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Report for Directives

NOV. 1943. Feb. 1944

(Copies 27-12-43)

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Allied Force Headquarters
ALLIED CONTROL COMMISSION
Land Forces Sub-commission
A.P.O. 509, U.S. Army

14 December 1943

Subject: Report

To : C-in-C AFHQ APO 512 (attention A/C of S, G-3)

1. In compliance with the provisions of paragraph 3 a, G-3 Memorandum to the undersigned dated 28 November 1943, and paragraph 4, cable to Fable for Simmons dated 1 December 1943 directing that report be expedited, information has been obtained from the Italian Military Authorities and by personal inspections and investigations of the organization, personnel, equipment, clothing, feeding, and training of Italian troops stationed in this area.

It should be noted that a report as comprehensive as the one required and applied to a command the strength of which is over 200,000, with the additional demand for expediting the same must of necessity be based upon the results of spot-checking and isolated sampling.

2. The several attributes of the Italian Land Forces concerning which estimates are required are treated separately, in the order listed, as follows:

a Composition

The Italian Land Forces in Sardinia are composed of units of all branches including infantry, artillery, armored, parascute, engineer-signal, ranger-saboteur, coastal, and supply troops.

b Organization

The Italian Land Forces in Sardinia are organized under the command of COMANDO MILITARE DELLA SARDEGNA, with headquarters at Dorigali, into two Corps; The VII Corp with headquarters at Sassari and the XIII Corp with headquarters at Cagliari. Each division, separate groupment, regiment, and battalion, and organization of special combat or service troop, is directly under the command of one of these three headquarters. A complete list of organizations

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and locations of same as submitted by C.M.S. is included in "FORZA e DISLOCAZIONE", attached hereto as Appendix "A".

c. Strength

A total strength of approximately 220,000 officers and men is indicated in detail in "FORZA e DISLOCAZIONE", Appendix "A".

d. Equipment

The status of supply of clothing, individual and unit equipment, weapons, and ammunition is indicated in tables attached hereto as Appendix "B". Of many omissions discovered in original draft submitted by C.M.S., some have been supplied. Data on other items are still missing and will be supplied as they become available. Among the latter are certain types of automotive equipment, engineer-signal equipment, and medical supplies, data on which are incomplete at this time.

The condition of clothing is, with few exceptions, unsatisfactory. In all cases the only clothing possessed by soldiers is that in which they stand. Underwear is largely non-existent, partly due to the fact that soap has been unobtainable for three months with the consequence that underwear has become unfit for use. Shoes are, almost without exception, in the last stages of usefulness. Many soldiers are entirely without shoes, using improvised sandals of wood or other material. The only shoes in stock are of extreme sizes which makes them of no use.

In the case of weapons, the condition at large is satisfactory. Small arms show the effect of the acute shortage of cleaning and preserving materials but field pieces and most other weapons have been cared for satisfactorily.

Medical supplies in the supply depot at Ozieri are far below normal in quantity except in the case of cotton and gauze dressings. Drugs such as novocain, quinine, and certain anesthetics are practically non-existent, as are thermometers, hypodermic syringes etc.

It is reported by commanders that the acute shortages among organizations of the VII Corp were contributed to by the fact that they were required to leave behind many items of personal and unit equipment when evacuated from Corsica.

e. Training

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The state of training, existing among the troops is not uniform but has been conditioned by the varied experiences to which units have been subjected. In general, the basic training of the private soldier, most of whom have had three or more years of service, appears to be thorough in-so-far as individual knowledge and skill in his limited area are concerned. Observation of demonstrations indicate that, in those functions which permit

(Continued 27-12-43)

automatic responses, the expectancy as to correct procedure is high. On the other hand, a sudden change of situation produces confusion and destroys the smoothness of performance. This observation applies also to N.C.O.s and junior officers. No opportunity to observe the responses of field officers to tactical situations was afforded in the brief time available.

The headquarters of higher echelons do not appear to be staffed with highly trained officers. Efforts to interrogate chiefs of staff and to observe the functioning of other divisional staff officers were usually forestalled by the C.G. who was always present and who insisted upon answering questions for his staff officers. Not infrequently such answers might have been improved upon by a subordinate.

f Efficiency

While the spot-checking which so brief a period permitted may not have provided a completely representative picture of the entire force, it is believed that the state of efficiency of the various elements is as widely-varied as is the training. The most general weakness encountered was concerned with the exercise of command functions. Exceptions to this were observed in the Rembo Division, the Battaglione Arditi, and in certain artillery units. In the latter organizations officers of all levels seemed capable and confident and apparently possessed the entire confidence of their men.

As mentioned under training, poor or incomplete staffing is believed to be another critical weakness which affects the efficiency of higher echelon units. Isolated instances of staff officers who appear aggressive and highly efficient were observed but were exceptional.

