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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 135TH INFANTRY REGIMENT  
(34TH U.S. INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE VICINITY OF  
FONDOUK EL OKBI, NORTH AFRICA, 26 MARCH-11 APRIL 1943  
(TUNISIAN CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal experience of a Regimental Supply Officer)

Type of operation described: REGIMENT IN THE ATTACK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index.....	1
Bibliography.....	2
Introduction.....	4
Strategic Considerations.....	4
Political Background of the Invasion.....	5
General Situation.....	6
Regimental Plan of Attack.....	13
Analysis and Criticism.....	21
Lessons.....	23
Map A - French North Africa	
Map B - General Situation - Tunisia	
Map C - 34th U.S. Infantry Division Sector	
Map D - Attack on Fondouk Gap	

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 135th Infantry Regiment, 34th U.S. Infantry Division in the Battle for Fondouk Gap, Tunisian Campaign, 26 March - 11 April 1943.

In order to orient the reader it will be necessary to discuss briefly the events that led up to the assault on Fondouk Gap.

The final decision in favor of the invasion of French North Africa was made in July 1942 during Prime Minister Churchill's second visit to Washington. ~~The date for the landings was fixed in August,~~ <sup>September</sup> and the invasion was to take place in November. In the meantime Rommel's Africa Corp was making the drive that took him to the gates of Alexandria Egypt, and the situation in the Mediterranean looked dark.

Thus the Battle for Egypt, which was launched by the British Eighth Army in October, was expected to help divert Axis attention from the newly selected North African theater of operations, and the British Eighth Army was to constitute the eastern jaw of the pincers designed to crush all Axis opposition in Africa. So the plans for the invasion were continued, despite the adverse situation that existed in Egypt. (1)

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

At the time the invasion was being planned, it appeared ~~that~~ the following strategic advantages would accrue from the occupation of French North Africa.

1. The first advantage would be to shipping. Allied Convoys would be able to move through the Mediterranean under the protection of land-based aircraft. They could reach Egypt and the Suez Canal by a sea route that is 2300 miles long, or 10,000 miles shorter than the route around the Cape of Good Hope. The distance from the United Kingdom to India and other points would also be greatly shortened. (2)
2. The occupation of French North Africa would make the blockade of the Axis powers virtually complete. All shipments of food and other supplies from Africa to Germany and her satellities would cease. (3)
3. Another possible route for the invasion of Continental Europe would be secured. (4)
4. The control of French North Africa by the Allies would make Egypt, the Suez Canal, and the Middle East safe from an invasion from the West. (5)
5. Dakar would no longer be a threat to South America. (6)
6. If the occupation of French North Africa could be carried out without fatally embittering the French troops and authorities in that region, it would provide a setting for the reconstitution of the French Army in preparation for its return in force to the homeland. (7)

#### POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF THE INVASION

No clear picture of the military operations in French North Africa can be obtained without some understanding of the political events that accompanied and sometimes even overshadowed the military aspects of the great Campaign. (8)

(2,3) A-1, p. 1; (4,5,6,7) A-1, p. 2; (8) A-1, p. 3

These military operations were staged against a background of diplomatic negotiations through which speedy cessation of French resistance was sought. (9) The problem of how to avoid fighting with the French Forces in Africa was difficult to approach. (10)

"The success of the operations depended on the efficient handling of a mass of details as well as on training and fighting qualities of the troops. And above all upon the secrecy with which this vast undertaking had to be prepared." (11)

"These events, which transpired subsequent to the actual landings on 8 November required quick decisions, and right or wrong from the political standpoint, the results finally achieved fully vindicated the American Military Leaders." (12)

#### GENERAL SITUATION

The landings took place on 8 November at three principal ports, Algiers and Oran on the Mediterranean, and Casablanca on the Atlantic. (See Map A) "They were the centers of political control of the French possessions in North Africa and were key points of the system of rail, highway, and air communications." (13)

