

# 8th Army

## Operation CRUSADER

### 18 November 1941

*8th Army fielded 713 tanks. The goal of Crusader was to destroy the German armour, the key to Axis combat power. Africa Corps could field only 174 Panzers.*

*The following OpOrder was re-created for PME. The flaws in the original plan have been retained for discussion purposes.*



**8th Army**  
**SOFAFI**  
**18 NOV 1941**

### **Operation Order** for Operation CRUSADER

Task Organization: ANNEX A

#### 1. SITUATION

- a. General. The Middle East is currently the most important theatre of the war for the British Empire. Aggressive action must be taken immediately to clear the Axis threat in the Western Desert and avoid a simultaneous defense of Egypt on two fronts. When the main threat is eliminated, the Northern front will be reinforced. Egypt must not be lost.
- b. Enemy. See ANNEX B. The Italian 55th Infantry Division defends the SIDI OMAR to SOLLUM (HALFAYA PASS) frontier. Units of the Italian XX and XXI Corps are besieging TOBRUK. The two armoured divisions, 15th and 21st, and one motorized division, 90th Light, of the Africa Corps, are staged East of TOBRUK. A small German force holds BARDIA, a separate force holds the HALFAYA PASS.
- c. Friendly. Army Group Middle East attacks and destroys Axis forces in North Africa in to defend Egypt and secure the North African coast. 8th Army is the main effort. Mediterranean Fleet and Air Forces Middle East interdict air and sea traffic between Europe and Africa and cut supply lines to restrict Axis forces in North Africa. 9th Army defends SYRIA and IRAQ to protect Iraqi oil fields and approaches to EGYPT.

2. MISSION. At H-Hour, 8th Army attacks and destroys Axis armoured forces east of TOBRUK in order to defend Egypt and secure the North African coast.

#### 3. EXECUTION

- a. Concept of Operations. From the vicinity of FORT MADDALENA, 8th Army attacks northwest toward TOBRUK on two separate corps axis.

As the main effort, the armour of XXX Corps attacks northwest through GABR SALEH toward SIDI REZEGH. This will provoke a German counter-attack against a concentrated XXX Corps at a location of our choosing. GABR SALEH and the Trigh El Abd are vital to German operations against TOBRUK. XXX Corps will destroy the German armour, then be prepared to attack west to relieve TOBRUK.

The infantry of XIII Corps attacks the Italian frontier defenses at SIDI OMAR to SOLLUM to mask XXX Corps movement, then envelops these defenses and seizes the garrisons at FORT CAPUZZO, SOLLUM and BARDIA. XIII Corps should be prepared to advance west, clearing enemy along the coast between BARDIA and TOBRUK.

The ultimate goal is to destroy the Axis armour, recapture terrain and airfields to assist Fleet and Air Forces, and relieve TOBRUK:

- (i) The enemy armoured forces are the target
- (ii) They must be hemmed in and not allowed to escape.
- (iii) The relief of TOBRUK must be incidental.

b. Tasks

- (1) XXX Corps. ME. Attack northwest through GABR SALEH towards SIDI REZEGH. Find, attack, and destroy the armoured units of the Africa Corps in order to eliminate the enemy's offensive capability.
- (2) XIII Corps. Attack Italian frontier defenses from SIDI OMAR to SOLLUM in order to fix Italian units and clear a coastal route toward TOBRUK.
- (3) 4th Armoured Brigade. Reserve. Screen the gap between XXX Corps and XIII Corps in order to protect the Corps flanks.
- (4) 70th Division (Tobruk Fortress). Hold TOBRUK. When relief is imminent, attack south-east in order to link up with relieving forces.
- (5) 29th Infantry Brigade Group (Oasis Group). Secure assigned positions in order to protect critical installations, resources and capabilities from enemy interference.

c. Coordinating Instructions

- (1) D-Day: 18 Nov 1941
- (2) H-Hour: 0400

4. ADMIN and LOGISTICS. Omitted.

5. COMMAND and SIGNAL. Omitted.

Sir Alan Gordon CUNNINGHAM  
Lieutenant General  
Commanding

**8th Army**  
FORT MADDALENA  
18 NOV 1941

ANNEX A: Task Organization to Operation Crusader

<b>8th Army</b>	LtGen Sir Alan Gordon CUNNINGHAM
<b>XXX Corps</b>	LtGen C. Willoughby M. NORRIE
<b>XIII Corps</b>	LtGen A. R. GODWIN-AUSTEN
<b>70th Division (REIN)</b> (Tobruk Fortress)	MajGen R. MacK. SCOBIE
<b>29th Infantry Brigade Group</b> (Oasis Group)	Brig Denys W. REID
2nd South African Division (enroute)	MajGen I. P. de VILLIERS
Long Range Desert Group (LRDG)	LtCol G. L. PRENDERGAST

