

NOTE

This is a preliminary narrative and should not be regarded as authoritative. It has not been checked for accuracy in all aspects, and its interpretations are not necessarily those of the Historical Section as a whole.

Ce texte est préliminaire et n'a aucun caractère officiel. On n'a pas vérifié son exactitude et les interprétations qu'il contient ne sont pas nécessairement celles du Service historique.

Directorate of History
National Defence Headquarters
Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0K2

July 1986

REPORT NO. 14
HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)
ARMY HEADQUARTERS

DECLASSIFIED
Authority: DHD 3-3
by Doc for DHist NDHQ
Date: OCT 15 1986

6 Dec 48

AMENDMENTS

Page Para Line

16	37	3	for: 14 Jul	read: 14 Aug
17	37	34	" 14 Jul	" 14 Aug

APPENDIX "E"

Delete paras 2, 3 and 4 and insert:

From information previously unavailable it has been confirmed that 1 Pz Gren Regt (15 Pz Gren Div) participated in the defence of Assoro and Leonforte.

On 11 May 43 O.B. South had created the "Kommando Sizilien", composed of "Grenadier Regimente Sizilien" Nos. 1, 2 and 3.

On 29 Jun 43 the designation of this force was changed to 15 Pz Gren Div:

Gren Regt Sizilien 1	became 104 Pz Gren Regt
Gren Regt Sizilien 2	became 115 Pz Gren Regt
Gren Regt Sizilien 3	became 129 Pz Gren Regt (1) (2).

After the change had taken place, the old designations were used occasionally. This must be borne in mind in order to preclude erroneous conclusions regarding the number of German formations committed.

(G.M.D.S. - H 1/123b, OKH, Schematic Card File of Divisional Units)

(1) Not 112 Pz Gren Regt

(2) Later absorbed by 115 Pz Gren Regt

DECLASSIFIED
Authority: DHD 3-3
by Case for DHist NDHQ
Date: OCT 15 1986

~~SECRET~~
~~CANCELLED~~
~~CANCELLED~~

R E P O R T N O. 14
HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)

ARMY HEADQUARTERS

15 Apr 47

The Sicilian Campaign. (July - August 1943)
Information from German Sources

Contents

	<u>Paras</u>	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	1	1
Sources of Information	2 - 7	1 - 2
German Appreciations of Allied Plans and Intentions	8 - 13	2 - 4
The Situation on the Eve of the Invasion	14 - 20	4 - 7
Enemy Forces and Dispositions		
(a) German Formations in Sicily at the Time of Invasion	21 - 26	7 - 8
(b) German Formations arriving at later Stages	27 - 32	8 - 10
General Course of German Operations during the Campaign	33 - 37	11 - 17
Course of Operations in Area of 30 Brit Corps, especially that of 1 Cdn Inf Div	38 - 44	17 - 21
German Losses	45 - 48	21 - 23
Experience Reports of Enemy Commanders	49 - 53	23 - 24
List of quoted Documents retained by Hist Sec (G.S.)	54	25

APPENDICES

- APPENDIX "A" Battle Groups of H.G. Div
APPENDIX "B" Experience Report of C.-in-C. South
APPENDIX "C" Experience Report of H.G. Div
APPENDIX "D" Experience Report of 15 Pz Gren Div
APPENDIX "E" German Formations defending Assoro and Leonforte

SECRET
CANCELLED

R E P O R T N O. 14
HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)
ARMY HEADQUARTERS

The Sicilian Campaign (July - August 1943)
Information from German Sources

INTRODUCTION

1. A series of Reports of Historical Section, Canadian Military Headquarters (Nos 126, 127, 132, 135 and 136), has recorded in detail the events of the Sicilian campaign of July and August 1943 as reflected in Allied documents. The present report is based upon German documents now in Allied hands. Its purpose is to afford the reader a general picture of the German operations in Sicily, and a more particular account of the part of the operations which most closely concerned the 1st Canadian Division.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

2. The documents on which this report is based are in the hands of the German Military Documents Section, Washington, D.C. The originals of many of the most important documents were lent to Hist Sec (G.S.) by G.M.D.S. for use in Ottawa. Those of primary significance have been photostated and will be permanently available in this form at Army Headquarters.

3. The German documents available at G.M.D.S. in connection with the Sicilian campaign are unfortunately rather fragmentary. The later phases of the Italian campaign are richly documented by the war diaries of the formations concerned, but the Sicilian material consists mainly of the daily reports of Field Marshal Kesselring to the German General Staff, of some captured documents, and of reports that were passed along to German formations on the mainland for purposes of information. The actual war diaries of the German formations engaged in the fighting in Sicily have not been found; it is possible that these diaries, or some of them, have been destroyed.

4. Source references appear at the end of paragraphs. An exception is made in the case of quotations from the daily reports of the German C.-in-C, South to the German General Staff, Army. To prevent cumbersome repetition, this source is referred to as O.B.S., followed by the date of the respective report.

5. The letter Z, following a reference, denotes that the document referred to is being permanently retained by Hist Sec (G.S.) for purposes of substantiation and possible later use. (See para 54). The daily reports of O.B.S. are being permanently retained on Microfilm D.H.S. Microfilm No 1.

6. Quoted matter is underlined in conformity with the original text.

7. Attention is drawn to the fact that the German "Regiment" represents the brigade or brigade group of British military terminology.

GERMAN APPRECIATIONS OF ALLIED PLANS AND INTENTIONS

8. Although nominally under the command of the Italian Commando Supremo, Field Marshal Kesselring was the commander actually responsible for the conduct of German operations in Italy and the Western and Central Mediterranean. He had been appointed Oberbefehlshaber Sued (O.B.S., C.-in-C. South) by Hitler on 2 Dec 41, in "Directive No. 38". (G.M.D.S. - W 1/1)

9. The chain of command in Italy on the eve of the Sicilian campaign had been set forth in detail by Marshal Kesselring in an order of 1 Jun 43 (G.M.D.S. - 43005/2, Z).

10. Early in 1943, a victorious conclusion of the Allied campaign in North Africa had become a virtual certainty. The German command was now forced to base important decisions upon the probable use the Allies would make of the newly gained initiative.

11. An appreciation: "Future Anglo-Saxon Operative Possibilities" was submitted by the section "Foreign Armies, West", of the German Armed Forces High Command, on 8 Feb 43. To show the situation as seen by German eyes, some pertinent paragraphs from this document are quoted below in translation:

In view of the inaccessibility of the Anglo-Saxons to espionage, and their steadily increasing use of camouflage and deception, we will not be able to discern the intentions of the enemy solely by the means of espionage and the analysis of press and propaganda...

The enemy will direct his operations against places where he believes that inferior defences will permit a quick realization of important aims. Short sea routes will also appear desirable...

The conference of Adana has shown that the enemy desires more than anything else an advance through Turkey. But Turkey - at least for the time being - seems to have denied herself to such plans...

Without preceding successes against the German - Italian Air Forces in Greece, a landing operation there must hardly be expected...

But the idea of knocking Italy out of the war after the conclusion of the African campaign, by means of air attacks and a landing operation, looms large in Anglo-Saxon deliberations...

Sicily offers itself as the first target. Its possession would not only offer the enemy a jumping-board for air - and land attacks against Italy but would also make it possible to resume shipping through the Mediterranean and so to accelerate supply shipments to the Near East. Such a landing would not be practicable without allowing a certain time for preparations and a tangible weakening of the German - Italian Air Force in Italy...

(G.M.D.S. - OKH/OKW, H 22/147; Z)

12. Although many signs pointed towards an invasion of Sicily, the island was defended before the landings only by the notoriously indifferent 6th Italian Army, bolstered by a harder core of two German divisions. During the subsequent operations large portions of two other German divisions were sent to Sicily. There were also many miscellaneous German units.

13. Without losing sight of other factors that must have been considered, there is ample evidence that a clever piece of Allied deception had succeeded in influencing the dispositions made by the German High Command. On 9 May 43, the section "Foreign Armies, West", of the German Armed Forces High Command, had issued a report entitled: "Memorandum concerning Documents found on a British Courier". From all the evidence pointing to the fact that the Germans expected the next blow to fall upon Sardinia and the Peloponnesus, the paragraphs appearing below in translation have been chosen as the shortest and most definite substantiation available.

I) Contents

A letter written on 23 Apr 43, by the Chief of the British General Staff to General Alexander, was found on a British courier in Spain and contains the following data:

Anglo-Saxon High Command plans two landing operations in the Mediterranean.

1) Against Greece (Cover name: Husky)

5th and 56th British Infantry Divisions tentatively earmarked. Landings to be at Cape Araxas and at Calamata. Diversion against the Dodecanese proposed.

- 2) Apparently in Western Mediterranean, target not specified. (Cover name: Brimstone)

No details concerning formations to be used. Only mentions feint attack against Sicily.

II) Analysis

...

- c) ...Sicily as the launching point of a diversionary attack directs attention on Sardinia and Corsica which already repeatedly have been pointed out by this section as probable theatres of landings. - It is quite conceivable that Sardinia with its weaker defences will be given preference by the enemy in order to gain new bases for action against Italy and Sicily.
- d) The planning of a large scale landing in the Mediterranean zone - long considered as firm - has been further confirmed by this discovery.

