

# INTELLIGENCE SHARING:

## A NOT SO NEW CONCEPT GIVEN NEW LIFE

MAJOR J.R. JOHNSON

What is the most important task every Soldier is responsible to do that we most need to improve? If you ask a CSM, he may tell you uniform compliance with Army Regulation 670-1. If you ask a team leader, he might say physical fitness, and a squad leader may say rifle marksmanship, but if you ask any S2, he will more than likely say communications!

Why is the intelligence officer so interested in communications? Without effective communications between echelons, an S2 cannot do his job. The most important tool for effective communication is the patrol debrief. A properly filled out patrol debrief paints the scene for an intelligence analyst. It allows the analyst to be in more than one place at a time; it also allows him to not only get a feel for what the enemy might be planning but also how the local population is reacting to both your patrols and the enemy's actions. If this information is effectively communicated, the analyst can compare it with information and intelligence received from higher and other units and form an effective picture of the enemy. Without it the analysts can only provide a guess or at best a generalized picture. I will discuss some of the things the Army has done to improve this communication, what intelligence trainers at the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California, are coaching units on rotation, and some of the impediments to successful implementation that company commanders can face.

With the Army's current decentralized company and battalion operating posts and bases, the importance of communications is ever so critical and its difficulties more magnified. Without daily face-to-face contact, company commanders can feel ignored or shut off by the battalion staffs. FM 3-21.75, *The Warrior Ethos and Soldier Combat Skills*, instructs every Soldier how to gather information (Chapter 9 - Every Soldier a Sensor), and now the Army has decided to follow its brothers in arms, the Marine Corps, in trying to give the S2 some support at the company level with the formation of the Intelligence Support Team (IST), or company S2. These are non-intelligence MOS Soldiers trained by mobile training teams (MTTs) and on-the-job training (OJT) to do basic collection and analysis, but more importantly provide that vital link of communications between the battalion S2 section and the company. When that relationship is even more stressed by intermittent communications between echelons, they can also provide simple products and basic analysis from their own collection. The basis of implementation for these ISTs is the forthcoming FM 2-91.6, *Soldier Surveillance and Reconnaissance*:



SPC Charles W. Gill

*A Soldier with the 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment talks to a shop owner in Shulla, Iraq, after violence in the area was reported.*

*Fundamentals of Tactical Information Collection*, which supersedes ST 2-91.6, *Small Unit Support to Intelligence*.

As a battalion intelligence observer/controller at NTC, I have advised commanders and first sergeants who come through rotations to dedicate at least three Soldiers, one supervisor and two analysts, and train as many personnel as possible in manning the IST. This normally means at least one additional Soldier in each platoon who is trained and helps the IST when they are not on patrol with their platoon. This gives units redundancy should someone need to be replaced (leave, injury, school, promotion), but more importantly it gives the platoon leader someone he can rely on to understand the information priorities and requirements the platoon needs to collect and report.

Some impediments to this communication are realized during implementation, when careful planning is not conducted and the right personnel are not chosen to fill this role. Just like their intelligence MOS counterparts, these newly trained personnel will require security clearances and need to understand the procedures for safeguarding sensitive information. The information exchanged between the IST and the S2 needs to be safeguarded from prying eyes, such as the trash collector and the CD/DVD salesmen that often hang out near our bases in theater. It is not a requirement to have a clearance before being trained, but certain Soldiers will have difficulty obtaining a clearance later, based on their previous troubles with authority. Those individuals should be identified before wasting training on them. Your S2 can help you to identify

---

prerequisites and assist in identifying things that may disqualify a Soldier. In addition, a dedicated work space and equipment are necessary to make the IST effective. Oftentimes this simply means a laptop to store files and work on, and space to work. Outline the IST structure and the roles and responsibility of the IST versus the company command post (CP). These seem like obvious requirements, but it is amazing how frustrating it becomes to prepare a product for a patrol getting ready to leave when one just returned and the shared notebook is being used by the returning platoon leader to do ammunition tracking or refine an operation order. While no one likes to give up personnel without a guaranteed return, if you don't set these Soldiers up for success initially by doing these simple things, you guarantee at least one thing: more frustration and time wasted fixing it later.

