

Chronology of Events – Madagascar

1942

15 March

Force 121 formed in the United Kingdom for the invasion of Madagascar. The headquarters is formed by the Headquarters, Royal Marine Division, under the command of Major General R. G. STURGES. Formations under command are:

- 13th Infantry Brigade Group;
- 17th Infantry Brigade Group;
- 29th Independent Infantry Brigade Group.

23 March

Force 121 sails from the United Kingdom bound for Freetown.

Convoys staged at Durban.

5 May

Units from the 29th Brigade (with 5th (Army) Commando attached) commence landings at Diego Suarez. Units from the 17th Infantry Brigade land as second wave.

6 May

- Units from the Third Wave, 13th Infantry Brigade, land at Diego Suarez;
- 29th Brigade meets determined resistance, and is held up. 17th Brigade comes up to assist, with 2nd South Lancs outflanking the French positions, and 17th Brigade force them to retire.

7 May

- 10.50 hours, The French commander at Diego Suarez surrenders to British Forces.
- 13.00 hours, British troops enter Antsirane;
- Commandos are landed at the harbour behind French lines;
- 14.00 hours, the two forts at Antsirance also surrender.

The capture of Diego Suarez is completed. British casualties are 389 killed, wounded and missing. French casualties are about 650 men and about 2,000 prisoners.

19 May

The 13th Infantry Brigade leaves Madagascar to sail to India to rejoin the 5th Infantry Division.

8 June

22nd (East Africa) Infantry Brigade (total of 4,772 personnel all ranks) lands from assault craft at Diego Suarez to relieve 17th Infantry Brigade.

10 June

The 17th Infantry Brigade leaves Madagascar to continue onto India to rejoin the 5th Infantry Division.

- 2 July Operation 'Throat' launched by commandos and one platoon from 5th Bn. K.A.R. to capture the island of Mayotte off north west coast of Madagascar.
- July The French Governor, M. ANNET, declines to surrender the rest of Madagascar. The British government decides to occupy the rest of the island. Planning commences for three operations:
- Operation 'Stream' – landing by 29th Brigade at Majunga on the east coast to secure bridgehead;
 - Operation 'Line' – landing by 22nd (E.A.) Brigade at Majunga to pass through 29th Brigade and advance on the capital Tananarive;
 - Operation 'Jane' – a diversionary landing by 29th Brigade at Tamatave on the east coast.
- 20 August 29th Infantry Brigade leaves Madagascar for East Africa in preparation for Operation 'Stream'.
- 1 September Islands Area (Major General G. R. SMALLWOOD) formed to assume command of Madagascar, Seychelles and Mauritius. Area assumes responsibility for operations on Madagascar.
- 5 September 22nd (East Africa) Infantry Brigade embarks at Diego Suarez for Operation 'Jane'.
- 7 September A Naval task force of some fifty ships sails from Mombasa and is joined by another task force sailing from Diego Suarez combines at Moyette and heads for Majunga.
- 10 September Units from the 29th Infantry Brigade land at Majunga, a port on the west coast of the island, and establish a bridgehead. Town captured for the loss of five men killed and nine wounded.
- 11 September Lead unit of 22nd (E.A.) Brigade (1st/1st K.A.R.) reaches the Betsiboka River to find the bridge (with a 452 feet middle span) damaged. Patrols are put across the river by foot and drive back the French defenders.
- 12 September The Betsiboka River bridge is made passable for vehicles. South African armoured cars cross and resume the advance. Several roadblocks are encountered but cleared, albeit delaying the advance.

- 16 September 1st/1st K.A.R. battlegroup reaches Anjajia and another river to cross. Patrols cross the river but meet with resistance. Lieutenant R. K. J. FRASER is killed, but, Sergeant ODILO assumes command of the platoon and led the troops to outflank and capture the French positions guarding the river crossing. British losses one officer and four askaris killed, one officer (Second Lieutenant A. P. PALMER) and seven askaris wounded. French losses are four French and eighteen Senegalese soldiers killed, eighteen taken prisoner.
- 18 September Operation 'Jane' takes place with an amphibious landing of No. 5 (Army) Commando and 29th Infantry Brigade at Tamatave on the east coast of the island. The commandos were landed from H.M. destroyers Active, Arrow and Blackmore, and a platoon from H.M.S. Inconstant. The French garrison initially refused to surrender, but after a show of force by the cruisers H.M.S. Gambia and Dauntless, the French commander surrendered. Follow up forces were then landed from the personnel ships, Dilwera, Dunera and Empire Pride.
- 20 September The 1st/1st K.A.R. battlegroup reach the main defensive position guarding the capital at Mahitsy.
- 21 September Full battalion attack launched on the Mahitsy position. Battle continues into 22nd September, with 'A' Company advancing along a ridge on the right flank, 'D' Company down the main road, with 'B' and 'C' Companies attacking artillery positions on the left flank. By 22.00 hours on 22 September, French positions overcome and battle over.
- 23 September The French Chef du District meets with Lieutenant Colonel MacNAB, the battlegroup commander, and declares the capital, Tananarive, an open city. British troops enter the city to a 'tumultuous welcome' by local residents having covered some three-hundred and sixty miles from Majunga.
- 26 September
- Advance southwards continues, now led by the 1st/6th K.A.R. battlegroup. Another French delaying force met at Behenjy. An attack resulted in most defending troops deserting.
 - Units from 29th Brigade advancing from Tamatave meet up with units from 22nd (E.A.) Brigade near Tananarive.
- 30 September Another blocking position at Sambaina reached where the road is surrounded by steep hills. Mortar fire kills Second Lieutenant J. M. WEST, and his platoon is pinned down. A battalion scale attack is launched and the position cleared.
- 9 October 5th K.A.R. battlegroup takes over the advance, and meets another defensive position at Ilaka.

- 10 October A battalion scale attack commences, with 'A' and 'B' Companies forcing their way down the main road, and 'C' and 'D' Companies covering the flanks.
- 12 October 'D' Company, 5th K.A.R., used to conduct a wide detour to enter Ambositra from the rear on 13 October. Forty-three prisoners captured and positions taken.
- 13 October A battle fought at Antanjona against prepared defensive positions. Lead platoon held up by mortar fire. Second Lieutenant R. CORBET-WARD killed leading his platoon in the final assault. Three Askaris killed and two wounded.
- 16 October The 29th Infantry Brigade leaves Madagascar bound for India.
- 20 October 1st/6th K.A.R. battlegroup continues advance towards Ambalavao overcoming several roadblocks.
- 2 November Last line of defence at Antanandava reached. Lieutenant D. EVANS killed by a sniper, the last casualty of the campaign.
- 5 November
- 08.30 hours – The French commander, General GUILLEMET contacts the British forces to request an immediate armistice.
 - 14.00 hours – ceasefire agreed.
- End of campaign, with 22nd (E.A.) Brigade having advanced six-hundred and sixty miles from Majunga over eight weeks. Casualties from the brigade group during the campaign are:
- 4 British officers killed and 4 wounded;
 - 5 British other ranks killed and nine wounded;
 - 21 African other ranks killed and 77 wounded.

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