**70th Division**  
FORT MADDALENA  
18 NOV 1941

ANNEX A: Task Organization to Operation Crusader

**70th Division (REIN)** (Tobruk Fortress)

MajGen R. MacK. SCOBIE

**14th Infantry Brigade**

Brig B. H. CHAPPEL

1st Bn, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment  
2nd Bn, York and Lancaster Regiment  
2nd Bn, The Black Watch Regiment  
14th Brigade AT Coy

+ 2/15th Australian Bn(-), 9th Australian Division

**16th Infantry Brigade**

Brig C. E. N. LOMAX

2nd Bn, The Queen's Royal Regiment  
2nd Bn, The King's Own Royal Regiment  
2nd Bn, The Royal Leicestershire Regiment  
16th Brigade AT Coy  
(2) MG Coys, 1st Bn, Northumberland Fusiliers

**23rd Infantry Brigade**

Brig C. H. V. COX

4th Bn, The Borderer Regiment  
1st Bn, Durham Light Infantry  
23rd Brigade AT Coy  
MG Coy, 1st Bn, Northumberland Fusiliers  
2/13th Australian Bn, 9th Australian Division

LtCol F. A. BURROWS

**Artillery**

1st Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery (RHA)  
104th Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery (RHA)  
107th Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery (RHA)  
144th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (RA)  
2nd, 13th, 14th, 57th, 89th Anti-Aircraft Artillery

+ **32nd Army Tank Brigade**

Brig A. C. WILLISON

1st Bn, Royal Tank Regiment (RTR)  
4th Bn, Royal Tank Regiment (RTR)  
7th Bn, Royal Tank Regiment (RTR) (-)(REIN)  
    "D" Squadron, 7th RTR + "C" Squadron KDG  
1st Motor Bn, The Essex Regiment

+ **Polish 1st Carpathian Rifle Brigade Group**

MajGen S. KOPANSKI

1st Carpathian Rifle Bn  
2nd Carpathian Rifle Bn  
3rd Carpathian Rifle Bn  
Carpathian Lancers  
Carpathian Brigade AT Coy  
Carpathian Field Regiment

Oasis Group  
FORT MADDALENA  
15 Nov 1941

ANNEX A: Task Organization to Operation CRUSADER

**Oasis Group**

Brig Denys W. REID

**29th Infantry Brigade Group**

Brig Denys W. REID

1st Bn, The Worcestershire Regiment  
6/13th Bn, Frontier Force Rifles  
3rd Bn, 2nd Punjab Regiment

**2nd South African Infantry Brigade, 1st SA Division**

Brig W. H. E. POOLE

1st Bn, Natal Mounted Rifles  
1st / 2nd Field Force Bn  
Cape Town Highlanders

4th Field Regiment, South African Artillery  
2nd Battery, 1st South African AT Regiment  
Field Coy, South African Engineers

**Artillery**

2nd Field Regiment THA (24 25-pounders)  
60th Field Regiment RA  
7th Medium Regiment RA

LtCol O. W. SHERWELL  
Brig A. F. HELY  
LtCol H. C. ELTON

“C” Battery, 73rd Anti-Tank Regiment RA

1st Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment RA  
6th Light Anti-Aircraft Regt RA

LtCol B. L. DeROBECK

**6th South African Armoured Car Regiment (-)**

LtCol V. O’B. SHORT

**7th South African Recce Regiment, 2nd SA Infantry Division** LtCol P.H. GROBBELAAR

**2nd South African Infantry Division**  
FORT MADDALENA  
18 Nov 1941

ANNEX A: Task Organization to Operation CRUSADER

**2nd South African Infantry Division (-)**

MajGen I.P. de VILLIERS  
GSO1 Col H.B. KLOPPER

**3rd South African Infantry Brigade**

Brig C. E. BORAIN

1st Bn, Imperial Light Horse (ILH)  
1st Bn, Royal Durban Light Infantry (RDLI)  
1st Bn, Rand Light Infantry (RLI)

**4th South African Infantry Brigade**

Brig A. A. HAYTON

Umvoti Mounted Rifles (UMR)  
2nd Bn, Royal Durban Light Infantry (RDLI)  
Kaffrarian Rifles (KR)

**6th South African Infantry Brigade**

Brig F. W. COOPER

2nd Bn, Transvaal Scottish (TS)  
1st Bn, South African Police (SAP)  
2nd Bn, South African Police (SAP)

**Artillery**

1st Field Regiment THA (24 25-pounders)  
2nd Field Regiment THA (24 25-pounders) (-)  
5th Field Regiment THA (24 25-pounders)

LtCol O. W. SHERWELL

2nd South African Anti-Tank Regiment (-) (16 18-pounders, 48 2-pounders)  
2nd South African Light Anti-Aircraft Regt (36 guns)

**7th South African Recce Regiment (- detached)**

LtCol P. H. GROBBELAAR

**Die Middellandse (RPS) MG Battalion**

**South African Engineers**

**2nd South African Light AA Regiment (-)**

5th Battery  
6th Battery