Most commanders would agree that they do not get enough intelligence from their S2, but is this due to a lack of information or relevance of that information to them? Without proper feedback an S2 cannot tailor a product to what a commander wants or expects, and without proper input an S2 can not make the necessary leaps of assessment when analyzing information to produce relevant intelligence. Which brings us back to that patrol debrief and the IST. The lack of intelligence value is not entirely due to an S2 getting the information he needs, often these days the S2 and his staff are poorly trained, manned, and lack the experience to make their assessments relevant, and that is what I and my counterparts at the Combined Training Centers (CTCs) strive to improve with our coaching and mentoring.

Like a computer, the information received and presentation of that information is only as good as the programs and information put into it and the skill of the person manipulating it. Set yourself up for success by enabling your Soldiers to provide information, and give feedback to the S2 on the outputs of that information whether they are in the form of a daily intelligence summary (INTSUM), patrol pre-brief, or an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) collection matrix. You just might be surprised at how easy it becomes to provide a task and purpose for your next patrol, as it is spelled out to you in the daily INTSUM the S2 passes to your IST supervisor.

---

**MAJ J.R. Johnson** is an intelligence officer with prior enlisted service as an infantryman. At the time this article was written, he was serving as an observer/controller for Maneuver Staff and Intelligence at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California.

---

# THE ANGLO-FRENCH INTERVENTION IN THE LEVANT JUNE 8 TO JULY 11, 1941

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER YOUSSEF ABOUL-ENEIN, USN  
2ND LIEUTENANT BASIL H. ABOUL-ENEIN, USAF

The defeat of pro-Axis Iraqi regiments led by Prime Minister Rashid Ali Al-Gaylani and the British effort to end the siege of the Habbaniya Air Force Base led to reevaluation of asymmetric agitation in the Middle East by Axis powers. Although the European, Russian and North African fronts in World War II garnered much attention, it is vital that obscure campaigns such as the one in Syria be reexamined. It offers potential lessons in the current war on terrorism that now occupies three major fronts in Iraq, Afghanistan and recently Lebanon. British military planners designed Operation Exporter, which was to put an end to German influence and agitation in the Middle East theater of operations. British military and political leaders were concerned that Vichy (pro-Nazi) French occupation of Syria was a strategic threat to surrounding Allied oil supplies in Iraq, Iran, and the Persian Gulf region. Operation Exporter combined British forces and Free French forces in a plan to invade Syria in June 1941. The aims were to occupy Syria and Lebanon, preventing the establishment of an Axis presence that could threaten British bases in Palestine and oil refineries at Abadan. Consequently, the operation was to enhance Britain's broader strategic position in the eastern Mediterranean. Disentangling the Middle East's complex modern history is important to instilling awareness among America's future military leaders.

During World War II, Syria and Lebanon were French protectorates and had been so since 1919. From 1920 British colonial policymakers worked diligently to create in Iraq a centralized government ruling over a population that was disparate and heterogeneous in the extreme. It had no ties of loyalty to the nation-state of Iraq or affection for its ruler King Feisal I; the only constant were tribal allegiances. Syria, on the other hand, was governed by France's colonial policy and did not face the same problem as British-mandated Iraq. The French were able to pursue a more traditional policy of divide and rule. In the old Ottoman Turkish province of Lebanon, with its Christian majority, small enclaves were divided from Syria to form what would become Lebanon. Areas inhabited by the Druze and Alawi minorities were formed into the enclaves of Jebel Druze and Latakia. The former province of Alexandretta, with its Turkish population, was granted autonomous rule. Syria was originally divided into two states, Damascus and Aleppo, and was reunited in 1925 partly as a result of nationalist pressures and civil unrest. Shaykh Salih ibn Ali led the Alawis; Shaykh Ismail Harir rebelled in the Hawran; and in the Jabal Druze, Sultan Pasha al Atrash, kinsman of the paramount chief of the Druze, led continual resistance, most notably in 1925, calling for unity. On February 9, 1925, to pacify these factions, the French permitted the nationalists to form the People's Party. This party was led by Faris al Khuri, and demanded French recognition of eventual Syrian independence. After the Nazi defeat of France in June 1940, French authorities in Syria recognized the Vichy Government of Field Marshal Philippe Petain and appointed a new Syrian cabinet headed by Khalid al Azm, a son of the Ottoman Minister of Religious Affairs and member of a wealthy Damascus family, as acting president and prime minister.

