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143

C.O.S.(44) 143rd.Meeting (O)

WAR CABINET

CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

MINUTES of Meeting held on WEDNESDAY,
3RD MAY, 1944 at 10.30 a.m.

PRESENT:

Field Marshal Sir Alan F. Brooke,
Chief of the Imperial General
Staff. (In the Chair)

Marshal of the Royal Air Force
Sir Charles F.A. Portal,
Chief of the Air Staff.

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew
B. Cunningham, First Sea Lord
and Chief of Naval Staff.

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT:

General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson,
Supreme Allied Commander,
Mediterranean Theatre.
(For Items 4 - 6)

Major-General R.E. Laycock,
Chief of Combined Operations.

SECRETARIAT

Major-General L.C. Hollis
Colonel C.R. Price
Group Captain A. Earle
Lt. Colonel D. Capel-Dunn

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1. "CROSSBOW"

(Previous Reference: C.O.S.(44) 141st Meeting (O), Minute 3)

THE COMMITTEE took note of the following statement by the Chief of the Air Staff of the results achieved by attacks to date on "CROSSBOW" objectives:-

Ski Sites No change

Large Sites

Category W	1
Category X	2
Category Y	1
Category Z	3

2. TRANSFER OF NIGHT INTRUDER SQUADRON FROM M.A.A.F TO UNITED KINGDOM

(Previous Reference: C.O.S.(44) 133rd Meeting (O), Minute 13)

THE COMMITTEE took note of a telegram^x from the Joint Staff Mission stating that the American Chiefs of Staff concurred in the transfer of No. 23 Mosquito night intruder squadron from the Mediterranean theatre to the United Kingdom.

x J.S.M. 32

3. SOUTH-EAST ASIA COMMAND - AIR SUPPORT FOR AMERICAN OPERATIONS IN THE SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC

THE COMMITTEE considered a telegram^x from the Joint Staff Mission containing the text of a signal which had been sent by the American Chiefs of Staff to the Commanding General, U.S. Army Forces in C.B.I. and requesting that it be passed to Admiral Mountbatten.

It was generally agreed that the instructions contained in the telegram would have a considerable effect on operations in South-East Asia Command and that Admiral Mountbatten should be asked for his comments on this aspect. It was noted that the Joint Staff Mission would try to obtain the background leading up to the despatch of the message as soon as possible.

THE COMMITTEE:-

Instructed the Secretary to repeat the signal to Admiral Mountbatten together with a request for his comments.^φ

x J.S.M. 34
^φ Sent as COSSEA 98 and 99.

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4. MEDITERRANEAN OPERATIONS - MEETING WITH GENERAL WILSONJ.P.(44) 125 (Final) X(Previous Reference: C.O.S.(44) 140th Meeting (O), Minute 3)

THE COMMITTEE discussed with General Sir Maitland Wilson:-

- (1) Telegram MEDCOS 100 giving an outline of intentions and ideas in implementation of the directive issued to the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theatre;
- (2) Telegram MEDCOS 101, in amplification of MEDCOS 100, outlining the various directions in which the small amphibious lift remaining in the Mediterranean theatre might be used;
- (3) An aide memoire by the Joint Planning Staff commenting on the above telegrams;
- (4) Telegram No. J.S.M. 33 giving the views of the U.S. Chiefs of Staff on the ideas outlined in C.O.S.(W) 16.

Operations in Italy

In reply to a question, SIR MAITLAND WILSON agreed that the reference to "surplus forces" in paragraph 1 of MEDCOS 101 was perhaps misleading. The forces would certainly be needed to implement the tasks laid down in his directive; the problem was to provide the resources necessary to bring them into action against the enemy.

It was agreed that this point would have to be brought out when telegraphing the comments of the British Chiefs of Staff to Washington.

Amphibious Operations

SIR MAITLAND WILSON gave details of the assault shipping and craft remaining in the Mediterranean and agreed that they represented an amphibious lift for about one division. They were, however, a somewhat "scratch" collection.

