

New British Army Is Reported Near Tobruk From the South

Thousands of Infantry to Join Mechanized Forces Driving on From Bardia

LONDON, Jan. 7.—A new British army was reported advancing across the Libyan desert today to attack Tobruk, important Italian naval and air force base 70 miles west of Bardia.

Dispatches from Egypt said that while medium and light tanks, armored cars and Bren-gun carriers were roaring along the direct Bardia-Tobruk road paralleling the coast, an entirely new British Empire force was cutting in toward the road from the desert south of Bardia.

It was planned that the mechanized and armored units should form the advance guard for the main body, basically infantry, which was moving in from the desert toward the undefended coastal road. Infantrymen by thousands were reported moving in trucks.

Ready Ahead of Time

Reports said that the British command in Egypt had started forming this new army at the moment the attack was begun on Bardia three weeks ago, ready to move out for a full-scale attack on Tobruk while the Italians were still reeling after Bardia's fall.

It was believed that the advance guard of the new army moved out from the desert Sunday and military experts expressed belief that it might by this time be near Tobruk.

Experts said also that at Tobruk the British might find a far weaker army, numerically, than the one they had defeated at Bardia. Some estimated the entire Italian force in the Tobruk area at possibly as few as two divisions, or about 30,000 men. At Bardia, the British had broken up an army of 75,000 and taken far more than 30,000 prisoners.

The *Times*, usually exceptionally well informed on such matters, asserted today that the British Empire casualties in the whole Libyan campaign had been fewer than 2000.

[Presumably casualties would cover wounded as well as killed. Dispatches from Australia had indicated that the total Australian losses in the final attack on Bardia had been fewer than 500.]

The Royal Air Force and the Navy were already blasting at Tobruk and there was belief here that Britons would read within a few days that a real attack on that base had been started.

Tobruk

Fires at Tobruk

CAIRO, Jan. 7.—British bombing planes made a lightning assault on the Fascist base at Tobruk yesterday. An RAF communique said that one very large fire caused by British bombing at Tobruk was visible as far as Bardia, and that British aircraft had flown over the blaze, dropping bombs directly into it and increasing its area.

As in the case of Bardia, Australian troops were in the vanguard of the attacking force. It was understood that Marshal Graziani had massed the cream-of his Black Shirt legionnaires to meet the assault. British sources estimated that 1000 or more German planes to assist him were being flown from Italy.

The British have rained hundreds of tons of bombs on the fortifications, barracks, and airdromes at Tobruk in continuous raids Saturday night, Sunday, and Sunday night.

Italians Now Know

ROME, Jan. 7.—Italy's high command admitted today that Bardia had fallen and was completely in British hands.

Yesterday was the Epiphany holiday, usually the merriest one in Italy, but there was general gloom among the celebrants as press and radio hints continually suggested disaster at Bardia.

Reports from Benghazi, capital of Italian Libya, indicated that the British were intensifying their attacks against Jarabub in an effort to strengthen their exposed left flank against counterattacks. But Italian communiques of the last week have reported Italians strongly entrenched in the sector. The apparent British aim, it said, was to take important oasis points preparatory to attacking Tobruk.



JANUARY 7, 1941