### Reasons the Vichy French Reshuffled the Syrian Cabinet After June 1940

The Vichy French sphere of influence over Syria provided safe passage and refueling for Luftwaffe planes that were en route to aid in an Iraqi revolt that began in 1941. This was suppressed by the British that same year. Vichy France allowed Germany and Italy:

- \* Full landing and provisioning rights in Syria;

- \* The right to establish a Luftwaffe base at Aleppo; and

- \* Permission to use ports, roads, and railways for transport of equipment to Iraq and train Iraqi soldiers in Syria with French weapons.

The Vichy French High Commissioner Henri Dentz had been convinced by Admiral Jean-Francois Darlan, Minister of the Navy, to allow German and Italian aircraft an airbase for logistical support. Darlan, a French naval officer and senior figure of the Vichy France regime, was close to Field Marshal Petain. The French Admiral rose to command the entire Vichy French navy after the dismissal of Petain's deputy, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pierre Laval, for ordering the entire fleet to French North Africa. This was a major mistake which allowed the British fleet to shell and destroy the French Vichy fleet at the Algerian port of Oran. Darlan was also made Minister of the Interior, Minister of Defense and Minister of Foreign Affairs by the Vichy French government. The destruction of the Vichy French Fleet by the Royal Navy in July 1940 combined with the slaughter of French sailors and decision to deprive the Axis of additional valuable warships, aroused anti-British sentiments among Vichy French officials. This resulted in the furthering of Vichy Franco-German military cooperation.

### Axis Manipulation of Syrian Governments at Will

Henri Dentz, High Commissioner of the Levant, forced the resignation of neutral Syrian President Emile Iddi and appointed a Pro-Vichy President Alfred Naqqash. On May 8, 1940, it was reported to Berlin that French representatives had agreed to the following concessions from the Naqqash government:

- \* Stocks of French arms under Italian

control in Syria were to be made available for arms transport to Iraq.

- \* Forwarding of arms shipments of other origins that arrive in Syria by land or sea for agitation in Iraq.

- \* Permission for the Luftwaffe, destined to Iraq, to make intermediate landings and to take on gasoline in the Levant; providing for operations in Iraq reconnaissance, pursuit planes, and bombers from the Vichy air force permitted by Syria to land and overfly the country under the armistice treaty.

- \* Providing an airbase in Syria to be made available for Axis use and to assist German planes making intermediate landings.

The British, viewing events and the installing of a pro-Axis Syrian government, imposed an economic embargo on Syria in November 1940. The United States State Department opposed any restrictions on Syria, fearing that such an action would draw Syria even closer to the Germans and have further repercussions on relations with neighboring Arab states. Prior to the blockade, Syrian and German wartime trading succeeded in obtaining Syrian wool, silk, as well as casings via the Turkish route for the manufacture of parachutes needed for the Luftwaffe and Nazi paratroopers. The vitality of Syrian military trading with Germany was a crucial aspect of the Axis war effort.

By late 1940, Nazi Germany sent German representative Werner Otto Von Hentig to Syria to execute Hitler's objectives to use the Levant as a staging area for the assault on Mosul's oil fields in Iraq and the Suez Canal in Egypt. Von Hentig met with several influential leaders of the Syrian nationalist factions including future President of Syria Shukri Al-Quwatli (1943-1949). They discussed increasing German-Syrian economic cooperation and plans to undermine Allied influence in Syria.