III) Evaluation

Owing to the brevity of the document it can not yet be told whether the information is genuine or an attempt at deception. In consideration of the surrounding circumstances and the situation in the Mediterranean the genuineness of the communication is deemed possible. Further to the confirmation of conceptions held already concerning the plans of the enemy in the Mediterranean the report adds new points of view with its references on plans for landings on the Eastern coast of the Peloponnesus and a feint against Sicily. The report directs special attention on Sardinia and the southwestern Greek ports and underlines the importance of increased preparedness in these sectors.

(G.M.D.S. - OKH/OKW, H 22/147; Z)

12

This report was followed on ~~21~~ May 43, by a telegram of instructions from the Operations Section of the same high authority to C.-in-C. South, concluding with the following order: "THE MEASURES TO BE TAKEN IN SARDINIA AND THE PELOPONNESUS HAVE PRIORITY OVER ANY OTHERS".
(G.M.D.S. - OKH/OKW, H 22/147; Z)

9814C (02)

see Memo to DDHS, 11 Apr 50

THE SITUATION ON THE EVE OF THE INVASION

14. It is rarely possible to complete strategic preparations without the enemy becoming aware of it. In June 1943 the Germans knew very well that large-scale

landing operations were being prepared, but the destination of the convoys steaming into the Mediterranean through the Straits of Gibraltar remained apparently a well-kept secret until late in the afternoon of 9 Jul, when German scout planes reported large Allied formations in the sea-lanes leading from Malta towards Sicily.

15. The situation, as seen by the enemy, is illustrated by the following quotations from O.B.S.:

- 1 Jul The arrival of five hospital ships at Gibraltar must be interpreted as a further step in the preparation of coming operations...
- 2 Jul A sixth hospital ship has arrived at Gibraltar...
- 3 Jul Heavy concentrations of troop ships (25) with numerous boats on board, at Port Said. Also 10 LCT...
- 4 Jul On 3 Jul the two battleships of the King George Class entered Gibraltar from the Mediterranean. In the afternoon the NELSON and RODNEY left Gibraltar for the Mediterranean and joined the aircraft carrier on her easterly course. A convoy of 28 units from the Atlantic passed Gibraltar on 4 Jul...

During the night 3/4 Jul a large convoy of 104 units passed the Straits from the Atlantic...

The large convoys of the last few days indicate a considerable increase in troops and material...

Leaves for troops in Northern Africa have been limited to the confines of the garrison...

- 5 Jul The sometimes heavy attacks against some air fields in Sicily were continued...
 - 6 Jul The attacks on landing fields in Sicily have been repeated...
- Many convoys in Western Mediterranean...
- 7 Jul Landing craft of all types in port of Sfax now permit the transfer of one British Landing Division. From the Tunisian area, including Malta and Pantelleria, five Brit or seven U.S. divs can now be dispatched...
 - 8 Jul The attacks on Sicilian airfields were continued on 7 Jul with light, heavy and heaviest aircraft. Some airfields situated near ports or possible landing sites have not been attacked.

Under certain circumstances landings from the air on these places may be planned. (sic)...

Three Hospital ships cleared Gibraltar for the Mediterranean and one more has reached Gibraltar from the Atlantic. This is a further indication of an early beginning of enemy operations...

In view of the shipping targets discovered in the neighbourhood of Malta, the German Air Force has increased reconnaissance activity south of Sardinia and Sicily...

10 Jul On 9 Jul at 1630 hrs ~~air~~ reconnaissance discovered
* (for 9 Jul) several convoys steering a general course towards Sicily...

Movement of enemy landing craft towards Sicily has been recognized and leads to the belief that the enemy has started his offensive and will move first of all against the southern and eastern coasts of Sicily...

On 9 Jul at 1810 hrs, 110 nautical miles east of Malta, a group of two battleships and one aircraft carrier, north of Malta five convoys totalling 150 - 180 units, apparently accompanied by battleships and aircraft carrier...

By 1840 hrs all troops in Sicily had been alerted...

At 0115 hrs, 10 Jul, Catania bombarded from the sea by heavy naval guns.

16. At the time when the Allied convoys sailing towards Sicily were discovered, the Axis High Commands could not have held any illusions concerning the value of the defences of the island. Originally it has been intended that the 6th Italian Army should be responsible for the defence of Sicily. But its morale was low, training had been haphazard and the delivery of supplies and ammunition was lagging behind. Already in March 1943 the Italian general Rotta, had submitted a detailed and decidedly pessimistic report. (G.M.D.S. - Ital, 717/4412)

* Early morning reports of O.B.S. usually reflect the situation of the previous day. The report dealing with the movements of convoys on 9 Jul, was dispatched on 10 Jul at 0350 hrs.

17. During the last week of June, a group of Italian staff officers had inspected the Italian units on Sicily. They found the situation unimproved and reported that the main burden of the defence would have to fall upon the shoulders of the German armoured formations. (G.M.D.S. - Ital, 717/4420).

18. Little heed had been paid to the recommendations of General Rotta; his main request, for 2000 aircraft - to insure the efficient defence of the island against the vast resources of the Allied powers - had remained unanswered. Even after the world had witnessed the spectacle of a gigantic convoy reaching its target without interference from the air; even after the great strength of the invading forces had become quite obvious, the Fuehrer remained adamant. From his discourses, evasions and exhortations at the meeting with the Duce, at Belluno, on 17 Jul 43, there could only be gathered one definite fact, namely that no material air support would be forthcoming for the battle of Sicily. (G.M.D.S. - Ital, 717/4407).

19. It is not quite clear which factors had the strongest influence upon the decisions of Hitler regarding the Mediterranean sphere. Questions of manpower and industrial capacity had begun to weigh heavily after Stalingrad; the desire to prevent a repetition of the disaster that had befallen the Luftwaffe in Africa must have been an important consideration. But whether it was preoccupation with the Russian front, underestimation of the strategical importance of Italy or the thought that Southern Italy would be untenable in any event, the fact remains that the hesitating dispatch of troops and the refusal to furnish air support profoundly affected the course of the fighting in Sicily and Southern Italy.

20. It may be worthy of note in this connection that already in April 1943, the Imperial Japanese General Staff had deemed it necessary to voice misgivings and to take the delicate and unusual step of pointing out to the Germans the advisability of creating a "centre of gravity" in the Mediterranean! (G.M.D.S. - OKH/OKW, Mil Att Br, G.S. April 43).

ENEMY FORCES AND DISPOSITIONS

(a) German Formations in Sicily at Time of Invasion

21. The German forces in Sicily at the time of invasion were mainly composed of the 15th Panzer Grenad Division and the Panzer Division "Hermann Goering".

22. The bulk of 15 Pz Gren Div (comprising 104, 115 and 382 Pz Gren Regts) had been massed in the Salemi - Gibbelina - Partanna area for the defence of the western part of the island and was rushed to the triangle Caltanissetta - Valguarnera - Piazza Amerina during the night 11/12 Jul. (G.M.D.S. - Ital 99a, Comm Supr sitreps, 9 Jul - 11 Jul 43).

23. The transfer of the H.G. division to Sicily had been completed on 1 Jul 43. (O.B.S. 2 Jul). Immediately upon arrival the division had been deployed across the southern tip of the island in a manner permitting an easy shifting of the centre of gravity according to the needs of the moment.

24. From the little information available with regard to the German dispositions on the eve of the landings it can at least be gathered with certainty that the German defence preparations were far from being completed. The following is quoted from O.B.S., 8 Jul.

The mass of Fortress Bn 903 has arrived in the Catania sector. H.Q. Fortress Regt 924 and Fortress Bn 904 are still in transit through Italy. The third Fortress Bn for Sicily is in the process of formation south-east of Reggio....The Fortress Artillery units for Sardinia and Sicily have not yet reached the Italian theatre.

25. At the beginning of the campaign the two German divisions in Sicily were directly under the command of Field Marshal Kesselring. A Corps Command was interposed on 18 Jul, when the H.Q. Staff of XIV Pz Corps, under General Hube, arrived on the island and assumed command over the German forces. (O.B.S. 16, 17, 18 Jul)

26. Acting upon orders from the German High Command, O.B.S. began the organization of an Army Command on 8 Aug. (10 Pz Army, General v. Vietinghoff). But while v. Vietinghoff's appreciations could not have failed to influence the German conduct of the campaign, the Army Command assumed actual tactical Command over XIV and LXXVI Pz Corps only on 22 Aug 43. (G.M.D.S. - 42803/1)

(b) German Formations arriving at later Stages

27. The forces arriving in Sicily during the progress of the campaign were not organic reserves of the formations already on the island but were drawn from the most convenient sources. The paratroops were flown in from France, 29 Pz Gren Div was ferried over from Calabria where it had just arrived with 26 Pz Div under command of LXXVI Pz Corps for the defence of the southern mainland. 3 Pz Gren Div was still further to the North, but it would have been possible to use at least the well equipped 26 Pz Div on Sicily, had the Germans not felt that their hands were tied by the ever-present threat of an Allied landing on the mainland especially in the Naples-Salerno sector. This was also the consideration responsible for the retention of 1 Regt, 1 Para Div, near Naples, in deviation from the original intention to send it South to join LXXVI Corps. (G.M.D.S. - 43005/1, 15 Jul)

28. The units transferred to Sicily during the course of the campaign are listed below in the order of their arrival.

Fallschirm Jaeger Regt 3 (3 Regt 1 Para Div) has jumped near Lentini without interference from the enemy...(O.B.S. 12 Jul)

* Note: 4 Regt 1 Para Div was listed as part of battle group Schmalz on 21 Jul 43. (Appendix "A").

