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A CONCISE HISTORY OF:

18 ARMY GROUP (HISTORY & PERSONNEL)

A short history of the 18th Army Group of the British Army, an operational command. In addition, known details of the key appointments held between 1930 and 1950 are included.
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A Concise History of the 18th Army Group (History & Personnel)

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18th Army Group

Allied Force Headquarters was formed in London on 24 June 1942. The Advanced Headquarters landed at Algiers on 25 November 1942, with the 1st Army under command. The Advanced Headquarters of the 1st Army had landed at Algiers on 9 November 1942 with V Corps and IX Corps under command. The Supreme Allied Commander, General EISENHOWER, appointed General Sir Harold Rupert Leofric George ALEXANDER, G.C.B., C.S.I. D.S.O., M.C.*, *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.* to the command of the 18th Army Group on 19 February 1943. The title of 18th Army Group was arrived at by an amalgamation of the 1st and 8th Armies, the two main constituent formations of the new Army Group. It took under command the:

- 1st Army (British);
- 8th Army (British);
- II U.S. Corps.

The Axis forces reached Djebel Aboid on 18 March, so ANDERSON ordered V Corps that it must halt the enemy offensive, and retake the ground lost recently in that action. In particular, ANDERSON was keen that Sedjenane was recaptured as it was an important road junction. To assist V Corps, it was reinforced with the addition of the 1st Parachute Brigade, the Corps Franc and one Tabor of French Gourmiers.

The 46th (British) Infantry Division commenced its offensive on 28 March, with under command its own 138th Infantry Brigade, the 36th Infantry Brigade from the 78th (British) Infantry Division, the 1st Parachute Brigade and the French Corps Franc. It started raining heavily again, which slowed down the Allied attack, but in spite of the weather, Sedjenane was recaptured on 30 March. The nature of the terrain meant that pack mule transport had to be deployed to keep the forward troops supplied, however, by 2 April the 46th Division had advanced about eighteen miles and taken about 850 German and Italian prisoners. By 2 April, the 46th Division was battle fatigued, and so ANDERSON decided to halt the offensive and to rest that formation.

The focus of Allied operations moved to the Centre Sector, with the 78th (British) Infantry Division (also under V Corps) tasked with clearing the ground on the left of the Beja to Medjez road. The division began its attack in the late evening of 7 April in the locality of Oued Zarga. The division was now complete for the first time in this campaign. The divisional commander, Major General (Temporary) Vyvyan EVELEGH had command of the 11th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier); 36th Infantry Brigade and the 38th (Irish) Infantry Brigade. The latter brigade had previously been under command of the 6th Armoured Division, but it had transferred to this division with effect from

On 20 April 1943, the order of battle of the 18th Army Group comprised:

- 1st (British) Army;
 - V Corps;
 - 1st (British) Infantry Division;
 - 4th (British) Infantry Division;
 - 78th (British) Infantry Division;
 - 25th Tank Brigade;
 - IX Corps;
 - 1st (British) Armoured Division;
 - 6th (British) Armoured Division;
 - 46th (British) Infantry Division;
 - French XIX Corps;
 - Division d'Alger;
 - Division du Maroc;
 - Division d'Oran;
 - French Tank Group
- II U.S. Corps;
 - 1st U.S. Armored Division;
 - 1st U.S. Infantry Division;
 - 9th U.S. Infantry Division;
 - 34th U.S. Infantry Division;
 - Corps Franc d'Afrique.