With the Axis juggernaut in the Balkans, Rommel's Afrika Korps in the western desert and the Gaylani coup in Iraq, Syria was not among Britain's top priorities in early April 1941. However, in April 1941, Free French leader General Charles De Gaulle arrived in Cairo for consultations with General Georges Catroux and the Allied Middle East Command based in Egypt, and on the agenda of the Free French was Syria. After the successful Allied landings in North Africa (Operation TORCH), Catroux was



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Degaulle-freefrench.png>

*Free French Force leader General Charles de Gaulle shakes the hand of General Henri Giraud in a screenshot taken from the 1943 U.S. Army propaganda film Divide and Conquer.*

appointed commander in chief of Free French forces in the Middle East. At the Cairo conference, DeGaulle proposed the capture of Beirut, Damascus and the airfield at Rayaq, located approximately 45 miles east of Beirut. It was a tactically strategic Vichy French airbase, but the British seemed reluctant because of the heavy losses inflicted on the Western Desert and would not want to risk thinning the Allied front against Axis positions in Libya against Rommel.

DeGaulle suspected the British of moving into Syria themselves and creating a British Mandate in Damascus. Such was the legacy of the race for colonies started in the latter part of the 18th century. The bitter conflict over who would exercise spheres of influence in the Middle East characterized Anglo-French relations preceding the pre-World War I Sykes-Picot Agreement, which carved out the modern Middle East among Britain, France, and Tsarist Russia.

Vichy War Minister, General Charles Huntziger, sent a message on May 4, 1941, to Vichy High Commissioner in Syria Dentz stating "it is not impossible that you may shortly be faced with a German attempt to give assistance to Iraq. If formations of German aircraft should seek to land on your airfields or should fly over your territory, it would be expedient to consider that France is not in the position of a neutral power with respect to Germany. It is not possible to treat the armed forces of Germany as hostile, but you would naturally oppose with force any intervention by the British forces" (*Iraq and Syria 1941, The Politics and Strategy of the Second World War* by Geoffrey Warner [1974]).

---

This was followed on May 6 by an order from Admiral Darlan to give German aircraft en route to Iraq “every facility” to continue their journey. Darlan flew to Berlin for consultations with Hitler and Nazi Foreign Minister Von Ribbentrop on May 12. The discussions ended with Darlan resolved to take a clear course of entering the war against Britain. Darlan was obviously acting in a conviction that a Nazi victory was at hand, as Allied forces were bloodied at Kasserine Pass. In his book, Warner wrote that Winston Churchill, eager as ever for action, cabled Wavell: “You will no doubt realize the grievous danger of Syria being captured by a few thousand Germans transported by air. Our information leads us to believe that Admiral Darlan has probably made some bargain to help the Germans to get in there. In face of your evident feeling of lack of resources we can see no other course open than to furnish General Catroux with the necessary transport and let him and his Free French do their best at the moment they deem suitable, the RAF acting against German landings. Any improvement you can make on this would be welcome . . . .”

Nazi agreements with Darlan were foiled on December 24, 1942, when a French anti-Nazi royalist, Ferdinand Bonnier de La Chapelle, entered Darlan’s headquarters and assassinated him. De La Chapelle was executed by firing squad two days later. Darlan would be replaced as high commissioner by another French flag officer, General Henri Giraud. German aircraft had been operating from Syrian airfields since April 1941 to support a revolt against the British in Iraq. By the end of May 1941, there were 120 Axis planes in Syria, which was a base of attack towards the British-controlled Suez Canal as well as opening the potential for air raids on the oil refineries at Abadan in the Northern Persian Gulf. The German Luftwaffe operating from the Axis held Dodecanese Islands and Crete, gave an opportunity to bombard Egypt and possibly airlift German airborne troops from bases in Crete. In August 1940, Germans agents arrived with ample support to arouse Arab nationalism and anti-British and anti-Zionist feeling in Syria. Axis agents spread rumors through an extensive system of collaborators and informants that Nazi Germany was in favor of Syrian independence. In consequence, riots broke out in Damascus. The pro-Axis coup in Iraq began to threaten British interests in the region and hence bring Syria ever closer to Axis influence. Just a modest investment in information operations by the Germans led to what one could argue a successful diversion of Allied (mainly British) resources in Iraq. These are lessons one could apply in the current conflict between the United States and Iran, in which Tehran pursues multiple diversionary fronts short of outright war to weaken American objectives in the Middle East. The World War II American Consul in Beirut, Cornelius Van Engert, warned Syrian nationalists of the harm that would befall Syria if it were to fall into German hands. In the article “Syria and State Department” which appeared in the January 1997 issue of *Middle Eastern Studies*, James Melki wrote that Syrian Nationalist leader Fakhri Al-Baroodi stated that “in the past, the fate of the Arabic speaking countries had been in the hands of London and Paris and the results had not been happy either.” The Vichy French authorities had dispatched weapons from Aleppo to Baghdad in support of Iraq’s pro-Axis Rashid Ali Al-Gaylani’s revolt. Melki also wrote that the magnitude of the complicity of Syria in the Iraq revolt had so heightened Allied