Bn Reggio and Fortress Bn 904 have been transferred to Sicily and are on the way to Caltagirone...(O.B.S. 13 Jul)

Advance group 29 Pz Gren Div and 2 Coy, 2 Bn Pz Gren Regt 382 (have been committed north of Catania, the latter south of Taormina...(O.B.S. 16 Jul)

General Kommando XIV (H.Q. Staff XIV Pz Corps) now being ferried over to Sicily (G.M.D.S. - 43005/1 16 Jul)

has assumed command over the German formations...(O.B.S. 18 Jul)

Pz Gren Regt 15 (of 29 Pz Gren Div) is proceeding towards Regalbuto, the reinforced 1 Bn of the Regt to the area west of Taormina... (O.B.S. 18 Jul)

As of 22 Jul, thirty heavy German anti-aircraft batteries are ready for the defence of the Straits of Messina... (O.B.S. 21 Jul)

The order for the immediate transfer of all elements of 29 Pz Gren Div has been given ...(O.B.S. 22 Jul)

The order of O.B.S. to transfer all parts of 29 Pz Gren Div to Sicily has been countermanded and only 71 Pz Gren Regt is now to be ferried over... (G.M.D.S. - 43005/1, 22 Jul)

* 4 Para Regt had descended near Acireale, about 10 miles northeast of Catania. (Special Interrogation Report General Heidrich, Commander First Parachute Division; Hist Sec C.M.H.Q., 13 Nov 46.)

Reinforced
Pz Gren Regt 71

is being committed with one Bn in the area of San Stefano and with the other two Bns near - and to the east of S. Fratello...(O.B.S. 27 Jul)

29. A recapitulation of all the German forces committed in Sicily shows the following picture:

15 Pz Gren Div	(complete)
H.G. Div	(complete in essentials)
29 Pz Gren Div	(in part: two Panzer Grenadier regiments present; tank battalion for limited time only)
1 Para Div	(in part: two Parachute regiments present)

Miscellaneous Fortress Battalions
Miscellaneous Anti-Aircraft units

Information concerning the miscellaneous units is defective; the presence of the following units in Sicily has however been established from German sources:

Fortress Battalions 903, 904, 923,
Battalion Reggio
1 Battalion Anti-Aircraft Regiment 49.

30. Photostat copies of the orders of battle of 29 Pz Gren Div and H.G. Div are being permanently retained by Historical Section (G.S.). The translation of a captured document showing the different battle groups of H.G. Div on 21 Jul, appears as Appendix "A". (G.M.D.S. - H.G. Div; Z)

31. Of the three regiments and the smaller units that had been ferried over to Sicily as reinforcements, 71 Pz Gren Regt of 29 Pz Gren Div was the last formation to be committed. The cancellation of the order to transfer all units of 29 Pz Gren Regt to Sicily (G.M.D.S. - 43005/1, 22 Jul) was the first sign that any hope of holding Sicily had been given up and that the remainder of the campaign was to assume the character of a mere delaying action.

32. The first official intimation that the evacuation of Sicily was being contemplated came on 27 Jul, two days after the resignation of Mussolini. The chief operations officers of the formations had been called to the headquarters of O.B.S., at Frascati, and were informed of the situation in a secret meeting. Plans and preparations for the evacuation were explained by General Westphal, Chief of Staff, O.B.S. The cover name given to the operation was "Course of Instruction No Ia" (Lehrgang Ia). (O.B.S. 27 Jul 43; G.M.D.S. - 43005/2, War Diary LXXVI Pz Corps, Appendices. vol 1, 27 Jul).

GENERAL COURSE OF GERMAN OPERATIONS DURING THE CAMPAIGN

33. Angered by the failure of their Axis partners, and unaware of the fact that their leaders considered the island as strategically desirable but untenable, the German troops fought well and yielded only when beaten. Owing to the lack of detailed German accounts of the fighting, the daily reports of O.B.S. had to be used to show how the German formations crumbled under the relentless pressure of Allied forces on the land, in the air and on the sea.

34. The following is a series of significant statements from the reports of O.B.S. Quotations from the dispatches of any one day, and referring to the same subject, are cited in chronological order.

Report for 10 Jul O.B.S. has given the following order
(Dispatched 11 Jul to the Chief of the German liaison
0340 hrs.) staff at H.Q. 6th Italian Army:
MASS OF H.G. DIV IS ORDERED TO DESTROY THE ENEMY WHO HAS ADVANCED TO CALTAGIRONE. BATTLE GROUP SCHMALZ (NOW AT LENTINI) WILL RETAKE PORT OF SYRACUSE IN IMMEDIATE COUNTER-ATTACK...

German close-combat troops in waves are supporting the successful attack of Pz Div H.G....

The attack of mass of H.G. div against enemy forces west of Caltagirone has not been effective as yet...

12 Jul The situation has become more acute...

H.G. div is withdrawing under strong enemy pressure from the Southeast into the area southeast Caltagirone - Vizzini...

The Italian forces in the area under attack are almost a total loss. The German forces at the moment are not sufficiently large to carry out a decisive attack against any one of the enemy bridgeheads...

13 Jul 15 Pz Gren Div committed to defence of right flank of Army on line Serradifalco - Canicatti...

Reinforced Pz Gren Regt 104 of 15 Pz G Div occupies defence line between Della and road junction 14 Km NW Caltagirone...

A special characteristic of the enemy manner of fighting is that he does not attack over open ground, but attacks through areas that provide cover while diminishing the efficacy of the tanks.

- 14 Jul To relieve pressure on the left flank, mass H.G. div is being committed to annihilate the paratroops who have descended in the plain of Catania. The center of the front and battle group Schmalz have been weakened through this and will not for long be able to resist strong attacks from the South. The western flank is exposed to envelopment and preparations are being made for retreat to the Etna position...

According to reports received up to now, H.G. div, since 10 Jul, has suffered the following battle casualties: 30 Officers and 600 O.Rs. - Div has at the moment 45 tanks ready for action..

- 15 Jul Battle group Schmalz had to withdraw on line Scordia - Bertuccia,...

- 16 Jul Since early morning enemy is attacking 15 Pz Gren Div from the South, near Barrafranca, Div will be forced to withdraw northwards to regain contact with H.G. div on left...

After hard and fluctuating engagements the battle group Schmalz had to be taken back behind the Lunga sector...

- 17 Jul In view of arrival of fresh enemy forces in the Lentini sector a large-scale attack on battle group Schmalz must be expected...

15 Pz Gren Div heavily attacked in line Barrafranca - Pietrapetia. After employment of reserves and in view of danger of break-through, division has started after nightfall to withdraw to the northeast on own initiative...

H.G. div has 30 tanks ready for action.

- 18 Jul Combat outposts of 15 Pz Gren Div on 17 Jul in line S. Caterina - Caltanissetta - Raddusa, mass of div withdrawing further. Commander XIV Panzer Corps has ordered to take division forward to line of combat outposts during night 17/18 Jul...

It is the intention of O.B.S. to withdraw 15 Pz Gren Div in general line Bonpietro - Leonforte and to defend this line. Main battle line of H.G. Div is holding...

19 Jul On 18 Jul enemy continued to deploy. Strong pressure on 15 Pz Gren Div. Strong armoured and motorized forces pressed north and northeastwards through Caltanissetta...

Another strong enemy formation (1½ - 2 divisions) took Valguarnera and road junction 18 km to the north-east...

Enemy armoured attack on H.G. div 12 km north-east of Ramacca broke through advanced positions. Advanced positions of div have been moved nearer to main battle line...

With arrival of 15 Pz Gren Regt (of 29 Pz Gren Div) to 15 Pz Gren Div, and of one Para Bn on right flank of H.G. div, situation on boundary between formations stabilized for time being...

20 Jul Right wing and left flank of 15 Pz Gren Div were threatened by envelopment and withdrawn on line 6 km east of Pollizzi - 2 km west of Alimena - Bordonarello - 8 km north of Calasibetta - 1 km south of Leonforte...

23 Jul On 22 Jul Leonforte has been taken by the enemy...

From report, XIV Pz Corps to O.B.S. at 0530 hrs: Enemy threatens to separate the regiments of 15 Pz Gren Div ...Only available reserve (consisting of one platoon) has been committed... Considerable casualties... Considerable loss of vehicles, especially at 3 Bn Gren Regt 15, owing to continuous attacks by fighter-bombers, artillery and low-level aircraft... Leonforte has been lost... 1st Heavy Field Howitzer Battery total loss through bombings... 15 Pz Gren Div withdrew in general line Campofelice - Gangi - Regalbuto...