In addition, on the southern front, 18th Army Group had under command:

- 8th (British) Army;
 - X Corps
 - 4th Indian Infantry Division;
 - 2nd New Zealand Infantry Division;
 - 56th (London) Infantry Division;
 - 8th Armoured Brigade
 - XXX Corps
 - 7th Armoured Division;
 - 50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division;
 - 51st (Highland) Infantry Division;
 - 4th Armoured Brigade;
 - 201st Guards Infantry Brigade

On 4 May 1943, with the reorganisation of Allied forces complete ready for what turned out to be the final offensive, the order of battle for the 18th Army Group was:

- 1st (British) Army;
 - V Corps;
 - 1st (British) Infantry Division;
 - 46th (British) Infantry Division;
 - 78th (British) Infantry Division;
 - 1st Army Group Royal Artillery;
 - IX Corps;
 - 6th (British) Armoured Division;
 - 7th (British) Armoured Division;
 - 4th (British) Infantry Division;
 - 4th Indian Infantry Division;
 - 25th Tank Brigade;
 - 201st Guards Brigade;
 - 2nd Army Group Royal Artillery;
 - French XIX Corps;
 - Division d'Alger;
 - Division du Maroc;
 - Division d'Oran;
 - French Tank Group
 - Army Reserve;
 - 1st (British) Armoured Division;
 - 139th Infantry Brigade Group;
 - 1st The King's Dragoon Guards;
 - 51st Royal Tank Regiment;
- II U.S. Corps;
 - 1st U.S. Armored Division;
 - 1st U.S. Infantry Division;
 - 9th U.S. Infantry Division;
 - 34th U.S. Infantry Division;
 - 13th U.S. Field Artillery Brigade;
 - 2626th U.S. Coast Artillery Brigade;
 - Corps Franc d'Afrique.

The 18th Army Group disbanded in Tunisia on 1 June 1943.

General Officer Commanding-in-Chief

19th February 1943 – 14th May 1943

General Sir Harold Rupert Leofric George ALEXANDER, G.C.B., C.S.I. D.S.O., M.C.* , *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*

Chief of the General Staff

17th February 1943 – 1st June 1943

Major General (Temporary) Richard Loudon McCREERY, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.*

Brigadier General Staff – (B.G.S.)

3rd October 1942 – 30th January 1943

Brigadier (Acting) Leonard Geoffrey HOLMES, *p.s.c.*

Brigadier General Staff (Intelligence) – (B.G.S. (I))

8th February 1943 – 1st June 1943 (7th June 1943)

Brigadier (Acting) Terence Sydney AIREY, O.B.E., *p.s.c.*

Major General in charge of Administration – (Maj Gen i/c Admin)

20th February 1943 – 1st June 1943

Major General (Acting) Charles Harvey MILLER, C.B.E., *p.s.c.*

Deputy Adjutant-General

Deputy Quarter-Master-General

Brigadier Royal Artillery – (B.R.A.)

19th February 1943 – 13th April 1943

Brigadier (Temporary) Sidney Chevalier KIRKMAN, O.B.E., M.C., *p.s.c.*

Chief Engineer – (C.Eng.)

20th February 1943 – 1st June 1943.

Brigadier (Temporary) Bernard Keith YOUNG, M.C.

Deputy Director of Survey

1943 – 1943

Colonel WHEELER,

Colonel Movements and Transportation

30th January 1943 – August 1943

Colonel (Acting) William Ernest Victor ABRAHAM, O.B.E., R.E.

Chief Signal Officer – (C.S.O.)

30th January 1943 – 1st June 1943

Major General (Temporary) William Ronald Campbell PENNEY, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*¹

¹ Awarded the C.B.E. on the 18th February 1943 for services as Signal Officer-in-Chief.

Deputy Chief Signal Officer – (C.S.O.)

1st March 1943 – 1st June 1943

Brigadier (Temporary) William Arthur SCOTT, M.B.E., R.Sigs.

Deputy Director of Supplies and Transport – (D.D.S.T.)

Brigadier WHITE

Brigadier HINDE

Deputy Director of Medical Services – (D.D.M.S.)

Consultant Surgeon

Consultant Physician

Deputy Director of Ordnance Services – (D.D.O.S.)

Deputy Director of Mechanical Engineering – (D.D.M.E.)

Assistant Chaplain-General

Command Paymaster

Assistant Director of Dental Services

Deputy Director of Labour

1942 – 1943

Brigadier (Temporary) Arthur Innes IRONS, D.S.O.

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