distress that the American ambassador to England had reported to have said that “if however, this use by the Germans of Syrian territory for military purposes continues, it is evident that the results will be very serious indeed.”

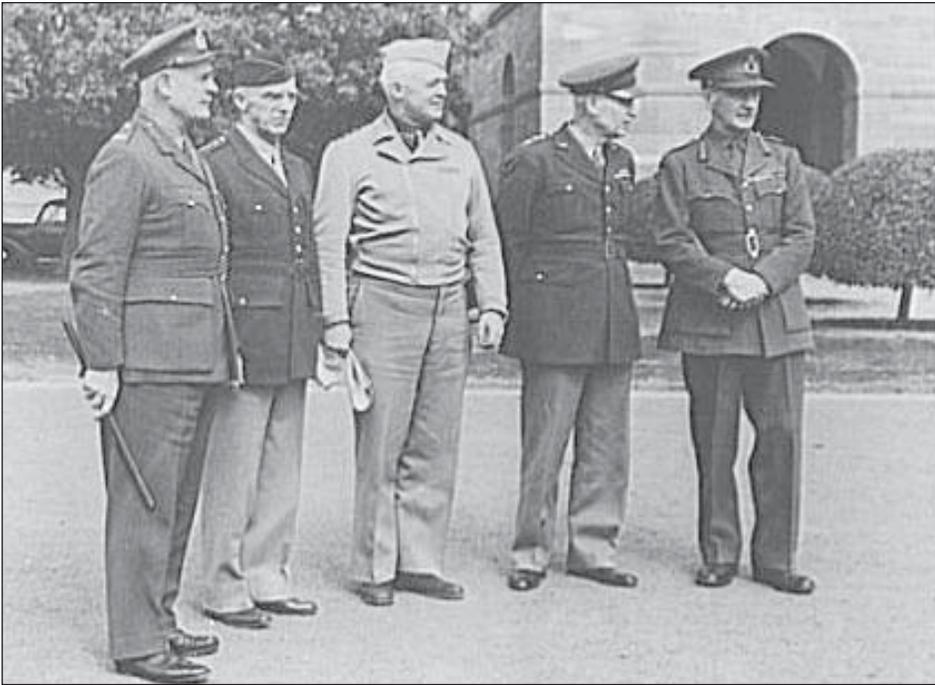
The Vichy French further complicated the Allied situation by sending war material through neutral Turkey and conducting an Axis build up on Turkish southern frontier. This strategically meant Turkey would be cut off geographically from the British, as the Axis would now influence Greece, Syria, instability in British Iraq, and would erode Allied lines of communication with Turkey. In the book *Turkish Foreign Policy During the Second World War - An ‘Active’ Neutrality*, author Selim Deringil wrote that British foreign secretary Anthony Eden thought it “essential that we should make plans of our own and that we should take the Turks to a large extent into our confidence; if once the Germans are able to establish themselves in any strength in Syria and succeed in organizing a part of the Arabs against us, Turkey will be effectively surrounded and it would indeed be difficult then to count upon her enduring loyalty . . . taking a long view, there is this further consideration: if, as a result of her isolation, Turkey were to cave in and allow passage of German troops into Syria, Germany would presumably be able to accumulate in due course important armored forces in the Middle East. These forces would not be limited by the difficulties of communication and supplies, which hamper any forces advancing on Egypt from the west, and a more formidable German Army could then be maintained and employed from Syria than from Tripoli. The only way to stop this is for Turkey to hold fast, and that could only be achieved at the earliest possible moment with the situation in Syria.”

