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## RESUME: LYBIAN CAMPAIGN, MAY-AUGUST 1940

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General Ironside, BRGC



Marshall Balbo, ITAC

Here is the true report of the Italian defeat in North Africa:

### May

Supported by two groups of Hurricanes, an armoured and three motorized corps cross the border of Libya towards Bardia, from where the initial assault on the citadel of



Tobruk is launched. Later, supported by naval gunfire, 6<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps makes initial progresses in the outskirts of the city but in the air, the RAF is having a tough fight against the seven hundred aircrafts of the Libyan Air Corps. Although Italian losses far exceed the British, the Hurricanes are too few to maintain air superiority throughout the month. A valiant counter attack by the Italian

10<sup>th</sup> Corps supported by bombers pushes our troops back in the last week.

### June

5<sup>th</sup> Corps strikes at Benghazi as Italian reinforcements are setting up their defences. Although initially very successful, 5<sup>th</sup> Corps' audacious advance is halted by strong enemy air activity and they are unable to secure the city. In the air, the fighting is more and more furious as the Libyan Air Corps launches air strikes on the whole front. These have however no serious results on the ground, the attacks being unable to stop 2<sup>nd</sup> Army's encirclement of Tobruk. By the end of the month, cut off from supplies and heavily bombed from offshore, the city's defenders can have little hope of relief.





### July

The Royal Navy destroys an Italian force of destroyers and merchants attempting to re-supply the defenders of Tobruk. The garrison is stormed by 6<sup>th</sup> armoured a few days later and surrenders unconditionally. In Benghazi, 5<sup>th</sup> Corps resumes its attack forcing the enemy to withdraw in disorder to the south.

### August

While 5<sup>th</sup> Corps entrenches in Benghazi, the rest of 2<sup>nd</sup> Army Group resume its offensive, with Soluk's airbase as target. The third and final objective of operation Crusader is captured on the 11<sup>th</sup> with 6<sup>th</sup> Armoured and 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry outflanking the forward Italian positions. Again, Marshall Balbo's forces are routed and it is only a lack of fighter cover that prevents our tanks to completely destroy them.



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