"In 1942 it was impossible to forecast the influence that Allied landings in French North Africa would have on the war as a whole, although it was never doubted that, in securing the immediate objectives of the invasion, the diversion created would assist the Russians. This result was fully expected and later fulfilled by the simple expedient of opening another front, thus forcing the Axis to send to North Africa and Southern Europe divisions that otherwise would have been used on the eastern front." (14)

(9) A-2, p. 21; (10,11) A-2, p. 19; (12,13) A-1, p. 4;  
(14) A-1, p. 15

// By the end of November 1942, there had been a definite turning point in the Allied military situation as a whole. The British Eighth Army had commenced the pursuit of Rommel's German Armies across Egypt and Libya; the Americans and British had landed successfully in French North Africa and had started the invasion of Tunisia; and the Russians had begun their winter offensive at Stalingrad. All of these offensive steps gathered momentum with each passing day. "The initiative had passed to the Allies, and for the first time during the war the German Military situation had deteriorated to an enforced strategic defensive." (15)

// Two main reasons impelled the Axis Command to an all-out defense of Tunisia. The first was that only by holding that area could they hope to evacuate the troops and equipment of the German Army in Egypt from their serious predicament. The second was that it was imperative to delay the allied attack against Europe for as long a period as possible, in order to gain time to prepare the necessary defenses. (16)

// "Once the facts were appraised by the Germans, they acted with speed and efficiency." In so doing, they won the race for Tunisia; succeeded in postponing the invasion of Italy, and gained much valuable time in which to strengthen their continental defenses. (17)

Handicapped by lack of railroad and motor transport and the long supply routes, Allied Commanders could send only a small combat unit into Tunisia. (18)

The much shorter lines of communication from Italy and Sicily initially turned the tide in favor of the Axis. (19)

(15) A-1, p. 16; (16,17) A-1, p. 20; (18,19) A-1, p. 21



// The Tunisian front in January extended from Chott Djerid (Great Salt Lake) in the south to the Mediterranean in the north, a distance of some 200 miles. (See Map B) Through the Sahara Desert, south of this line roamed small patrols of the French Camel Corp. To the north the American troops held the desert and wasteland area near Gafsa, and Feriana and up to Faid Pass. Further north around Pichon and Fondouk the French XIX Corp held positions in the hills. These forces, which had rallied to the French General Giraud, were lightly armed, had neither the transport nor the administrative machinery for offensive operations, and lacked modern weapons. (20) The *remainder* balance of the front north to the sea at Cape Serrat was held by the British First Army. (21)

// As a result of the Casablanca Conference which took place during the middle of January, certain changes were made in the system of Allied Command in North Africa. In order to concentrate control and coordinate the efforts of all Allied forces in the new theater, General Alexander was appointed to command the newly formed Eighteenth Army Group, which consisted of the British First and Eighth Armies, the American II Corp, and the French XIX Corp. He would be the deputy of General Eisenhower, who remained Commander in Chief. This unity of Command which became fully effective during the middle of February contributed much to the ultimate Allied Victory. (22) It was at this time, that the American Fifth Army was formed in French Morocco and Algeria under the command of Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark. (23)

// During January and February the enemy attacked many times at widely separated parts of the front. It was apparent that

(20,21) A-1, p. 21; (22,23) A-1, p. 23

22 A-1 p 26

the enemy was improving a position in which they temporarily held the advantage. (24)

Before the Allies were ready to attack, the Germans made their only real dangerous threat to our Tunisian Campaign, in mid February. The purpose of the enemy attacks were:

1. To capture the high ground surrounding the mountain passes at Fondouk, Faid, Gafsa, and Kasserine. (25) (See Map B)

2. To broaden the long coastal corridor, from these passes east to the sea, in order to safeguard the lines of communications between the German Army in the north and Rommel's army in the south. (26)

3. To make airfields in this coastal corridor safer from Allied interference. (27)

4. To throw the allied forces off balance before any coordinated attack could be launched, and attempt to capture Tebessa which was the communication center for American forces in Tunisia at this time, and sever the supply route of the American forces. (28) (See Map B)

During these diversified attacks Rommel's forces succeeded in driving the American forces back in the entire sector. Thus causing heavy casualties and destroying much American equipment which was difficult to replace, because of the limited road and rail facilities from ports, which were constantly under German air attacks, and the long submarine infested sea trip from the United States. (29)

Due to the extended front which the American forces defended, and the limited number of troops available, replacement equipment and personnel were necessarily absorbed by front line units while occupying defensive positions.