Tanks ready for action:

15 Pz Gren Div:	30
H.G. Div:	23 (incl. 3 Tiger)

25 Jul The occupation of Western Sicily by the enemy can be considered as completed...

On 21 and 22 Jul, air recce counted 548 enemy aircraft on Sicily...

Tanks ready for action:

15 Pz Gren Div: 28
(need minor repairs, another 10)
H.G. Div 48

26 Jul Enemy is advancing towards main battle line of 15 Pz Gren Div...

Enemy air activity causes further considerable casualties...

27 Jul The Operations Officers of the Air Force, the Corps and Divisions have been informed of the situation and the possible developments at O.B.S. The necessary orders have been given according to the instructions received...(see para 32 above).

The transfer of reinforcements to Sardinia and Corsica has been stopped for the time being; transports to Sicily have been limited to supplies...

28 Jul The enemy has been able to take the heights 7 km north-east of Leonforte...

29 Jul The enemy (1 U.S., 1 Cdn Inf Div) exerts pressure on our forces withdrawing to straighten front-line after local breakthroughs...

Strong enemy pressure on 15 Pz Gren Div continues. Local penetrations... Nicosia was lost in the afternoon. Strong fighting for Agira continues in the evening (1 Cdn Inf Div). Street battles there...

30 Jul The withdrawals of 29 and 15 Pz Gren Div went according to plan...

Enemy attacks on Regalbuto and Catenanuova. Local reserves are used to seal off penetrations...

31 Jul Strong enemy attack supported by tanks and artillery stopped 2 km west of Regalbuto...Renewed enemy attack on Catenanuova (1 Cdn Div) led to loss of the locality...

On the right wing of H.G. Div, Regalbuto and Catenanuova have been occupied by the enemy...

The enemy has increased his air activity in comparison with the preceding days...he blockaded important supply bases by heaviest bombing attacks...

2 Aug The enemy is feeling his way towards Troina from Nicosia...

1 Cdn Inf Div succeeded in occupying heights north of Regalbuto after a hard battle...

If it is not possible to hold the pivot Regalbuto, the left wing will have to be taken back on the bridgehead position within the next few days...

3 Aug Enemy pressure in easterly direction against front Regalbuto-Centuripe continues unabated...

5 Aug Enemy air attacks make any supply traffic during the day an impossibility..

Counter-measures with the last reserves are being undertaken 4 km north-west of Troina, 10 km north-west and 7 km north-east of Regalbuto...

6 Aug The complete lack of reserves in 29 Pz Gren Div sector aggravates the situation in the extreme...

If correction of the situation in the sector of 15 Pz Gren Div is not possible, Corps Commander will withdraw div to shortened "Hube" position.

The danger of an enemy breakthrough on road Troina - Nicosia caused Corps Commander to take the whole front back on the shortened bridgehead position in general line 1 km south-west Capo D'Orlando - 5 km west of Randazzo - summit of Mount Etna - 5 km Ciare...

8 Aug Sharp enemy pressure on withdrawing troops of 29 Pz Gren Div with penetrations into the withdrawing units at Fratello...

10 Aug In sector H.G. Div an enemy attack on Mt. Etna has been repelled...

The evacuation of Sicily has started according to plan...

14 Aug The evacuation of Sicily continues according to plan...

17 Aug The evacuation of Sicily was complete at 0600 hrs.

35. A small piece of information regarding the ferrying over of retreating German units to the mainland was found in the War Diary of LXXVI Pz Corps:

During the nights 10/11 and 11/12 Aug the following have been ferried over to the mainland:

615 officers, 19924 N.C.Os. and O.Rs.
2185 vehicles,
34 tanks, 44 self-propelled assault guns
15 heavy anti-tank guns
21 guns, 11 anti-aircraft guns

(G.M.D.S. - 43005/1, 13 Aug 43)

36. The well organized defences of the Straits of Messina, aided by the darkness of the nights and the shortness of the distance, made it possible for the Germans to save most of their men and material. No figures have been found that would permit a statement about the numbers ferried back. A map-sketch of the arrangements and a detailed Operations Order for the Straits of Messina, have been found however in the diary of the Commander of the Defences. (G.M.D.S. - 45746, War Diary of Oberst Baade Z)

37. Some revealing sidelights on the campaign are taken from a dispatch of General Hube to Field Marshal Kesselring on 14 ^{Aug} Jul, 2310 hrs.

Suggestions for the final ~~final~~ ^{Aug} communique after the conclusion of the evacuation.

1) Main idea:

To describe battles in Sicily as a big success.

Aim:

To raise morale and confidence at home and to create pride in the Sicilian formations.

Example:

The catastrophe of material at Dunkirk was presented to the British public as a great success - In the case of a favourable conclusion of the evacuation the end of the Sicilian campaign is actually a full success. After the initial fiasco, the fighting, as well as the preparation and execution of the evacuation, with all serviceable material and men (including the wounded), went according to plan.

2) In spite of tremendous superiority of men and material the enemy required six weeks to take the island...

The bloody losses of the enemy were high and can be estimated as 1/3 of the fighting strength...(sic)

The German formations are now on the mainland, ready and able for battle...

I suggest the mentioning by name of the three German divisions and the elements of the 1 Para Div who participated in the fighting...

Anti-Aircraft units have rendered excellent services in the battles on the ground...

I only would object most sharply to any possibly intended mention of the Air Force as giving immediate assistance to the troops on the ground. With all due respect to the few pilots, mostly reconnaissance pilots, the ground forces had practically to rely entirely upon themselves in their battles against the enemy on land and in the air...

Praise for Italian troops can only be justified in the case of the artillery...

I consider it as especially harmful when, as it happens time and again, one encounters communiques that do not correspond in any manner with the actual situation, especially the situation in the air, and that appear ridiculous to those who were there. A decided change in this matter would be in the interest of the troops. (Signed: Hube).

(Hist Sec (G.S.), Microfilm No 1,
14 Jul 43)
14 1745

COURSE OF OPERATIONS IN AREA OF 30 BRIT CORPS,
ESPECIALLY THAT OF 1 CDN INF DIV

38. The limitations of the source material are felt most keenly in connection with the actions of 30 Brit Corps and its Canadian component, 1 Cdn Inf Div. The daily reports of O.B.S., however, show many references to the formations concerned and, in the case of 1 Cdn Inf Div, tend to confirm and corroborate the facts and interpretations presented in the earlier reports of Hist Sec (G.S.).

39. The following quotations have been taken from the reports of O.B.S.

10 Jul 1 Cdn Inf Div West of Pachino...

12 Jul 0320 hrs...North of Pachino the advance of 1 Cdn Inf Div was supported by the descent of strong detachments of paratroops...

13 Jul On 12 Jul, 1 Cdn Inf Div in the main completed the disembarkation of troops and the unloading of vehicles...

The paratroopers who jumped south and west of Catania on 13 Jul at 2300 hrs, were Canadians of units not yet determined...

(Note: This was a mistaken identification, the div concerned was 1 Brit Airborne Div).

17 Jul According to enemy radio reports Caltagirone has been occupied by Canadian troops...The enemy radio reports that, further to Caltagirone, the formations of 1 Cdn Inf Div, under the command of Major-General Simonds, have also taken Grammichele.

(Note: Communications evidently had been disrupted; this is the only instance of such indirect reporting by O.B.S.).

21 Jul 1 Cdn Inf Div in area Leonforte...

Near Valguarnera troops trained for fighting in the mountains have been mentioned. They are called "Mountain boys" and probably belong to 1 Cdn Div. It might be the 48 Highlanders or the Seaforth...

(Note: It also might have been the Hast & P.E.R. who occupied the heights about Valguarnera).

22 Jul The order of battle of 1 Cdn Inf Div corresponds in the main with the information contained in the manual "The British Army". In place of the "Regina Inf Regt" and the "Royal Winnipeg Rifles" listed therein, there are now the "Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment" (attachment unknown) and the "West Nova Scotia Regiment" (hitherto believed to be with 2 Cdn Inf Div). *

23 Jul Leonforte fell into the hands of the (for 22 Jul) enemy. (See Appendix "E").

* It is interesting to note how incomplete the German intelligence was on the composition of 1 Cdn Inf Div, although the full order of battle had been published in Canadian newspapers.

40. The laconic statement regarding the loss of Leonforte was true to a pattern ever encountered in German reports announcing the loss of an important position. No explanations were needed, a glance at the map showed clearly that the brilliant teamwork of the units of 2 Cdn Inf Bde had brought about the fall of a key position in the German line of defence. For the next few days the reports of O.B.S. were filled with desultory material until on 27 Jul, the meeting at O.B.S. removed the evacuation of Sicily from the realm of conjecture to that of firm military planning and execution. (See para 32 above).