It was noted that there might be a requirement for one or more additional headquarters ships for the Mediterranean and SIR ANDREW CUNNINGHAM said that arrangements could probably be made to meet this requirement soon after the launching of "OVERLORD".

In discussion, it was agreed that the best way of being prepared to take advantage of any favourable development after "OVERLORD", using Allied resources in the Mediterranean theatre, would be to prepare plans for the following amphibious operations:-

X copy attached.

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- (i) The seizure of a port on the west coast of France on the lines of the "CALIPH" concept;
- (ii) A landing on the south coast of France, somewhat on the lines of "ANVIL" but with the object of seizing a port, if possible;
- (iii) A landing behind the German line in Italy to assist the advance of our forces on the mainland;
- (iv) A landing on the eastern shore of the Adriatic with the object of developing an air base in support of the Partisans and in co-operation with a Russian advance through the Galatz gap.

The scope and timing of (i) and (ii) above would depend on the scale of enemy opposition after "OVERLORD" and on the extent to which additional amphibious resources could be made available ex "OVERLORD" and from other theatres. These operations could only take place under "RANKIN" conditions and might conveniently be referred to as "RANKIN ANVIL" and "RANKIN CALIPH". The possibility of introducing elements of a French armoured division into France to operate somewhat on the lines of long range penetration groups should be examined.

SIR MAITLAND WILSON said that he had discussed with the Americans under his command the idea of developing an air base on the Yugoslav coast in support of Tito, and they had appeared to take a favourable view of this project, particularly in co-operation with a successful Russian penetration through the Galatz gap.

SIR ALAN BROOKE suggested that Sir Maitland Wilson should have an early meeting with General Eisenhower to discuss plans for "RANKIN CALIPH" and "RANKIN ANVIL" with particular reference to the amphibious resources which General Eisenhower might be able to release after the early stages of "OVERLORD". If plans could be prepared and forces got ready, there would then be the minimum delay after the arrival of the necessary assault shipping.

J.S.M. 33

It was agreed that an operation against Western France would have the disadvantages referred to in paragraphs (a) and (c) of telegram J.S.M. 33 from the U.S. Chiefs of Staff.

SIR ANDREW CUNNINGHAM said that he did not attach much weight to the argument in paragraph (b) about the submarine menace in the Atlantic and Bay of Biscay.

As regards air support, it was thought that the air cover from the 7 assault carriers, which could probably be made available, should be adequate under "RANKIN" conditions. For this reason, plans for "RANKIN ANVIL" need not be confined to areas within range of shore based air support.

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Cargo Shipping

SIR MAITLAND WILSON emphasised that the present allocation of cargo shipping to the Mediterranean theatre would be quite inadequate to support amphibious operations on the scale contemplated.

It was agreed that the outline plan for "RANKIN ANVIL", when ready, should form the basis for a request for additional cargo shipping. In the meanwhile it was most important that the transfer of cargo ships from the Mediterranean to other theatres should be held up. The Ministry of War Transport should be consulted as to the best way of arranging for a standstill order.

Transport Aircraft

THE COMMITTEE referred to a telegram^x from Admiral Mountbatten regarding availability of transport aircraft in support of operations in Burma and asked General Wilson to explain the reasons why he needed the transport squadrons back in the Mediterranean, in order that a strong case might be made out in a telegram to Washington.

SIR MAITLAND WILSON said that transport aircraft were required for operations against the German lines of communication in Italy, to maintain supplies to the Partisans in Yugoslavia and, above all, to train airborne units for operations in support of "RANKIN ANVIL/CALIPH". It was in operations under "RANKIN" conditions that airborne troops could play the greatest part.

THE COMMITTEE:-

- (a) Instructed the Secretary to arrange a meeting between Sir Maitland Wilson and General Eisenhower for the discussion of plans and resources for "RANKIN ANVIL" and "RANKIN CALIPH";
- (b) Invited Sir Maitland Wilson to report as soon as possible the results of his discussion with General Eisenhower;
- (c) Instructed the Secretary to request the views of the Ministry of War Transport on the best way of arranging for the withdrawal of cargo shipping from the Mediterranean to be suspended;
- (d) Instructed the Joint Planning Staff to examine SEACOS 148 and to prepare a draft telegram to the Joint Staff Mission commenting on it, with particular reference to the need for transport aircraft in the Mediterranean.