(24,25,26,27,28) A-1, p. <sup>37+38</sup>33; (29) A-24

The 34th U.S. Infantry Division was occupying defensive positions 18 February-5 March 1943, in the Sbiba Valley with the left flank anchored at Mount Barbrou and extending south to Sbeitla, a distance of over 20 miles. (30)

The order of Battle for the 34th U.S. Infantry Division was as follows: the 133d, 135th, and 168th Infantry Regiments, 125th, 151st, 175th Light Artillery Battalions and the 185th Medium Artillery Battalion. The 109th Engineer and 109th Medical Battalions, 34th Signal Co, and 34th Reconnaissance troop, 734th Ord. Co., 109 Quartermaster Co, 34th Military Police Platoon. The 107th AAA Battalion, 751st Tank Battalion, and 813th Tank Destroyer Battalion were attached.

On the 4th of March 1943 the "Ward Force" was organized under the command of Col. R. W. Ward, Commanding Officer, 135th Infantry, which consisted of the 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry, 125th Field Artillery Battalion, one platoon of the 107th AAA Battalion, one company of the 751st Tank Battalion, one platoon of the 813th Tank Battalion, and the 34th Division Reconnaissance troop, with four pioneer and demolition squads of 109th Engineer Battalion. (30 A)

This unit was to make a demonstration in force, to the east in the direction of Picher and El Ala, with the mission of locating the enemy and diverting reinforcements from other sectors. (See Map C) (30 A)

The 133d Infantry Regiment screened the route of approach by blocking to the south and east. This force occupied their objective without incident, and located enemy positions. This line was occupied for one day when observation posts picked up a large German force assembling, at the left rear, for a

(30) A-24, Personal knowledge (207-12, P. 8)

counterattack. Commanding General, 34th U.S. Infantry Division then ordered the "Ward Force" to retire to their original defensive positions in the Sbiba Valley. This German force dispersed without engaging our forces. (31)

The terrain to our immediate front was rocky and sandy. The mountains for the most part were steep and had vegetation only on their lower slopes. On the whole the flat land, between our lines and the Germans, permitted cross country movement and maneuver of armor. The only barriers were the dried up stream beds, which criss crossed the countryside, but which were not formidable tank barriers.

The only concealment came from scattered clumps of cactus or stunted olive trees, which were interspersed over the ground.

Following the success of the Americans II Corp drive in the south, the Americans were occupying the following positions, 9th U.S. Infantry Division was in position around Kasserine and Feriana, 1st U.S. Infantry Division was occupying Gafsa, 1st U.S. Armored Division was enroute to Maknassy to occupy the city, and the 34th U.S. Infantry Division was in defensive positions in the Sbiba Valley. (See Map B)

The 34th U.S. Infantry Division Reconnaissance troop had operated motorized patrols in and around Hadjeb el Aïoun, Kef-el-Ahmar pass, and no contact had been made with the enemy.

On 25 March the Division received the order for its first major attack in World War II. The mission of the 34th U.S. Infantry Division was to seize Fondouk Gap, the gateway to the German communications center of Kairouan and the port city of Sousse, thus cutting the German forces in two and forming an

(31) A-24, Personal knowledge

anvil against which the British Eighth Army, under General Montgomery, the hammer, would drive Rommel's German forces against and destroy them. (See Map B)

Fondouk was protected by two spiny ridges which closed in on the Village from the north, east and the south. Between these spiny ridges lay the pass through which the attack must go. Along the southern slope of the ridge was a wadi running from Pichon to Fondouk, which was very wide. (32)

On 25 March 34th U.S. Infantry Division issued orders for the movement by motor of the 135th Infantry Regiment into an assembly area in the vicinity of Hadjeb el Aïoun after dark on 26 March 1943.