41. From the reports of the intervening days, two items of interest are quoted below:

24 Jul According to captured documents the enemy code word for the landing operations in Sicily is "Husky"...

26 Jul According to Italian sources, General McNaughton, the Commander of the Canadian Expeditionary Corps, has reached Algeria on his way to Sicily to inspect 1 Cdn Inf Div.

42. The reports of O.B.S. during the closing days of July and at the beginning of August show numerous passages reflecting the violent attacks carried out by 1 Cdn Inf Div.

28 Jul A strong attack of 1 Cdn Inf Div on Agira has been repelled up to now...

In the afternoon renewed attacks of strong forces on Agira...

29 Jul In the centre, the enemy (1 U.S., 1 Cdn Div) exert pressure on our troops which are withdrawing to straighten the front... Since noon strong enemy attacks (1 Cdn Inf Div) on Agira. Street battles there...

Nicosia and height 8 km south-east were lost in the afternoon. In the evening continued violent fighting for Agira...

30 Jul The withdrawals of 29 and 15 Pz Gren Divs in night 29/30 went according to plan. Enemy attack supported by tanks and arty was stopped 2 km west of the locality. A simultaneous attack on Catenanuova led to local penetrations...

31 Jul Renewed attack on Catenanuova led to the loss of the locality (1 Cdn Inf Div)...

2 Aug In the sector of H.G. Div the 1 Cdn Inf Div succeeded in occupying the heights north of Regalbuto after a hard battle...

North-east and east of Nicosia the enemy is feeling his way towards Troina...

The assembling of additional forces indicates that in the next few days the enemy will try to force a breakthrough to Randazzo by way of Troina and Adrano. If it is not possible to hold the pivot Regalbuto, the left wing will have to be taken back on the bridgehead position within the next few days...

3 Aug On the sector of H.G. Div the pressure on Regalbuto and Centuripe continues unabated...

An enemy radio communique mentions the Canadian Corps in Sicily. It is therefore possible that Canadian formations other than 1 Cdn Inf Div are committed in Sicily (Panzer Brigade? - Armoured Brigade?)...

5 Aug The employment of elements of the Princess Louise Dragoons has been confirmed...

According to British radio reports 78 Brit Inf Div has been committed in the Centuripe area between 1 Cdn and 51 Brit Divs. This is the first indication of the presence of this division in Sicily...

6 Aug Two enemy attacks on Adrano have been repelled

Canadian Prisoners of War carried daggers and knockers...

Rearguards of H.G. Div caused heavy casualties to enemy pressing onwards west of Adrano and at Paterno...

The danger of an enemy breakthrough caused the Corps Commander to take the whole front back to the shortened bridgehead position...(para 34 above, 6 Aug)

11 Aug 1 Cdn Inf Div follows withdrawal movement towards Randazzo... *

15 Aug Randazzo was taken by 9 U.S. and 78 Brit Divs; 1 Cdn Inf Div apparently not in front line now...

* Note that the Germans were still unaware of the fact that 1 Cdn Inf Div had been withdrawn on 6 Aug.

43. It can in no way detract from the glory of Allied arms if the unusual case is cited of a German unit showing no inclination to fight. This happened at Catenanuova. The capture of the locality was an integral part of the very carefully prepared operation "Hardgate", described in detail in Report No 135, paras 156 - 186.

44. It was the task of the West Nova Scotia Regiment to take the town and it turned out to be easier than expected. The first sentences of para 178 of the above report, are quoted in this respect:

On the right flank, W.N.S. crossed the starting line shortly after midnight, advancing with two companies forward. The barrage seemed to have stupefied the enemy at first, and practically no opposition was met with. During the early morning hours, the leading companies advanced into the town along the axis of the main highway still meeting little resistance...

What the diary of West N.S.R. describes as "little resistance", could not fail to attract the attention and the wrath of Lieutenant-General Conrath, the Commander of H.G. Div, to which the battalion in question was attached. The incident is reflected in the War Diaries of 10 Pz Army by the following:

10 Pz Army to O.B.S. 7 Sep 43

According to a report of H.G. Div, the locality of Catenanuova was occupied on 30 Jul by the enemy without any resistance owing to the complete failure of Fortress Bn 923. The battalion fled in the direction of Centuripe in a shameful manner without enemy pressure. The immediate dissolution of the battalion has been ordered.

General Field Marshal Keitel has initiated Court Martial proceedings against the Officer Commanding and the guilty officers...

OKH Heeresfeldjustizblatt AZ 485, Ju, Abt. 1024/43

(G.M.D.S. - 42803/2, 7 Sep 43)

GERMAN LOSSES

45. The Condition Report for H.G. Div, at the end of August 1943, yields the following information:

Authorized Strength	18466
Deficiencies	6139

Casualties for August 1943

	Dead	Wounded	Missing	Sick	Other	Total
Offrs	14	47	12	50	3	126
N.C.Os. & O.Rs.	379	1146	71	2555	144	4295
Total	393	1193	83	2605	147	4421

Reinforcements in August: 1725

Degree of Mobility: 50%

Formations under Command of H.G. Div during August:

115 Pz Gren Regt:	Authorized Strength	2337
	Deficiencies	375
	Casualties in August	641
	Reinforcements August	47
	Mobility: Practically Immobile.	
Bn Reggio:	Authorized Strength	985
	Deficiencies	528
	Casualties in August	187
	Rft in August	Nil
	Mobility: Immobile	
1 Bn A.A. Regt 49:	Authorized Strength	1138
	Deficiencies	4
	Casualties in August	35
	Reinforcements August	2
	Mobility	100%

(G.M.D.S. - OKH/OKW, H 16/24;Z)

46. In the case of 15 Pz Gren Div, no documents have been found that would permit a precise reckoning of the losses suffered. It is known however that the division reappeared in action early in October, 1943. 115 Pz Gren Regt was then still under the command of the adjoining H.G. Div, 382 Pz Gren Regt had disappeared and been replaced by 129 Pz Gren Regt. After the absorption of three battalions of reinforcements (207, 214, 222), and after the incorporation of Bn Reggio, the division was still 1600 men below authorized strength. (G.M.D.S. - 43803/10)

47. The heavy losses that were inflicted on the two regiments of 29 Pz Gren Div can be inferred from the figures contained in a report that the division submitted to LXXVI Corps on 28 Aug:

Present Fighting Strength of Pz Gren Regts 15 and 71

Pz Gren Regt 15	<u>Officers</u>	<u>N.C.Os.</u>	<u>O.Rs.</u>
1 Bn	6	35	100
2 Bn	8	93	421
3 Bn	7	43	223
<hr/>			
Totals	21	171	744 936

Pz Gren Regt 71			
1 Bn	6	41	243
2 Bn	7	29	156
3 Bn	8	66	311
<hr/>			
Totals	21	136	710 867

Sick: (both regts) 1467

(G.M.D.S. - 43005/2, 28 Aug)

48. Additional information is supplied by the Condition Report of 29 Pz Gren Div at end of August:

Losses of the last two months were high; in the case of 71 Pz Gren Regt they amounted to 33%...

Division is fit for employment according to its strength. Fighting power is 50% of normal.

(G.M.D.S. - 43005/2, 14 Sep 43)

7606m

EXPERIENCE REPORTS OF ENEMY COMMANDERS

49. Translations of the following reports appear as Appendices:

C.-in-C. South, Initial stages	(Appendix "B")
H.G. Div, 24 Aug 43	(Appendix "C")
15 Pz Gren Div, 7 Sep 43	(Appendix "D")

Photostat copies of the German text have been made in each case and are being retained for permanent reference by Hist Sec (G.S.).

50. The report of C.-in-C. South apparently was prepared after the first few days of fighting since copies of it were being forwarded by LXXVI Corps to the divisions on 20 Jul. Perhaps the most significant conclusion of the report is contained in para 4, it reads as follows:

The opinion has been strengthened that, in order to fight the enemy in his moment of greatest weakness, the reserve formations must be committed as soon as the direction of the landing, possibly even only in general, has been discerned.

(G.M.D.S. - 43005/2: see also Appendix "B")

51. The report rendered by H.G. Div is well in keeping with the type of mind of the fanatical Nazis who were selected for service in the division for reasons of ideological orthodoxy as much as for their military qualifications. The avowed intention of the Allied generals to save blood where machines could do the job, and the realization of this intention which endeared the commanders to their peoples, was interpreted in the following manner:

Neither Allied command nor manner of fighting were distinguished by bold decisions or special bravery; the method of fighting was one of pronounced caution with massed employment of superior material...

(G.M.D.S. - 42243/6; see also Appendix "C")

52. The lengthy report of 15 Pz Gren Div is more objective; it deals in detail with the British and American methods of fighting. Two statements that seem to be of interest are quoted below:

Good soldier material. English and Canadians harder in the attack than Americans. In general fair ways of fighting. In fieldcraft (Indianerkrieg) superior to our own troops. Very mobile at night, surprise break-ins, clever infiltrations at night with small groups between our strong points...

In spite of ceaseless employment of the air force the campaign has proven that the air force alone can not force decisions in battle. After initial losses the troops did adapt themselves to a degree that could never be reached in training.

