the main thrust.

This course would also almost certainly include an attack from the sea round about Gazala for the same object as before.

3. I feel myself that the second course is the one he will adopt, and that it is certainly the most dangerous to us, as if it succeeds it will cut our forces in half and probably result in the destruction of the northern part of them. We must of course be ready to deal with the enemy should he adopt the first course, and in either event, you must of course be most careful not to commit your armoured striking force until you know beyond reasonable doubt where the main body of his armour is thrusting.

4. Now, as to the method I think he is likely to adopt to put the second course into effect. I believe he will try to put the main body of his armour through our front on both sides of the Gadd el Ahmar ridge, which, as you know, runs more or less east and west along the boundary between the 1st S.A. and 50th Divs. This attack will be supported by every kind of weapon, including especially dive-bombers and anti-tank artillery. It will be pushed relentlessly on a narrow front.

As we agreed the other day, it is likely that such an attack will break through in spite of our minefields. Let us assume that it does break through on a comparatively narrow front.

I think that then he will immediately put out defensive flanks, taking full advantage of the main coastal escarpment to the north, and of the escarpment which runs along the Trigh Capuzzo to the south. If he can get his anti-tank and other artillery, protected by infantry, established on these escarpments, he will have established a corridor which may be difficult to cut, especially for your armour, if it is positioned as at present, somewhat far to the south.

Having secured his flank, he will drive in on Tobruk, assisted almost certainly by parachute attacks on the place itself and the troops guarding the entrances, and, possibly, also by landings from the sea which may be supported by naval bombardment. At the same time he may try to open the Gazala defile for the passage of M.T. and troops by landings from assault boats east of it.

As I have already said, this main attack will almost certainly be accompanied by a strong and resolute feint against Bir Hacheim, which will develop into a real attack if it has any initial success.