The 34th U.S. Infantry Division Reconnaissance troop was to screen the motor movement of the 135th Infantry Regiment.

This was open warfare. There were no flanks, no front and practically no rear. The German Airforce was a constant threat with airfields at Kairouan, less than 50 miles away. All movement of troops took place under cover of darkness with total blackout. (33)

The head of the 135th Infantry motor column passed the I.P., hill 620 (see map C) at 2030 hours on 26 March and moved through Kef el Ahmar pass, and closed into the assembly area north and east of Hadjeb el Aïoun by 0300 hours, 27 March 1943. (See Map C).

The 34th U.S. Infantry Division Plan of Attack was to have two regiments abreast in the assault, covering a front of approximately 5 miles, and one regiment in reserve. The boundary between regiments would be Route #3 Hadjeb el Aïoun to Fondouk. The attack was a frontal assault of the objective. (34) (See Map D).

(32) A-4, p. 195; (33, 34) A-24, Personal knowledge

## REGIMENTAL PLAN OF ATTACK

H-hour was to be 0600, 27 March 1943, with 2d and 3d Battalions in assault, with 3d Battalion on the right, and in contact with the 168th Infantry Regiment on the right of Route #3. The 2d Battalion was echeloned in depth to the left and rear. The 1st Battalion was in Division reserve in the vicinity of the assembly area, with a mission of protecting the left flank of the Division.

The Regimental Command Post was in the wadi approximately seven miles northeast of Hadjeb el Aïoun.

The Regimental train moved into an area about two miles east of Hadjeb el Aïoun on Route #3. Ammunition vehicles at this time were hauling seven and one half to ten tons of ammunition. (35)

At H-hour the attack "jumped off" as planned with the leading elements taking up the approach march. Shortly after leaving the line of departure the advance elements encountered an unmarked mine field, which had been laid by American troops during the campaign in mid February. About 18 casualties were received and approximately 8 or 9 vehicles were demobilized. By 1000 hours the 3d Battalion had reached the first phase line (See Map D) and there awaited the order to continue the attack. At 1035 hours the Battalion continued the attack on Division order, to the objective (See Map C). Shortly after the advance toward the objective, the second Battalion received intermittent artillery fire from the east end of Djebel Trozza. At 1050 hours the Battalion Commander 3d Battalion reported no contact with the enemy, but observed enemy mortar and artillery fire falling into the 168th Infantry sector on his left flank.

(35) A-24, Personal knowledge

The advance of the 168th Infantry was held up until this enemy fire was located and neutralized. This delay resulted in 3d Battalion getting ahead of the unit on the right flank, before orders were received to halt so that the line could again be straightened out. (36)

At approximately 1130 hours the 2d Battalion was being attacked on the left flank by a small heavily armored German force in armored cars and tanks. This counterattack was kept from materializing, with organic weapons of the Battalion, until artillery fire could be adjusted to the enemy, which completely routed this force. (37)

The Regimental S-2 ordered a Patrol consisting of six men and two one-quarter ton vehicles of the Reconnaissance Platoon to conduct a motorized reconnaissance on the left flank of the Regimental sector, toward the base of Djebel Trozza. Mid-afternoon a lone survivor returned to the Command Post, and reported the patrol had been ambushed by a German armored reconnaissance patrol in front of our leading elements, and did not know where or when the ambush had taken place. (38)

At 1347 hours, the 3d Battalion Commander reported receiving enfilading fire on his lines from one or two artillery pieces and from this time enemy activity increased in the entire Division sector, slowing the advance considerably.