(G.M.D.S. - 42243/6; see also Appendix "D")

53. The tribute paid by 15 Pz Div to our "clever infiltrations at night" may well have been a reminiscence of the seizure of Assoro by Hast & P.E.R. (Report No 135, paras 78 - 90).

LIST OF QUOTED DOCUMENTS PERMANENTLY RETAINED
BY HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)

	<i>Original</i>	<i>Date</i>	<u>Para</u>
981 CS. (D2) 54. →	(a)	German Chain of Command in Italian Theatre at Time of Sicilian Campaign	10 9
981 HC. (D1)	(b)	"Future Anglo-Saxon Operative Possibilities"	11
981 HC. (D2)	(c)	"Memorandum concerning Documents found on a British Courier"	13
981 HC. (D1)	(d)	Telegraphic Order giving priority to the Defences of Sardinia and the Peloponnesus	13
981 Pz H.G. (D1)	(e)	Battle groups of H.G. Div on 21 Jul 43.	30
981 PG 29. (D1)	(f)	Order of Battle of 29 Pz Gren Div	30
981 Pz H.G. (D2)	(g)	Order of Battle of H.G. Div (Part of item (i))	30
981 S. (D1)	(h)	Operations Order for Defences of the Straits of Messina	36
981 Pz H.G. (D2)	(i)	Condition Report of H.G. Div, 1 Sep 43	45
981 CS. (D1)	(j)	Experience Report of German C.-in-C. South (German Text)	50
981 Pz H.G. (D1)	(k)	Experience Report of H.G. Div (German Text)	51
981 PG 15. (D1)	(l)	Experience Report of 15 Pz Gren Div (German Text)	52

55. This report has been prepared by Capt A.G. Steiger, Historical Section (G.S.).

A. G. Steiger, Capt.
(C.F. Stacey) Colonel,
Director
Historical Section (G.S.)

A P P E N D I X " A "

BATTLE GROUPS OF HERMANN GOERING DIVISION

on 21 Jul 43

:

Translated from an original captured document
(G.M.D.S. - H.G. Div)

S E C R E T

(To be returned to Adjutant)

Panzer Division Hermann Goering
Ops, No. 396/43, secret.

Div H.Q.
21 Jul 43

The following organization into battle groups,
as they existed on 21 Jul 43, is herewith
notified:

1) Battle Group v. Carnap

1 Bn, Para Regt 3
13 Bty (smoke) and mixed 4 Bn, Pz Art Regt H.G.
Fortress Bn 923
5 troop, A.A. unit H.G. for special purposes.

2) Battle Group Preuss with

H.Q. Pz Regt H.G.
2 Bn, Pz Regt H.G.
Flak - Gerbini

(a) Battle Group Kluge

H.Q. and 1 Bn, Pz Gren Regt 2, H.G.
1 Bn, Pz Art Regt H.G.
Pz Gren Bn Oria
10 troop, A.A. unit for special purposes, H.G.
(One Bn and one Arty Bn Italians)
Remnants 1 Bn, Pz Gren Regt 1, H.G.

(b) Battle Group Rebholz

Pz Recce Bn H.G.
2 Bn, Pz Arty Regt H.G.
Bn Reggio
9 troop, A.A. unit for special purposes, H.G.
Remnants 2 Bn, Pz Gren Regt 2, H.G.

3) Battle Group Schmalz

Bde H.Q. for special purposes, H.G.
Pz Gren Regt 115 (formerly Koerner)
3 Bn, Pz Art Regt H.G.
3 Bn, Pz Regt H.G.
Bn Schachtleben
4 Para Regt
Flak - Catania
(One Bn and one Arty Bn of Italians)
2 Bn Regt 382
Fortress Bn 904

4) Divisional Reserve

1 Bn, Pz Regt H.G.
3 Para Regt (less 1 Bn)

5) 1 Bn, Flak Regt H.G.

For the Commander of the Division,
The First General Staff Officer,
(Signature illegible)

Regrouping of the different elements of the various battle groups makes it possible to reconstruct an approximate order of battle for the division at the time. (Less components absent on special tasks and attachments).

Hermann Goering Division

Div H.Q.

Bde H.Q. for special purposes

H.G. Div

Under Command
of H.G. Div

Armd Recce Unit

Pz Recce Bn H.G.

Tank Regiment

H.Q. Pz Regt H.G.
1 Bn Pz Regt H.G.
2 Bn Pz Regt H.G.
3 Bn Pz Regt H.G.

Infantry (mot)

Remnants 1 Bn Pz Gren Regt 1, H.G.

H.Q. Pz Gren Regt 2, H.G.
1 Bn Pz Gren Regt 2, H.G.
Remnants:
2 Bn Pz Gren Regt 2, H.G.

Pz Gren Bn Oria

Pz Gren Regt 115

Infantry

Fortress Bn 904
Fortress Bn 923
Bn Reggio
Bn Schachtleben
2 Bn Regt 382
Two Bns of Italian
Infantry.

Artillery

1 Bn Pz Arty Regt H.G.
2 Bn Pz Arty Regt H.G.
3 Bn Pz Arty Regt H.G.
4 Bn Pz Arty Regt H.G.

Two Bns of Italian
Arty

Anti-Aircraft Arty

1 Bn Flak Regt H.G.
Flak Gerbini
Flak Catania

Troops 5,9 & 10
of an attached
Flak unit

Paratroops

3 Regt, 1 Para Div
4 Regt, 1 Para Div

R E P O R T

of

Oberkommando Sued (Ob.Sued)
(High Command South - Field Marshal Kesselring)

on the initial stages of the

S I C I L I A N C A M P A I G N

Translation from a communication of LXXVI Panzer Korps
to subordinate formations. 20 Jul 43.

76 B Enys
GMDS - 43005/2, War Diary 16th Panzer Division,
Appendices, vol 1.

Corps Headquarters forwards particulars of the
experiences during the fighting in Sicily

A. Report of High Command South

- 1) In view of the complete naval supremacy of the British the effect of the naval artillery against land targets is of particular importance, especially so where the coast is on a slope in full view, but also where it is flat since the British observe from the ships by means of captive balloons. The battle group Schmalz and the Livorno division unfortunately have furnished the evidence. This fact must be taken into account to a much higher degree than heretofore in the whole Italian area, and coastal formations must be committed flanking and covered in such a manner that they can not be neutralized from the sea. In the case of the Fortress battalions on Sardinia I have personally given such orders right on the spot. - Counter attacks along mountain roads that are exposed to view from the sea must be avoided if at all possible. It can be avoided if the preparations are made either in a coastal region that is hard to observe or when the descent takes place during the night, in bad weather or (and the British are masters of this) by smoke screens. If this marching and deployment has to be done during the day in ground thus exposed to observation, it is necessary at least to reduce the effect of the naval guns by downing of the captive balloons, fire or smoke-screens on the ships.
- 2) Paratroops have greatly delayed the advance of our own troops and have inflicted considerable casualties on our troops. Small groups of parachutists who had jumped into overgrown country made themselves noticed in a particularly unpleasant manner. In the future this fact must be taken into account through the setting aside of security detachments in every formation for the purpose of guarding the zone of the advance and to give battle to appearing paratroops without creating a substantial delay of the marching troops.
- 3) Italian coastal batteries at Syracuse were put out of action by para-and glidertroops. Further proof has thus been given to support the already existing order for all-around defence.

- 4) The opinion has been strengthened that, in order to fight the enemy in his moment of greatest weakness, the reserve formations must be committed as soon as the direction of the landing, possibly even only in general, has been discerned. These movements must be prepared and discussed with the allies in such a manner that troublesome congestions will be avoided.
- 5) The landing of the British and Americans against practically no defence of our own must not be permitted to happen again. It is necessary that if possible at all, a part of the artillery of the reserve division be used to oppose the landing.
- 6) Not fully motorized formations as well as not fully trained troops are only conditionally useful for counterattacks of a wide frame. Where there is no railroad the commitment of non-motorized troops is an enormous burden to the commanders. A certain ratio between troops and vehicles therefore must not be exceeded.
- 7) Water-and land mines must be used to a much greater degree since the British and Americans do not choose the most favourable spots for landings and the subsequent fighting. In this manner it is possible to protect exactly those areas which usually are only guarded by small forces.
- 8) Once more it becomes necessary to point out the importance of digging in. Where it is not possible to do so owing to the lack of entrenching tools or on account of rocky ground, artificial and well camouflaged cover must be created with sandbags etc. Well timed provision of sandbags as well as procurement of fresh supplies is an important function of the commands. It is pointed out that sometimes more, and more disagreeable injuries were caused by broken stones than by fragments of shells.
- 9) It has been noted for the third time that in the case of strong enemy air-and artillery superiority the wire communications break down just at the most critical moments of the engagement. It must be stated that commanders and troops are not fully conversant with the utilization of radio. It is therefore important that command by wireless be practised frequently during quiet periods. The importance of radio beam communications has again been demonstrated and the lack of such equipment has made itself felt unpleasantly.

