

XXX Corps

Operation CRUSADER

18 November 1941

XXX Corps was a tank-heavy, fully motorized formation, the powerful Main Effort of the Crusader plan. XXX Corps' mission was straightforward: to destroy the armour of the Afrika Corps. The relief of Tobruk was secondary.

The following OpOrder was re-created for PME. The inconsistencies of the original plan have been retained for discussion purposes.



XXX Corps
FORT MADDALENA
18 Nov 1941

Operation Order for Operation CRUSDADER

Task Organization: ANNEX A

1. SITUATION

- a. General. Omitted.
- b. Enemy. See ANNEX B. The entire Axis force in North Africa is in Cyrenaica between BARDIA and TOBRUK. These dispositions are unlikely to change. The 15th Panzer and 21st Panzer Divisions of the Afrika Corps are staged west of GAMBUT. These divisions will sortie south toward GABR SALEH on word of a British offensive toward TOBRUK. Of the two weak Italian Infantry Corps besieging TOBRUK, on Italian infantry division, the 132nd, defends the BIR EL GUBI corridor.
- c. Friendly. See 8th Army CRUSADER OpOrder. 8th Army attacks NW and destroys Axis armour in North Africa IOT defend Egypt and secure the North African coast for an eventual invasion of Europe. XXX Corps is ME.

XIII Corps attacks Italian frontier defenses in the SIDI OMAR to SOLLUM area IOT fix Italian units and clear a coastal route to TOBRUK.

2. MISSION. At H-Hour, XXX Corps attacks NW through GABR SALEH toward SIDI REZEGH, to find, attack, and destroy the armoured units of the Afrika Corps IOT eliminate the enemy's offensive capability.

3. EXECUTION

- a. Concept of Operations. See APPENDIX 10: Operations Overlay to ANNEX C: Operations. As XIII Corps fixes enemy formations in the SIDI OMAR to HALFAYA

PASS area, XXX Corps attacks NW on three axis, through GABR SALEH toward SIDI REZEGH. While the infantry division guards the west flank by blocking the Trigh el Abd corridor at BIR EL GUBI, the armoured division will find, draw out, and destroy the enemy armor, which will be moving from GAMBUT toward GABR SALEH.

The armoured brigade group will protect the east flank of the Corps. The Guards Brigade in reserve will protect lines of communication.

After engaging the German armour, BPT conduct follow-on operations NW through SIDI REZEGH to link up with TOBRUK.

b. Tasks

- (1) 7th Armoured Division. ME. Attack (NW) through GABR SALEH IOT draw out German armour. Attack and destroy German armoured forces.
- (2) 4th Armoured Brigade. Attack (NW) in trace of 7th Armoured Division. Screen the right flank of the Corps IOT to prevent the enemy from splitting XXX and XIII Corps. BPT support 7th Armoured Division's attack on German armour.
- (3) 1st South African Division. Attack (NW) and secure the (E)-(W) corridor at BIR EL GUBI IOT protect the (W) flank of the 7th Armoured Division. BPT to advance and capture SIDI REZEGH ridge and airfield.
- (4) 22nd Guards Infantry Brigade. RES. Advance (NW) in trace. BPT protect lines of communications, forward maintenance centers and logistics sites.

4. ADMIN and LOGISTICS

5. COMMAND and SIGNALS

C. Willoughby M. NORRIE
LtGen
Commanding

XXX Corps Operation CRUSADER 18 November 1941



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ANNEX A: Task Organization to Operation CRUSADER

XXX Corps

LtGen Willoughby M. NORRIE

7th Armoured Division (REIN)