Note: It was subsequently arranged for Sir Maitland Wilson to see General Eisenhower on Friday morning, 5th May, and for him to report at the meeting of the Chiefs of Staff on Saturday morning, 6th May.

x SEACOS 148

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5. BRAZILIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

(Previous Reference: C.O.S.(44) 139th Meeting (O), Minute 12)

THE COMMITTEE discussed with Sir Maitland Wilson the following minute from the Prime Minister:-

"FOREIGN SECRETARY
GENERAL HOLLIS. C.O.S. COMMITTEE

I am all for getting the Brazilian Division into Italy as soon as possible. Every effort should be made, subject to battle exigencies, to bring this into Italy. There should be no talk of a token force. The above also applies to the Air Squadron.

(Intld.) W.S.C.

1.5.44"

SIR MAITLAND WILSON said that he was prepared to accept the Brazilian Infantry Division and fighter squadron as proposed.

THE COMMITTEE:-

- (a) Instructed the Secretary to draft and despatch a reply^x to J.S.M. telegram No. 9 accordingly;
- (b) Instructed the Secretary to submit a minute⁺ to the Prime Minister reporting the action taken.

x C.O.S.(W) 28
+ Annex

6. COMMAND OF OPERATIONS IN THE ADRIATIC AND AEGEAN

(Previous Reference: C.O.S.(44) 140th Meeting (O), Minute 2)

THE COMMITTEE considered a minute^x by the Prime Minister suggesting that all operations against the Dalmatian and Aegean islands might be put under the command of Admiral John Cunningham.

SIR MAITLAND WILSON said that he was in favour of setting up a Trans Adriatic Command at Bari under a senior Air Force officer. The Command would include operations against Hungary but not in Italy. The Commander would have under him senior Naval, Army and Air Force officers and would have control of Force 266 and the Commandos. The Trans Adriatic Command would come directly under the Supreme Allied Commander.

x No. D. 135/4.

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SIR CHARLES PORTAL said that if the scheme were approved he would gladly provide an Air Force officer as Commander.

SIR ANDREW CUNNINGHAM said that he was strongly in favour of the Commandos coming directly under naval control.

It was recalled that the appointment of a single officer to co-ordinate S.O.E. operations in Yugoslavia had been approved at "SEXTANT".

SIR MAITLAND WILSON said that his present proposal went rather further than this and envisaged the appointment of a more senior officer in command.

THE COMMITTEE:-

Invited Sir Maitland Wilson to circulate a note outlining his proposal.

Offices of the War Cabinet,
S.W.1.
3rd May, 1944

ANNEX

Copy of a Minute dated 3rd May, 1944 from
the Secretary, Chiefs of Staff Committee
to the Prime Minister

Brazilian Expeditionary Force

The Chiefs of Staff have considered your minute on the transfer of a Brazilian Division and a fighter squadron to the Mediterranean and, in anticipation of your approval, they have sent the attached telegram agreeing to the American proposal.

2. The U.S. Chiefs of Staff state that the bulk of the division will not be ready for shipment until after 1st October, 1944, but that one Regimental Combat Team (about 3,000 strong) will be ready for shipment in June. The fighter squadron should be ready about 1st September.

3. I have sent a copy of this minute to the Foreign Secretary and to the Minister of War Transport.

+ COS(W) 28

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J.P.(44) 125 (FINAL)

BIGOT

2ND MAY 1944

WAR CABINET

JOINT PLANNING STAFF

MEDITERRANEAN OPERATION - MEDCOS 101

Aide Memoire by the Joint Planning Staff

MEDCOS 100 detailed the action which General Wilson could take with his present resources during the early critical period of OVERLORD.

2. MEDCOS 101, which we have examined in accordance with our instructions⁺, is his promised appreciation of the major operations which might be undertaken by him in the Mediterranean theatre after the initial critical period of OVERLORD, together with an estimate of the additional resources which he would require for them.