B. Report of the Officer commanding 7th Signal-Intelligence Bn.

According to American newspaper reports the American combined fighter-divebomber "A 26" is being used in Sicily in large numbers for the first time. According to these reports the results are said to be very good since it combines the advantages of the Ju 87 with those of the fighter plane. It has been developed from the "Mustang".

For the Corps Command
The Chief of the General Staff

Signed: RUNKEL

Distribution list on draft.

A P P E N D I X "C"

R E P O R T

. of

Panzer Division "Hermann Goering"

(Operations section - Ia)

ON THE SICILIAN CAMPAIGN

Translated from a copy appearing in GMDS - No 42243/6,
Appendix No. 207 to War Diary of 16 Panzer Division

S E C R E T

C O P Y

Panzerdivision Hermann Goering
-Ia- No. 552/43 secret

Div H.Q., 24 Aug 43

Brief Experience Report on the Fighting
in Sicily

I. E N E M Y

- 1) Neither command nor manner of fighting excelled in bold decisions or especial bravery of the British and Americans, the method of fighting was one of pronounced caution with massed employment of superior material.

Whenever the enemy planned to attack he prepared strong arty positions and tried to "shoot out" our infantry. Sometimes his fire assumed the character of the heavy barrages of the First World War. The enemy succeeded in this "shooting out" whenever our own troops on account of the lava or the rocky nature of the ground did not succeed in digging themselves in fast or deep enough.

Conclusion: As soon as the troops have occupied a position they must dig in with all energy "right up to the neck".

- 2) Tank tactics in the German sense, namely the commitment of massed armour at the center of gravity, were not used by the enemy in Sicily, although this would have been well possible in the plain of Catania. The enemy employed the armour by assigning tanks to accompany the infantry in the strength of about one company (maximum 16 tanks) and that on all parts of the front where the ground was reasonably favourable for the movement of armour. The enemy did not seek out pronounced tank country.

Conclusion: Anti-tank defences must be installed wherever tanks might possibly come. Mobile anti-tank guns and tank reserves must be held in readiness.

- 3) The Infantry of the enemy does not know attack in the German sense, but after hours of arty preparation advances haltingly to occupy shot-up ground. They shun close combat which only took place in a few cases where the enemy succeeded in outflanking our troops. The enemy attacks mainly at night and conducts himself very cleverly. The British are very sensitive to counter-attacks. Wherever counter-attacks were

executed with energy they succeeded in cleaning up local penetrations.

Conclusion: Most important for the training of our infantry for battle with the British: night fighting, counter-attacks in platoon and company formation.

- 4) Once the continuous front line had ceased to exist as a result of the attacks of the enemy on both sides of Mount Etna, the enemy in very clever fashion tried time after time to turn our wings and to appear in our backs during the night. In doing so the enemy scaled heights of up to 6000 feet and in the comparatively great rapidity of his advance through the mountains showed remarkable athletic accomplishments.

Conclusion: Reconnaissance and protection of flanks and rear even in difficult country.

- 5) Enemy reconnaissance was awkward and not elastic enough. The British and the Americans did not scout on foot but by vehicle; in accordance with German concepts this would have been correct only as far as the plain of Catania. Disengagements of our own troops were never noticed right away by the enemy; every time he reconnoitered with tanks or scout cars that were always put out of action.

Conclusion: Leave armour-breaking arms with the hindmost rearguards.

- 6) The enemy Air Force had complete air supremacy, the damage done however is in no relation to the magnitude of the forces committed. Only on a few days did the enemy use the air force like the Russians in support of the ground forces as close support airplanes. The enemy confined his low-level attacks to vehicle traffic on the supply routes, and used massed high-altitude bombing for the destruction of localities and the harassing of supply traffic. With the low-level attacks the enemy had a certain amount of success because where there were no anti-aircraft defences he put columns and single vehicles on fire. However, his low-flying airplanes are exceedingly sensitive to anti-aircraft fire.

And the only result the enemy obtained with the high altitude bombings was the complete destruction of numerous localities. In no case did he succeed in causing a prolonged blocking of the roads. Even after Randazzo had been attacked 21 times in one day with waves of 12 planes, it was possible to reopen this ~~through~~ traffic after only four hours. To be sure in this particular case special forces (including Engineers) had been held in readiness for the purpose.

Conclusion: Light anti-aircraft arty should not be placed near the front lines but along the routes of supply. Sufficiently large

forces (including inhabitants of the region) with engineers under the command of forceful officers must be used to clear traffic lanes and especially localities.

- 7) The Airborne and paratroops of the enemy fought without system. They were not committed at centres of gravity. The reason for this may have been the fact that they had not yet received much training. At any rate the enemy succeeded in harassing our troops with his parachutists. Wherever these groups who had jumped somewhere were attacked with energy it was possible to clean up the situation very quickly.

Conclusion: Every unit, every transport or other column must be trained to fight against enemy paratroops. Any "waiting to see what the enemy will do" is wrong in principle since it means that the enemy gains time for the defence of the forces that have made the jump. It is necessary to have the whole rear areas systematically combed by reserves, personnel of transport services and alarm formations, even in areas where no enemy have been seen.

II. F R I E N D S

In Sicily the Italians virtually never gave battle and presumably they will not fight on the mainland either. Many units in Sicily, either led by their officers or on their own, marched off without firing a single shot. Valuable equipment fell into the hands of the enemy in undamaged condition. The good intentions of some commanders and the good appearance of some officers and non-commissioned officers must not lead one to overlook the fact that 90% of the Italian Army are cowards and do not want to fight.

The best branch of the service is still the Artillery. Their firing-technique in certain cases is excellent. One arty detachment - and the only Italian formation in Sicily to do so - fought valiantly with this division until the end of the retreat, showing commendable skill in gunnery. The Italians fire on principle by unit, the same principle applies in our case too, but it is not followed everywhere.

But the mass of the Italian arty will not differ from the other formations when the Italians are amongst themselves. When framed by German units some small units will fight.

Conclusion: Future actions to be planned as if there were no Italians at all in the area. Italian heavy weapons which - as is well known - are left behind, must be manned by our own personnel when it is impossible to force their gun-crews to fire even when surrounded by German units.

Motor cyclists must never be allowed to proceed alone but must always be escorted by a side car-rider with small-arm ready to fire. Italians must see as little as possible of our own positions, intentions, strength and formation.

In summary it is to be noted that the experiences in Sicily did not reveal anything new about the methods of command and fighting of the enemy. With the greatest possible economy of human lives and when in strong numerical superiority, the enemy will apply his superior resources of equipment and ammunition and his supremacy of the air in such a manner that success falls into his hands as a ripe fruit. The German soldier does not need to fear a threefold British-American superiority as long as he is favoured by the ground.

It must therefore be the concern of the high command in Italy to choke off enemy landings in the initial stage through appropriate commitments. Since the enemy is clever and quick in the execution of his landings, any formation which is held in readiness in the interior for alternative possible landings will arrive too late. Only where German soldiers are placed right on the coast will it be possible with certainty to prevent an enemy landing.

signed: Conrath

For accuracy:

signd. Halstraeter
Lieut and Orderly Officer.

R E P O R T

of

15th German Panzer Grenadier Division

(Operations section - Ia)

ON THE SICILIAN CAMPAIGN

Translated from a copy appearing in GMDS - No 42243/6,
Appendix No 239 to War Diary of 16th Panzer Division.

C O P Y of
15 Pz Gren Div (new) Ia No 1068/43 secr of 4 Sep 43.

Experience report for the Campaign in Sicily

1) British-American Methods of Fighting:

In General

Before every attack most careful reconnaissance and preparation with heavy weapons. Our own thin lines were penetrated by recce patrols, often up to company strength, provided with good and handy radiotelephones and assisted by details from advance arty observation posts. During daytime thorough recce in front of our own main battle lines with armour up to 20, some of them armoured scout cars. Armoured vehicles, under the protection of heavy tanks from a distance of 1500 - 2000 metres, advance right into closest proximity of our main battle line.

In attack, intention to save blood by use of considerable material. Any heights on which there might possibly be positions, even in the depth of the main battle zone, are covered with sudden concentrations of fire from all calibres.

In the case of tank attacks they advance first into the middle distance before our main battle line in order to draw the fire of our defences. The Infantry is usually carried on vehicles within the range of our own arty, then advances in loose formations. Attacks are supported by heavy weapons, especially with fire concentrations from medium and heavy mortars.

The rule to shun the highest mountain tops and to occupy lower heights further ahead has proven itself. During the night it is necessary to change positions and to guard all valleys, ravines and depressions.

Time of attacks: Frequently about 2 hours before nightfall with the attempt to gain his successes through bypassing of heights which are neutralized by arty fire. Rarely attacks in the early hours of the morning. Chooses moon-lit nights for attack.

Owing to his rigid tactical doctrine the enemy did in no instance succeed in exploiting favourable positions won in battle. When an attack failed the adversary disengaged himself and reformed in assembly positions far away from our advanced lines.