The status of supply, or lack of same, is inevitably associated with the efficiency of the various units. Half or less than half rations, prepared and served in an unwholesome and unsanitary manner, shabby clothing, squalid living quarters, each contribute to evidence of lack of efficiency. Furthermore the lack of quinine or of sufficient quantities of synthetic drugs for treating or preventing the effects of malaria has reduced the effectiveness of a large proportion of the command.

g Morale

An estimate of this attribute involves the consideration of many factors already mentioned. Any such abstraction can be measured only through its manifestations. For the purposes of this report, the term "morale" will be defined as combat discipline and will include fortitude, desire to overcome obstacles, high spirit in the face of unsatisfactory surroundings, and obvious determination to come to grips with the enemy which is destroying the homes of his family and friends.

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(C) ed 27-12-43)

With this definition in mind, the majority of units observed as well as individual soldiers questioned gave small if any evidence of high morale. While apparently disciplined in ranks to the point of stiffness, when out of formation most soldiers exhibited little smartness or proud soldierly bearing. Police and cleanliness, both personal and the surroundings of billets and cook-houses were very unsatisfactory.

Probably much of the obvious listlessness and lack of discipline is due to idleness which is necessary, so commanders insisted, because of insufficient rations and the desire to conserve the already shabby uniforms, particularly shoes. Nevertheless, the general impression of morale is that it is unquestionably low. Again, exceptions to this condition are the Nembo Division and the Battaglione Arditi. The members of these units conduct themselves proudly with perhaps some evidence of defiance despite their well worn clothing. They have alike been recruited from highly athletic young men and really act the part of fighting soldiers. The fact that the homes of the majority of the members of these units are in enemy occupied territory is an additional factor to be considered in estimating their probable conduct in battle.

3. Summary

This report should be considered in the light of what it really is - the result of hastily sampled units. It is believed that the impressions of the units inspected are accurate but the spot-checking, involving relatively few of the total number of units, may not have provided an accurate or representative cross-section of the entire command.

Soldiers of the C.M.S. whose homes are in Sardinia have been granted extended furloughs. The exact number of these furloughed soldiers has not been obtained nor has information as to whether the furloughs are to be continued indefinitely or whether such soldiers receive pay or rations from the army.

With food conditions as they are in Sardinia it would seem wise to furlough or discharge to their homes all soldiers whose homes are in Sicily and perhaps that part of the mainland not enemy occupied.

It is reported that some 30,000 soldiers of the C.M.S. ¹⁹⁴¹ are natives of that part of Italy which was formerly Yugoslav and that they have formed a "secret committee" to promote the organization of a "Slav Division" to fight the Germans in Yugoslavia. The details of this report are being investigated.

Approximately 10,000 Italian troops are engaged in providing security at the various airfields, ports, radar stations, etc. under the direction of the commanders of those various installations, and as laborers in various activities.

(Copied 12-13)

4. Conclusions

a That in view of the state of equipment, training, efficiency, and morale, a large proportion of the Italian Forces are not qualified for combat service in the near future, but

b That the Nembo Division and Arditi Battalion are qualified for early field service except for clothing and a brief period of conditioning with full rations.

5. Recommendations

a That the Nembo Division and Arditi Battalion be transferred to the mainland for immediate preparation for early combat duty.

b That further and continuous inspections be conducted to insure the identification of all units qualified for various types of service.

c That troops in Sardinia whose homes are in Sicily or that portion of the Italian mainland not enemy occupied be furloughed or discharged to their homes.

F. L. Simmons
Colonel Infantry
Representative in
Sardinia

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incl 1- Appendix "A"- Organization Data
incl 2- Appendix "B"- Supply Data

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Equals British CONFIDENTIAL
Allied Force Headquarters
Allied Control Commission
Land Forces Sub-commission Rep't'y
A.P.O. 809, U.S. Army

2 December 1943

Memorandum to: A/C of S, G-3 AFHQ

Subject: Informal Report.

1. Pursuant to provisions of LO AFHQ dated 27 Nov. 1943, undersigned arrived Sardinia with party 30 Nov 43 and reported to HQ AGC. The hasty observations noted in following list are submitted for whatever interest they may contain.

a AGC ill in local hospital.

b Conference with AGC in hospital at his request revealed belief by him that all Italian Military Forces in Sardinia are under his direction for all purposes. (Contrary to last sentence, Par 2 b, Admin. Memo. No. 80, AFHQ, 14 Nov 43)

c Undersigned accompanied acting AGC on visit to CG Ital. Mil. Forces in Sardinia and Regional Commissioner (Allied Control Commission) Sardinia, 1 Dec 1943, returning HQ AGC 2 Dec 43 with information necessary to comply with cable request AFHQ 30 Nov 43. Report on status of move of the Sabauda Division being completed for mailing 3 Dec 43.

d Informed by acting AGC that no transportation available for use of undersigned.