MajGen W. H. E. "Strafer" GOTT

4th Armoured Brigade Group

Brig Alec H. GATEHOUSE

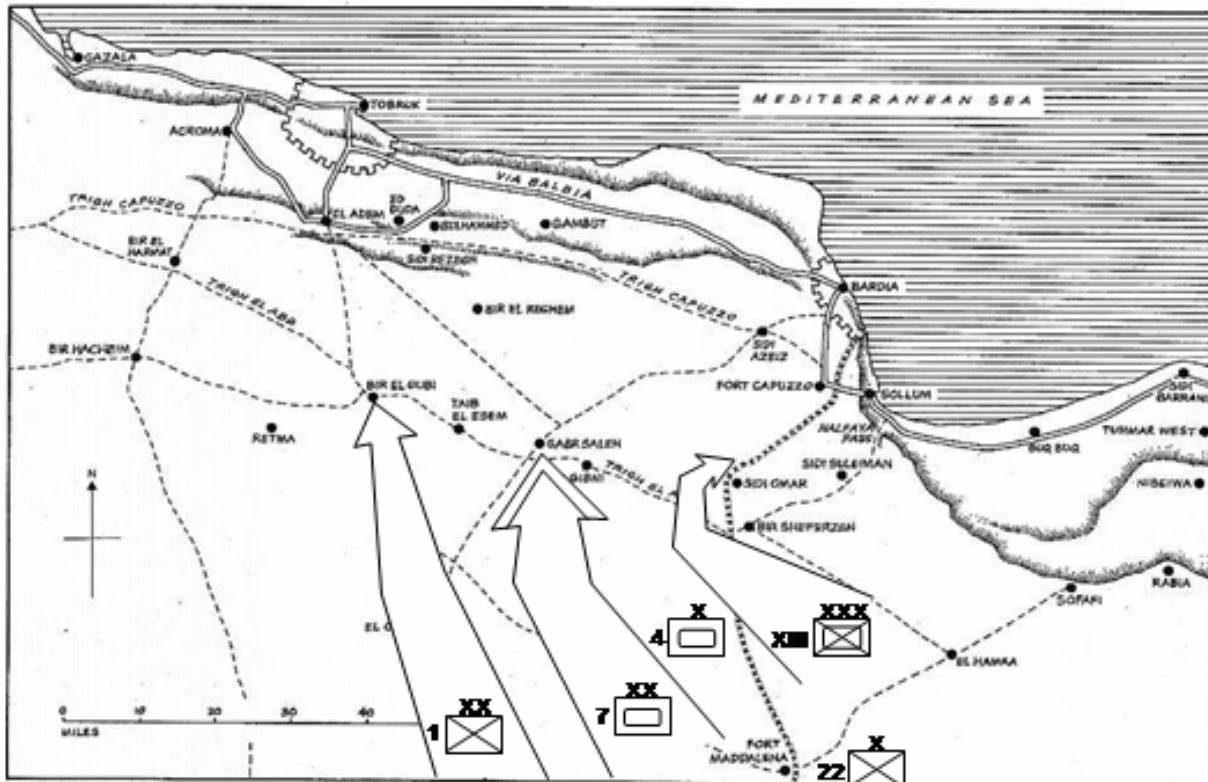
1st South African Division (-)

Brig George L. BRINK

22nd Guards Brigade (-)

Brig J. C. O. MARRIOTT

APPENDIX 10: Operations Overlay to ANNEX C: Operations



**7th Armoured Division “The Desert Rats”
Operation CRUSADER
18 November 1941**



7th Armoured Division
FORT MADDALENA
18 Nov 1941

ANNEX A: Task Organization for Operation CRUSADER

7th Armoured Division (REIN) (455 Tanks)

MajGen W. H. E. “Strafer” GOTT

7th Armoured Brigade (129 Cruisers)

Brig G. M. O. DAVY

7th Tank Battalion, Queen’s Own Hussars
2nd Tank Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment (RTR)
6th Tank Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment (RTR)

LtCol BYASS (KIA)
LtCol CHUTE
LtCol (KIA)

“A” Company, 2nd Bn, The Rifle Brigade
(2) Bty, 4th R.H.A. (16) 25-pounders
3rd Troop, 102nd Northumberland Hussars AT Regiment R.H.A.
4th Bty, 1st LAA Regiment R.A.