In *Iraq and Syria 1941*, Warner wrote that the British agreed with DeGaulle’s plan to wrestle the Levant from the Vichy French, and on May 20 indicated that:

- \* “Catroux’s request was to be granted;
- \* The Free French were to be given not only the transport they wanted but as much military and air support as possible;
- \* An immediate Free French declaration of independence for Syria and the Lebanon would be backed by Britain;
- \* The opportunity was too good to miss; and
- \* Entering these two territories (Syria and Lebanon) was to be regarded as a political coup rather than a military operation. . . .”

Vichy forces had postured themselves in positions from which they clearly intended to defend Syria against any British or Free French invasions. Warner also wrote that Allied Middle East Commander General Archibald Wavell cabled London that he was “moving reinforcements to Palestine and after full discussion with my colleagues because we feel we must be prepared for action against Syria, the whole position in the Near East is governed mainly by air power and air bases. Enemy air bases in Greece make our hold of Crete precarious and enemy bases in Libya, Crete and Syria would make our hold on Egypt difficult.” This shows the central strategic position the Axis enjoyed in Syria, but in the same time Arab politicians in Syria seemed enamored by German nationalism, hoping to duplicate this in the Arab experience.

Despite the approval of Operation Exporter, it very nearly did not take place as planned owing to a combination of military and political factors. On the military side, there were some last minute doubts as to the wisdom of proceeding in Syria with Wavell



Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

*From left to right, Field Marshal Archibald Wavell, LTG Joseph W. Stilwell, LTG H.H. "Hap" Arnold, LTG Brehon Somervell and Field Marshal Sir John Dill meet in New Delhi, India.*

conducting an imminent counteroffensive in the Western Desert. On the political side, a bitter dispute between the British and the Free French over influence in Syria arose. The Free French regarded the Arab nationalists in the mandate as a matter for their exclusive concern, and regarded British attempt to influence them as part of a design to exclude France from the orient altogether. The National Defense Research Committee (NDRC), an organization created under the aegis of the Council of National Defense to coordinate, supervise, and conduct scientific research on the problems underlying the development, production, and use of mechanisms and devices of warfare in the United States from June 27, 1940, until June 28, 1941, endorsed the decision and Churchill decided to take on both Crete and Syria. The counteroffensive in the western desert failed miserably, largely due to the decision for a simultaneous invasion of Syria.

### Operation Exporter

General Archibald Wavell, commander in chief of the Middle East, aimed at gathering the largest possible force to occupy Syria at the earliest date. The Allied ground forces would be made up of the:

- \* 1st Australian Corps (7th Australian

Division and 6th Division: constituent brigades),

- \* 5th Indian Brigade,
- \* Free French Division with the use of 12 H39 light tanks,
- \* Iraqforce, and 10th Indian Division.

In all 18,000 Australians, 9,000 British, 5,000 Free French and 2,000 Indians. The Royal Air Force consisted of 12 Fulmar, 17 Swordfish, and 4 Albacore. General Wavell sent an outline of his plan for the invasion of Syria, code-named Operation Exporter to London.

On May 21, 1941, Wavell ordered the 7th Australian Division to be ready to be deployed to Palestine and ordered General Henry Maitland Wilson, who had assumed command of Palestine and Transjordan, to prepare a plan for an advance on Syria. General Wilson, also known as *Jumbo* Wilson, saw active duty in the Second Boer War and World War I. In June 1939, Wilson was appointed commander of the British and Commonwealth forces tasked with the defense of Egypt and the Sudan. In a broadcast Churchill said, "General Wilson who commands the Army of the Nile, was reputed to be one of our finest tacticians, and few will now deny him that quality." He planned a three-pronged advance, one for Beirut, Rayaq, and Damascus, with possible diversionary raids upon Tripoli in Lebanon and Homs in Syria. It

would not be able to take Aleppo, but Warner wrote that Wavell wondered if the Turks could be convinced to thrust into Aleppo.