F.L. Simons
Colonel, Infantry

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File - Report for directives

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PRIORITY

30 NOVEMBER 1943

NUMBER D-90

TO FATIMA FOR JOYCE

FROM CG ALLIED GARRISON SARDINIA

ARRIVED SARDINIA THIS DATE COMPLIANCE DIRECTIVE AC OF S CMA G DASH THREE CMA

A PD F PD HQ PD FOR DUTY AS REPRESENTATIVE LAND FORCES SUBCOMMISSION PD

SIMMONS FOR WEBSTER

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File Report for directives

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Allied Force Headquarters
ALLIED CONTROL COMMISSION
Land Forces Sub-commission
A.P.O. 509, U.S. Army

2 February 1944

Subject: Report of Investigation

To : Commanding General, A.G.S.

1. Authority - Verbal instruction, C/S, A.G.S.

2. Matter investigated - Allegations of mistreatment of members of 229th Labor Company, Italian, by officers in retaliation for being interviewed by visiting "Jugo-Slav" officers.

3. Facts

a Captain V. Vucinich approached by four Italian soldiers (Krstic, Joseph - native of ZADAR - spokesman) who stated that five soldiers of 229th Co. were tied on the ground in tents with hands behind them and under armed guard as punishment for participating in an interview with Jugo-Slav officers. It was further stated that the confined soldiers had been threatened with death. Soldiers were said to be citizens of territory captured by Italian forces who had been impressed into service as labor troops.

b On being conducted to area of 229th Co. on Elass - Cagliari road by soldier Krstic, accompanied by Capt. Vucinich and Italian interpreter, it was discovered by investigating officer that no soldiers were tied in close confinement; that five soldiers were restricted to the immediate limits of a small area occupied by shelter tents and under guard; that the senior Italian officer present, S. Ten. ENESTO VINCENTINO, had no objections to an interview with the soldiers. 1937

c Pvt. MARIO SULER stated that he is a citizen of PIEMONTE; that the 229th Co. was engaged in working in Cagliari under directions of a contractor who paid a few lire per day for services; said money being turned over to one of the officers of the company, Lt. ALDO BALLI; that on 27 January 1944 he, SULER, had had too much to drink and asked several of the officers for the money he had earned; that he had been tied to a pole with his hands fastened behind him with "MANETTES"; that he had remained there for one hour; that some of his

Report of Investigation (cont'd)

friends who had also been drinking had tried to release him and were now being restricted with him as punishment; that his punishment had no connection with the recent visit of the three Jugo-Slav officers who had made an unauthorized call on the company prior to the arranging of their schedule.

d S. Ten. Vincentino stated that money was collected from contractor to be used for extra food and clothing, balance to be returned to soldiers at a future time; that SULER had been drunk and behaving in a disorderly manner - singing, cursing, mocking the officers, and became very insubordinate when refused money by the custodian of same, Lt. BALDI; that when Jugo-Slav officers had arrived unexpectedly about two weeks ago and were discovered surrounded by the soldiers of the company, the company officers formed the company (with difficulty) in order to permit the personnel to be addressed by the Jugo-Slav officers.

e Pvt. SILVESTRE TUTA stated that he was a citizen of TALMIN and that, at visit of Jugo-Slav officers, the Italian officers attempted to form company but the men wanted to talk informally; that Italian officers threw rocks at soldiers in attempting to get them in line to listen to Jugo-Slav officers; that he (Tuta) had tried to cut rope holding SULER to pole and was being punished for that; that his punishment had no relation to the visit of Jugo-Slav officers.

f Pvt. Joseph Krstic, spokesman for original complainants, agreed, on questioning, that the punishment of SULER was not a consequence of the visit of the Jugo-Slav officers; stated that he wished to speak on the subject of the situation in the labor company in general. Investigating officer explained that he had no immediate interest in anything not closely related to original allegation.

g Captain Vuclnich stated that he desired to ask no further questions; that the situation seemed quite clear from statements obtained.

h No sworn testimony was taken.

4. Discussion

An analysis of the testimony of all concerned readily discloses that the four complainants, under the leadership of Krstic, were interested in inciting discontent among members of 229th Co. and had become concerned for their own status. Therefore they had seized upon the incident of punishment administered to Suler for disorderly conduct as a device to divert attention from them and against their Italian officers. No evidence of harsh nor

Report of Investigation (cont'd)

inhuman treatment was disclosed. Statements of complainants to effect that soldiers being punished were not Italian citizens are untrue.

Considerable evidence of turbulence on part of members of company were observed. The visit of the Jugo-Slav officers two weeks ago is being used by such soldiers as Krstic as a basis of claim that the members of the "Slav" companies are to be sent to Jugo-Slavia to join the "Partisans". Apparently the Italian officers are having difficulty in restraining the present unruly tendencies.

5. Conclusions

a That charges made by complainants are not founded in fact.

b That radical members of 229th company are engaged in inciting discontent among the personnel.

6. Recommendations

a That no further action be taken in this matter.

b That the disposition on part of intelligence officers to encourage complaints made directly to this headquarters by disaffected Italian soldiers be discontinued and that such complainants be directed to file their evidence, if any, with the proper officials in the Italian Forces.

F. L. SIMMONS
Colonel, Infantry
Investigating Officer.

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