22nd Armoured Brigade, 1st Arm Div (163 Crusaders)

Brig J. SCOTT-COCKBURN

2nd Bn Royal Gloucestershire Hussars (Crusaders)
3rd Tank Battalion, County of London Yeomanry (46 Crusaders)
4th Tank Battalion, County of London Yeomanry

LtCol R. K. JAGO
LtCol CARR

“B” Company, 1st Bn, Kings’ Royal Rifle Corps
“C” Battery, 4th R.H.A. (8) 25-pounders
2nd Troop, 102nd Northumberland Hussars AT Regiment R.H.A.
3rd Bty, 1st LAA Regiment R.A.
“M” Battery, 3rd AT Regiment R.H.A.

Maj R. A. EDEN

7th Support Group

Brig J. C. “Jock” CAMPBELL

1st Battalion, The King’s Royal Rifle Corps (-)
“D” Battery, 3rd AT Regiment R.H.A.
2nd Battalion, The Rifle Brigade (-)
“J” Battery, 3rd AT Regiment R.H.A.

LtCol de SALIS
Maj STUART
LtCol Lord Hugo GARMOYLE
Maj Bernard PINNEY

Division Artillery

CRA

2nd Field Regiment, R.H.A. (24) 25-pounders
4th Field Regiment, R.H.A. (24) 25-pounders

LtCol John CURRIE

60th Field Regiment R.A.

67th Medium Regiment, R.A., XXX Corps

3rd AT Regiment, R.H.A.

102nd Northumberland Hussars AT Regiment R.H.A.

1st LAA Regiment R.A. (-)

Royal Engineers (R.E.)

4th Field Squadron, R.E.

143 Field Park Troop, R.E.

Division HQ:

RAMC: 2nd, 13th, 15th, Field Ambulance, 7th Lt Field Hygiene Sect

RASC: 5th, 30th, 58th, 65th, 67th, 550th Companies

1st Bn, King's Dragoon Guards, XXX Corps

6th South African Armoured Car Regiment, XXX Corps

11th Hussars Recce Battalion (Humber Armoured Cars)



7th Armoured Brigade

With the 22nd Armoured Brigade borrowed from 1st Armoured Division, and 4th Armoured Brigade in support, the 7th Armoured Division prepared to fight the Crusader Battle with three armoured brigades totaling more than 450 tanks. Each Brigade advanced on its own axis. In the confusing melee that followed, the three brigades had difficulty supporting one another.



22nd Armoured Brigade

**4th Armoured Brigade Group
Operation CRUSADER
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4th Armoured Brigade Group
FORT MADDALENA
18 Nov 1941

ANNEX A: Task Organization to Operation CRUSADER

4th Armoured Brigade Group (166 Stuart Tanks)

Brig Alec H. GATEHOUSE

8th Battalion, King's Royal Irish Hussars (REIN)

Company, 2nd Bn, Scots Guards
Battery, 2nd Field Regt, R.H.A.
Det, 122nd Lt AA Battery, R.A.

3rd Tank Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment (REIN)

Company, 2nd Bn, Scots Guards
Battery, 2nd Field Regt, R.H.A.
Det, 122nd Lt AA Battery, R.A.

LtCol "Bunny" EWINS

5th Tank Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment (REIN)

Company, 2nd Bn, Scots Guards
Battery, 2nd Field Regt, R.H.A.
Det, 122nd Lt AA Battery, R.A.

LtCol Dinham DREW

4th South African Armoured Car Regiment, XXX Corps

LtCol D. S. NEWTON-KING
2IC: Maj J. G. Craig Anderson

Brigade HQ

1st Troop, 102nd Northumberland Hussars AT Regiment, R.H.A., XXX Corps
2nd Bn, Scots Guards (-)
2nd Field Regt, Royal Horse Artillery (R.H.A.) (-)
122nd Lt AA Battery, R.A. (-)

The 2nd Scots Guards was a motor battalion, a motorized infantry battalion specifically trained and equipped to fight with tanks. Each company of the battalion supported one tank battalion.