The British ambassador in Ankara approached the Turkish Foreign Minister, Sukru Saracoglu on June 2. Saracoglu brought up the question of Syria in a conversation with German Ambassador to Turkey Franz Von Papen. Saracoglu conveyed to Britain that his government could not accept any Allied proposal to occupy Northern Syria as this might involve it in war with France, and possibly Germany. The Allied ground forces were composed of:

- \* 7th Australian Division headed by Major General John Dudley Lavarack.
- \* 5th Indian Infantry Brigade group led by Brigadier General Herbert William Lloyd.
- \* Free French Forces led by General Le Gentilhomme comprising six battalions and a company of tanks.

Allied airforce strength for Operation Exporter would consist of 28 aircraft operating from Palestine and Cyprus. In reserve were the:

- \* British 6th Infantry Division,
- \* Australian 17th Brigade,
- \* Iraqforce (the Allied force occupying Iraq, including the Indian 10th Infantry Division, the British 4th Cavalry Brigade and the Arab Legion).

Hitler sent little support to the Levant as his attention was diverted in Russia, the Balkans and England, as well as sustaining Axis forces in North Africa. Therefore Allied forces would face primarily Vichy ground forces composed of:

- \* The French Foreign Legion under General Dentz comprised of 18 battalions, with 120 guns and 90 tanks, 35,000 men in all, mainly Senegalese, Algerian and Moroccan.
- \* 2,000 horsemen and motorized infantry with a few armored cars.
- \* An airforce of about 90 aircraft.
- \* A naval task force of two destroyers and three submarines based in Beirut.

### Allied Movements in the Levant

The 21st Australian Brigade would advance north, from Palestine, along the Lebanese coast, headed towards Beirut. The 25th Australian Brigade would head for Rayaq Airfield. The 5th Indian Brigade and the Free French Force would march on Damascus. Once these three objectives

---

were attained, an advance on Tripoli, Homs, and Palmyra to the north would begin.

The invasion began on June 7, 1941, and was met with strong opposition. The Vichy French resisted along all three of the Allied routes of advance. On June 8, while the 21st Australian Brigade crossed the Litani River on the coastal road heading for Beirut, two columns advanced from Jordan. On the Lebanese coastal section, fierce fighting occurred at the banks of the Litani River two days after the invasion to capture key bridgeheads along the river. The 21st Australian Infantry Brigade passed through the area. Sea bombardment of the Lebanese port of Sidon resulted in its easy occupation on June 15. On the central route, Merjayoun, located in Southern Lebanon, was captured on the 11th of June. On June 12 it was decided to transport the bulk of the Allied forces to Merjayoun and take part in the coastal advance, via a mountainside route that passed through Jezzine. A rapid progress was made by the Indians and Free French towards Damascus but was halted within 10 miles of the capital. With Wavell calling in the reserves of the 6th British division to advance on Palmyra and two brigades of the 10th Indian division in Iraq were ordered to march up the Euphrates River on Aleppo. On June 21, the Syrian capital of Damascus fell to a combined Indian, British, Australian and Free French force. Fighting escalated, however, in Lebanon as the Allies struggled to take the important coastal center of Damour, located 12 miles south of Beirut, which was secured on July 9. Allied concentration on Jezzine and coastal areas commenced. British forces headed north to Beirut and were within a few miles from the Lebanese capital by July 10. General Dentz' forces were diminishing and only one fifth of his air force remained. At 8:30 a.m., on July 12 Vichy envoys arrived to negotiate for an armistice, which was signed at Acre and brought Syria into the Allied fold.