In Particular

a) Infantry

Good soldier material. English and Canadians harder in the attack than the Americans. In general fair ways of fighting. In fieldcraft (Indianerkrieg) superior to our own troops. Very mobile at night, surprise break-ins, clever infiltrations at night with small groups between our strong points.

On the whole the American infantry especially is far inferior to the German. Sensitive to artillery mortar fire and tanks. Immediate counter-attacks of even numerically inferior detachments of our own troops always succeeded. Shun close combat. Determined leadership can compensate for many inferiorities of numbers and material.

b) Artillery

Enemy arty far superior in numbers and ammunition. In spite of considerable expenditure of ammunition we had relatively few casualties with the exception of areas where rocky ground made it impossible to dig in. Artillery, since not hindered by aircraft precautions, was led cleverly and shot well. Concentrations of fire from battalion and brigade formations. Intermittent harassing fire from heavy long-range arty by day and night far into the rear areas (on road junctions, winding roads and localities), with relatively small results however.

High-burst ranging, smoke or incendiary ammunitions. Also in action frequent use of incendiary ammunition to fight artillery.

Anglo-American arty-recce mainly by sound and very good. Arty-recce aviation available in sufficient numbers. Use of arty groups exclusively to combat arty since ammunition plentiful. Scattered fire with high expenditure of ammunition on all areas where gun positions or observation posts might possibly be.

Very good and sturdy radio equipment, excellent direction finding, advanced observation posts and arty-recce details in sufficient numbers with inf and with definite tasks.

Very elastic and clever observations posts, sometimes far advanced without any protection from infantry. Expenditures of ammunition inconceivable for German circumstances, e.g. firing of whole groups on single scouts.

c) Armour

Owing to the mountainous nature of the area armour on the whole is confined to action on the roads and the ground immediately beside the road. The American

carries out sudden tank attacks mainly along the roads after short, violent arty preparation.

Formation of the attack: Armoured point, 8-10 light "General Stuart" tanks with an attacking speed of about 50 km, firing continuously with guns and IMGs while travelling. Followed by heavy tanks.

Initial shock effect upon our own troops. But with determined action of close combat groups, anti-tank guns and flanking attacks by our own tanks always bound to fail. Enemy has anti-tank formations too. The American avoids when possible fighting tank against tank. Armoured rearguards will generally not be attacked by American tanks at night. The cross-country mobility of American tanks at night is amazingly great. Fighting value smaller than that of our armoured formations. American tank formations nearly always abandon attacks after relatively light initial losses.

American fighter-bombers are exceedingly active in the search for tanks in assembly positions. Best possible camouflage, absolute obliteration of all traces, placing of guards to ensure disciplined behaviour of all crews, will go far, even without active anti-aircraft defences, to prevent enemy attacks on assembly positions. American fighter bombers have repeatedly made low-flying attacks on armour without success. Fighting enemy aircraft with the turret machine gun caused them frequently to turn away.

d) Air Force

Complete enemy mastery of the air. Heavy use of fighter bombers with bomb and aircraft armament, mostly against supply traffic. Attacks on columns as well as on single vehicles. Excellent flying with very good use of ground (hedge-hopping). Ceaseless air-recce, use of bomber formations at centers of gravity, on localities, bridges, defiles and supply depots. Lively air activity at night also. Decreased air-activity up to about one and one half hours after daybreak and during the early dusk. At night parachute flares followed by bombing. During moon-lit nights also low level attacks with bombs and aircraft armaments on columns and individual vehicles. The initial élan of the opposing pilots, who attacked partly from low levels or with nearly vertical diving attacks, was noticeably dampened as a consequence of the high number of planes shot down in the first days.

The 2-cm anti-aircraft gun proved itself as a valuable weapon. Against various armoured types, e.g. Curtiss-Tomahawk and Mustang, the incendiary-explosive shell No 40 was found to be of insufficient power of penetration.

Own conclusions:

Excellent camouflage, absolute security from disturbance for battle headquarters through the creation of a wide barred zone with guards who at the same time are serving as air sentinels and warning service, have been very successful and have facilitated the work of the staffs. On every halt installation of slit trenches as a matter of course. In a country so lacking in cover they also serve the troops following later on. Traffic wherever possible only at night and without lights; during the day only by single vehicles with aircraft spotters on each vehicle.

In the case of attack from low flying planes immediate stop, abandonment of vehicle and firing upon enemy craft with all arms. The "Lightning" has shown itself to be particularly vulnerable to fire. Fire on aircraft with all available weapons, including small arms. (One "Lightning" was downed with a sub-machine gun.)

In spite of causing occasional hindrances to traffic it has been found to be good practice to leave vehicles that have been burned out or rendered useless through low-level attacks, on the side of the road, as the enemy attacked these same vehicles time and again, in some cases with whole swarms of aircraft.

Firing positions not to be near easily inflammable objects (heaps of straw, stubble fields, underbrush), as a safeguard against incendiary ammunition and canisters of phosphorus. Munition in emplacements to be well distributed, vehicles with alcohol and ammunition to be parked well away from other parking places. When travelling maintain good distances, during the day 300 metres, at night at least 100 metres.

Intense air recce by low-flying aircraft may point to special intentions of the opponent in the sector concerned.

In spite of the ceaseless employment of the air force the campaign has proven that the air force alone can not force decisions in battle. After initial losses the troops did adapt themselves to the air superiority of the enemy to a degree that could never be reached in training.

2) Own Experiences

Frequent lapses of vigilance as a result of over-exertion and over-fatigue. Organization of combat-zone observation with smallest number possible and with frequent reliefs especially important. Rifles with telescopic sights desirable equipment promising particularly good results in view of the cautious manner of fighting of the opponents. Own 7.5-cm and 7.62-cm anti-tank guns in mountainous territory of insufficient manoeuvrability. Mortars have proven to be especially useful in mountain regions, Difficulties in finding arty positions for ourselves owing to enemy air superiority.

Our own demolitions and road-blocks were overcome rather quickly by the enemy as a result of his great superiority in material. Only after the demolitions had reached a certain depth through our gradual withdrawal, could a more definite retarding effect be observed.

The laying of mines, including stray mines and ample use of anti-personnel mines contributed noticeably to the delaying of the enemy's advance.

Our own troops experienced high casualties from malaria. The supply service for casualties was made difficult through the constant air attacks on the ambulances... The placing of a Red Cross sign of the largest possible size with the sign of the Red Cross over the whole roof and the sides has proven effective. Deliberate attack on ambulances by low-flying aircraft was only noticed in isolated instances.

Telephone lines were sabotaged frequently. Radio communications were rendered completely impossible between 1900 hrs and 0400 hrs through atmospheric disturbances. Radio stations of any kind always to be located far away from command - or observation posts.

3) Peculiarities of fighting in the mountains

In spite of insufficient equipment and of being unused to mountain warfare our troops adapted themselves comparatively well to the situation. Difficulties especially with the water supply. The mountainous and intersected country was favourable for withdrawals. Limitation of the possibilities for gun emplacements through ground impassable for arty. Radius of wireless transmission reduced in mountains. Wireless equipment to be located on heights as far as possible.

4) Co-operation with the Italians

Only to a small degree was it possible to work together with the Italians. The infantry, moderately well led, insufficiently equipped with heavy infantry weapons and, in accordance with national character showing little soldierly deportment, was soon represented on the front by a few units only.

Great inclination to desert.

Much better was the collaboration with the artillery. Under German command (Joint observation posts, ranging by German officers), the Italian arty fought well even under heavy arty fire from the enemy. Close co-operation after initial mistrust had been overcome.

The average Italian artillery officer is reasonably well trained. The conception of the advanced observation post with the infantry is unknown to them. Fire is map fire from emplacements. Italian artillery : badly equipped with signal equipment. To a large degree equipped with obsolete types of guns. Great dispersion, therefore usually only area fire possible.

APPENDIX "E"

GERMAN FORMATIONS DEFENDING ASSORO AND LEONFORTE

In Report No 135, para 89, the defence of Assoro and Leonforte has been ascribed to 1 Pz Gren Regt (15 Pz Gren Div). The information had been taken from Hist Sec File/1 Cdn Inf Div/L/F, Int Summary No 5, 23 Jul.

The reports of O.B.S. seem to confirm that the action was carried out by elements of 15 Pz Gren Div. No evidence has been found, however, to indicate that 15 Pz Gren Div had elements other than 104, 115 and 382 Regiments. Until additional information becomes available it might be well to say that Assoro and Leonforte were defended by elements of 15 Pz Gren Div.

The situation map of the Italian Commando Supremo, for 23 Jul, shows the Livorno Division as holding a sector of about 25 miles between H.G. Div and 15 Pz Gren Div. In a sense that may have been true, but the few relevant captured documents of H.G. Div show that 3 Para Regt had been dispatched into this area to close the gap resulting from the progressive disintegration of Livorno Division.

Whether at the same time the remnants of 1 Pz Gren Regt H.G. Div were sent as far West as Leonforte can not be ascertained at the moment; it is certain however that this regiment at the time in question was exactly in the depleted condition described in the documents captured by 1 Cdn Inf Div.

(G.M.D.S. - H.G. Div)