3. The substance of MEDCOS 101 is that, with the very limited amphibious resources available, the forces in the Mediterranean are strategically inflexible; that no worthwhile amphibious operation can be undertaken unless these resources are increased by a further two-and-a-third-divisional shore-to-shore lift, together with the necessary shipping; that without these resources the land forces which may be set free by the development of the campaign in Italy may be largely wasted and unable to take advantage of opportunities which may occur.

General Wilson considers that a three-divisional assault, with an immediate follow-up of a further three divisions, is the minimum force likely to achieve adequate results against the scale of opposition likely to be met with in the Mediterranean, except in RANKIN "B" conditions.

4. Our detailed comments on the various matters raised by General Wilson are set out below. The outstanding point, however, is that, with the possible exception of the 26 L.S.T. which the U.S. Chiefs of Staff might make available, no further L.S.T's can be provided until they are released by S.C.A.E.F. from OVERLORD. No fixed date can yet be given for this, but it seems unlikely that any substantial number can be provided much before D + 90. If this is so, it is doubtful whether they could be available for operations in the Mediterranean before mid-October, by which time the weather conditions will have become indifferent.

+ C.O.S. (44) 140th Mtg. (0)

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5. General Wilson refers to the possibility of using landing craft and transport aircraft on the way to the Far East after their release from OVERLORD. It is important not to take for granted that these ships and craft will automatically go to the Far East. There may well be a demand for further amphibious operations in the European theatre - as indicated by General Wilson - either this year or possibly next year, which should take priority over Far Eastern operations. This point might suitably be mentioned when the Chiefs of Staff send their comments on MEDCOS 101 to the U.S. Chiefs of Staff after discussion with General Wilson.

6. Reference paragraphs of
MEDCOS 101

COMMENTS

Para. 1

General Wilson emphasises that to make use of the surplus forces that will be freed by the joining of the bridgehead and by the capture of ROME, and to undertake a major amphibious operation in the Mediterranean he would require additional resources in landing ships and craft.

We agree

Para. 2

It is impossible to decide at this stage in the war on any definite plan for adoption after the critical period of OVERLORD. However, it is obvious that immobilised forces will be useless and that a flexible strategic reserve would be a great advantage. This flexibility can only be provided by the allocation of additional shipping and amphibious resources.

No comment.

Para. 3

General Wilson visualises the following situations:

(a) The Germans stabilising South of ROME after the bridgehead has been joined, in which case he requires amphibious forces to strike behind the enemy and turn his flank.

(a) We assume that, as indicated in MEDCOS 100, para. 6, this operation could be carried out with the amphibious lift remaining in the Mediterranean.

It must be made clear that no further resources can be provided before the probable dates of these operations, so that if they are to be carried out, they must be related to General Wilson's present amphibious resources.

(b) The Germans fighting a slow delaying action to the PISA-RIMINI line, in which case he can follow up on land with at most 3 divisions, while the initial build-up by land in front of PISA-RIMINI cannot exceed 15 divisions. He requires craft to out-flank the enemy by sea and to accelerate the build-up in front of the PISA-RIMINI line.

(b) This limitation to 8 and 15 divisions respectively is due to logistic difficulties, presumably after taking into account a heavy scale of enemy demolitions.

His available lift in landing ships and craft might, however, accelerate the build-up by supplementing the land L. of C., but only at the expense of further operations.

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(c) Circumstances arising in which a modified ANVIL might be feasible or desirable, or RANKIN "B" conditions might arise in the ANVIL area.

(d) A situation which can best be met by exploitation into Northern Yugoslavia.

The support of Tito with really large scale supplies of arms and food is suggested.

Para. 4

(a) Any operation, with the exception of a minor one in close tactical support of the main forces, with anything less than a 3 divisional assault with immediate follow-up of 3 divisions is likely to lack penetrating power and to be contained. To complete a 3 divisional shore-to-shore lift an additional $2\frac{1}{3}$ divisions shore to shore lift is required.

(b) An additional allocation of minesweepers and naval assault vessels would be necessary.