### Allied Endgame

The British transferred the mandate administration agreed to after World War I, to Free French forces appointing General Catroux as Delegate-General and Plenipotentiary. General Catroux selected Taj Al-din al-Hassani as president of Syria. Six hundred Palmach (infant Israeli Haganah) units also participated in the invasion of Syria alongside the Allies conducting sabotage of transportation and communication networks. Future Israeli Chief of Staff, Minister of Defense and Minister of Foreign Affairs General Moshe Dayan and future Israeli Prime Minister General Yitzhak Rabin were among the famous members of Palmach who participated in Operation Exporter. Dayan received the British Distinguished Service Order for his actions in the campaign while attached to the Australian 7th Division. In command of reconnaissance units of the Palmach sent to secure a bridge across the Litani River, Dayan lost his left eye when his binoculars were hit by a French sniper's bullet while he was surveying the bridge, earning him his trademark eye patch.

### Conclusion

**Strategically:** The Syrian campaign (Operation Exporter) greatly improved the strategic position of British interests in the Middle East. It removed the threat of any attempt of the Axis penetration eastwards from the Mediterranean and secured the defenses of the Suez Canal and relieved Turkish anxiety of her southern border.

The occupation and conquest of the Levant ended the German advance towards the Persian Gulf and India.

**Seeds of the Jewish Armed Underground are planted:** The Palmach unit was established by the British on May 15, 1941, to aid the British in the protection of Palestine from Nazi threat. After the British victory at El-Alamein in 1942, the British ordered the dismantling of the Palmach unit. Instead, the whole organization went underground, combining military training with agricultural work which made the Palmach self sufficient and self-funding. They placed heavy emphasis on training field commanders. Their military training by the British came to haunt the British position in Palestine. From the summer of 1945 until the end of 1947, when the British administration suppressed the Jewish settlement movement and blocked Jewish immigration into the country, the Palmach brought ships with tens of thousands of Jewish refugees and Holocaust survivors from Europe illegally. As the British positions began to withdraw from Palestine in May 1948, the Palmach emerged to influence and contribute to Israel's military considerations. Upon the declaration of the state of Israel, May 15, 1948, the Israel Defense Force (IDF) was established, founded on the infrastructure of the Haganah and its striking force, the Palmach. The Palmach unit was dissolved after the formation of the IDF. During the war of independence of 1948, the Palmach units held the Jewish settlements of Gush Etzion, Kfar Darom, and Revivim against Arab militia.

**Syrian and Lebanese Confrontation and Independence:** As far as the Levant was concerned, the British policy took the form of unrelenting pressure upon the Free French to implement their pledge of independence for the two countries, Syria and Lebanon. This naturally encouraged nationalists and led to periodic confrontations between them and the french authorities. Continuing pressure from Syrian nationalist groups forced the French to evacuate their troops in April 1946, leaving the country in the hands of a republican government that had been formed during the mandate.

**Arab Nationalists Misread Allied Victories in 1942:** Pro-Axis Syrian leaders would continue to misread the British victory in El-Alamein in Egypt coupled with successful landings of Allied forces in Northwest Africa failing to see the tide was beginning to turn for the Axis. So immersed were nationalist Syrian leaders in uniting Arabs using German nationalist tools perfected after the Franco-Prussian War of 1871 and leading to two World Wars, they misread the beginnings of what would be a massive Russian counteroffensive against the Germans, the loss of Stalingrad from the grasp of the Nazis. This was the tide in 1942 that began to favor the Allies from the Eastern and North African theaters of war.

---

**LCDR Youssef Aboul-Enein** is a Navy Medical Service Corps officer specially at the Joint Intelligence Task Force for Combating Terrorism. From 2002 to 2006, he served as Middle East County Director and Advisor at the Office of the Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. He is a frequent contributor to *Infantry Magazine*.

**2LT Basil Aboul-Enein** is an Air Force Biomedical Science Officer and currently a graduate student of Public Health at the University of Texas Medical Center. He works as a Dietetics Professor at San Jacinto College.

The list of references for this article is on file and available through *Infantry Magazine*.

---