1st South African Division

Operation CRUSADER

18 November 1941



1st South African Infantry Division
FORT MADDALENA
18 Nov 1941

1st South African Infantry Division (- 2nd Brigade)

MajGen George E. BRINK
GSO1 Col S.J. JOUBERT
GSO2 Maj A.J. SMIT

1st South African Infantry Brigade

1st Bn, Royal Natal Carbineers (RNC)
1st Bn, Duke of Edinburgh's Own Rifles (DEOR)
1st Bn, Transvaal Scottish (TS)

Brig Dan H. PIENAAR
Brigade-Major Major O.N. FLEMMER
LtCol P.M.G. LeROUX
LtCol G.T. SENESCALL

- + 10th South African Field Ambulance
- + Det, 1st South African Field Company
- + 4th South African AT Battery, 1st SA AT Regiment
- + 1st Company, Regiment President Steyn (RPS) MG Bn

5th South African Infantry Brigade

1st Bn, South African Irish (SAI) (REIN) LtCol J.F.K. DOBBS (WIA) / Maj C. McN. COCHRON
+ 9th Field Battery, 3rd SA Field Regiment
+ 'J' Troop, 3rd SA AT Battery (2-pounders)

Brig B.F. ARMSTRONG (PW)
Brigade-Major Major D.H. OLLEMANS
Maj H.H. GREENWOOD
SgtMaj V. BARCLAY

2nd Bn, Regiment Botha (RB) (REIN)
+ 7th Field Battery, 3rd SA Field Regiment
+ 'K' Troop, 3rd SA AT Battery (2-pounders)

LtCol C.G. MASON (WIA) (PW)
Maj R.L. HARRIS

3rd Bn, Transvaal Scottish (TS) (REIN) LtCol W.H. KIRBY (KIA) / Maj J.D.E. GARTLY (KIA)
+ 8th Field Battery, 3rd SA Field Regiment
+ 'I' Troop, 3rd SA AT Battery (2-pounders)

Maj R.G. ROSSER
Maj R.S. BERRY
SgtMaj R.W. du PLESSIS

- + 11th South African Field Ambulance
- + Det, 1st South African Field Company
- + 3rd South African AT Battery, 1st SA AT Regiment
- + 3rd Company, Regiment President Steyn (RPS) MG Bn

Maj L. MELZER PW
Lt NILLMAPIUS

Artillery

Col C.L. de Wet du TOIT

3rd Field Regiment THA (24 25-pounders)
4th Field Regiment THA (24 25-pounders)
7th Field Regiment THA (24 25-pounders)

LtCol I.B. WHYTE

1st South African Anti-Tank Regiment (- 3rd and 4th Battery) (16 18-pounders, 48 2-pounders)
1st South African Light Anti-Aircraft Regt (36 guns)

LtCol F.I. GERRARD

3rd South African Armoured Car Regiment

LtCol J.P.A. FURSTENBURG

Regiment President Steyn (RPS) MG Bn (- 1st and 3rd Companies)

22nd Guards Brigade Operation CRUSADER 18 November 1941

**22nd Guard Brigade
FORT MADDALENA
18 Nov 1941**

22nd Guards Brigade (-)

Brig J. C. O. MARRIOTT

9th Battalion, The Rifle Brigade

3rd Battalion, The Coldstream Guards

51st Field Regiment, R.A.

12th Battery, 1st LAA Regiment R.A.

During World War II, anti-tank missiles and rockets were not yet available. Anti-tank guns were the weapons that protected non-armoured units. British artillerymen were skilled and brave gunners, but German tacticians employed their guns better. The Germans coordinated all arms, especially anti-tank shields, far more effectively than the British. The German 88mm anti-aircraft cannon, with its family of multi-purpose ammunition, was the most feared tank killer on the North African battlefield.



British towed anti-tank gun with crew in North Africa. A well-prepared, dug-in position would lower the gun into defilade, almost flush with the desert floor, making it hard to see and harder to kill.