(c) This is the only one of the situations mentioned to which Admiral King's tentative offer of L.S.T. would apply, as the "Southern or Western" coast of France is specifically referred to.

We consider that General Wilson should be asked the circumstances in which he could gain an entry into Southern or Western France with his present resources plus the additional 26 U.S. L.S.T's and on the assumption that the corresponding personnel and M.T. ships could be made available.

(d) We doubt whether an operation of this nature would be of direct assistance to OVERLORD. Whilst the implications cannot be assessed without detailed proposals, we should nevertheless point out that the supplying of really large quantities of arms from British resources might have to be at the expense of operations elsewhere.

(a) We do not know the exact serviceability factor on which General Wilson has based his figure, but with a generous allowance for unserviceability, we estimate that he should have a shore to shore lift of at least one division. We calculate that with the addition of 26 U.S. L.S.T's he will have a lift of the order of two divisions. The lift for a third division is not in sight and could only be provided from OVERLORD.

We do not know how quickly General Wilson visualises the three-follow-up divisions being required after the assault. If they are all to be afloat at the same time as the assault convoy, the provision of personnel shipping, may prove a difficulty.

(b) S.C.A.E.F. has not yet stated when naval forces can be released from OVERLORD. If that operation goes well there is no reason to suppose that considerable British or U.S. naval reinforcements could not be sent to the Mediterranean. Any British force would, however, be at the expense of the build-up of the Eastern Fleet. It is unlikely that any minesweepers could be released for a considerable time.

✓ J.S.M. 23

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(c) It is suggested that assault vessels released after the launching of OVERLORD could be used in the Mediterranean without prejudice to operations in the Far East.

No landing ships and craft are due to proceed to the East until they are no longer required for the war against Germany. Shipments already planned for this summer involve minor landing craft only.

Para. 5

About 150 cargo ship sailings would be necessary for the assault and follow-up convoys of an amphibious operation of the type envisaged, or to deal with RANKIN conditions should they arise. This figure is over and above cargo shipping already allotted to internal Mediterranean movement.

This figure assumes that a three-divisional lift of landing ships and craft will be available. It is already realised, both in London and in Washington, that present Mediterranean cargo shipping allocations are exclusive of ANVIL or any other operation.

A large number of ships employed inside the Mediterranean are now being transferred to other services, and unless special action is taken to prevent their dispersal, there will remain at the end of May only the 60 ships allocated for internal sailings in June.

Para. 6

Lift for airborne forces, after the return of aircraft lent to S.E.A.C., will be less than one R.C.T. Additional lift for one division less one R.C.T. is requested.

We agree with General Wilson's estimate. After the OVERLORD assaults S.C.A.E.F. intends to retain all airborne forces and transport aircraft in reserve for use as opportunity offers. No date of release can therefore be forecast.

It is suggested that transport aircraft on route to India from the European theatre might be temporarily diverted.

Any diversion of transport aircraft already allocated to India will very seriously affect operations in Burma and tonnages over the Hump.

7. The CALIPH Concept

Neither General Wilson nor General Eisenhower has yet examined the CALIPH Concept, whereby forces now available in the Mediterranean, supplemented from Italy after Operation DIADEM, might undertake an assault on the Western or Southern coast of France in the event of a partial German withdrawal. We suggest that General Eisenhower and General Wilson should discuss this project, employing such forces as can be made available from the Mediterranean and OVERLORD theatres.

SUMMARY.

8. From a summary of these comments the following points emerge:-

- (a) that we consider that General Wilson has now in the Mediterranean a lift for at least one division;
- (b) that with the addition of 26 U.S. L.S.T's he would have about a two divisional lift;

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- (c) that no other amphibious resources or transport aircraft are in sight for him except those which may be released from OVERLORD.
- (d) that no provision of cargo shipping for operations in the Mediterranean is at present being allowed for. The Combined Shipping authorities should be given early warning of any such requirements so that they may examine the implications of providing them.

(Signed) G. GRANTHAM
 W.H. RAY
 W.L. DAWSON

Offices of the War Cabinet,
 S.W.1.

2ND MAY, 1944.

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