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.

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
ANNEX A: Task Organization to Operation Crusader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Organization</th>
<th>Commanding Officer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>8th Army</strong></td>
<td>LtGen Sir Alan Gordon CUNNINGHAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>XXX Corps</strong></td>
<td>LtGen C. Willoughby M. NORRIE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>XIII Corps</strong></td>
<td>LtGen A. R. GODWIN-AUSTEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>70th Division (REIN) (Tobruk Fortress)</strong></td>
<td>MajGen R. MacK. SCOBIE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>29th Infantry Brigade Group</strong> (Oasis Group)**</td>
<td>Brig Denys W. REID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd South African Division (enroute)</td>
<td>MajGen I. P. de VILLIERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Range Desert Group (LRDG)</td>
<td>LtCol G. L. PRENDERGAST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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ANNEX A: Task Organization to Operation Crusader

70th Division (REIN) (Tobruk Fortress)

MajGen R. MacK. SCOBIE

14th Infantry Brigade
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

Brig B. H. CHAPPEL

16th Infantry Brigade
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

Brig C. E. N. LOMAX

23rd Infantry Brigade
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

Brig C. H. V. COX

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

Brig A. C. WILLISON

+ 32nd Army Tank Brigade
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

Brig A. C. WILLISON

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

MajGen S. KOPANSKI
ANNEX A: Task Organization to Operation CRUSADER

**Oasis Group**

**29th Infantry Brigade Group**

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

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

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

Artillery

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

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

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

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

**7th South African Recce Regiment**, 2nd SA Infantry Division
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

LtCol O. W. SHERWELL

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

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