At dusk the 3d Battalion crossed Highway #3 and began moving cross country to attack the ridge running north and south directly in front of the Regimental sector. After moving forward approximately 500 yards enemy fire was so intense that the advance was stopped completely. After crossing the highway, which had been the boundary between regiments, (See Map D) the

(36) A-13; (37) A-19; (38) A-20

unit on the right began echeloning further to the right leaving a gap between regiments, which allowed the enemy to occupy high ground between the two units and causing casualties by enfilading fire on both flanks. (39)

At 1800 hours the Regimental Commander issued an order for a night attack at 1930 hours, attempting to infiltrate troops into the enemy positions, and attached two companies of the 2d Battalion to the 3d Battalion for what was expected would be the final phase of this operation. The attack moved well forward and penetrated the enemy's main line of resistance, when enemy fire and resistance became so intensive that the right flank of the battalion turned toward the north and rolled into the flat ground below the hills. The Battalion was reorganized and a second attempt was made the same night to capture the high ground. Due to the heavy casualties that were inflicted by the enemy, the confusion that existed amongst units, and the complete loss of contact with the unit on the right flank, no further penetration of the enemy's lines could be forced, and this night attack was called off, and the Battalion held their position. (40)

At 0700 hours on 28 March the 2d Battalion passed through the 3d Battalion and attacked the objective following a ten-minute artillery preparation. The attack again progressed until leading elements reached the slopes of the final objective, at which time intense frontal and flanking fire from automatic weapons, mortar and artillery inflicted heavy casualties, including the Battalion Commander, and no further advance could be made. Despite this intense enemy fire, repeated efforts were made by infiltration to push forward, but without

(39) A-24, Eye witness account; (40) A-20



success. On the 29th of March the unit on the right attacked the objective in their sector, following an intense artillery barrage at which time the 2d Battalion again attempted to penetrate the enemy defenses during this diversionary attack on the left. This attack also failed. (41)

The 1st Battalion was released to Regimental control following the failure of the last attack and orders were issued for this Battalion to be committed in the assault of the final objective. 1st Battalion observation post picked up an enemy motor column moving in on the left flank of their sector. Orders were rescinded immediately and with the accurate artillery fire the 1st Battalion succeeded in driving off this thrust. (42)

The 2d Battalion received orders on 30 March to hold their present line and establish a defensive position. After dark the 3d Battalion was ordered to relieve the 2d Battalion in their defensive positions. This relief was completed by 0100 hours on 31 March. The regiment held these positions until the night of 1-2 April, at which time the entire Division retired two miles to the west and established new defensive positions on the high ground between Djebel Trozza and the mountain range on the south. (43)

The Germans occupied this defensive position with a reinforced Company, however when the attack commenced reinforcements were rushed in immediately, and assisted in holding our assault. The enemy had spent a considerable amount of time and effort to prepare automatic weapons positions in the solid rock, many of them reinforced with railroad ties and steel girders. The approaches were bare, flat, and completely devoid

(41) A-13; (42) A-15; (43) A-13

of cover. Barbed wire and minefields were placed at maximum range for small arms fire at the lower approaches to the mountains. Maneuvering was virtually impossible, as the enemy had vantage points, which permitted observation of all movement in the entire Valley, even in the bottom of shallow slit trenches.

This attack, although not successful in accomplishing the mission assigned, did draw enemy reinforcements from the British Eighth Army front, where the main effort was to be launched. (44)

The casualties suffered by the Regiment in this phase were: killed in action 2 Officers, 23 EM; Wounded in action 12 Officers, 161 EM; missing in action 1 Officer, 17 EM; and captured 1 EM. (45) No figures are available as to casualties inflicted upon the Germans.

During the time these defensive positions were occupied, patrols were the order of the day. At no time were the enemy front lines definitely established, however our patrols and enemy patrols had frequent fire fights between front lines. Our patrols brought in information as to the road net and all terrain features to our immediate front, which proved valuable in our attack upon Fondouk at a later date.

Approximately 150 personal replacements were received in the regiment, and the 2d Battalion received this entire allotment because of the heavy casualties in the last battle. (46)

Resupply and evacuation during this phase was accomplished by one-quarter ton vehicles and carrying parties under cover of darkness.

Enemy Air was active and successful in knocking out several of our vehicles. An operator of a .50 caliber AA mounted machine

(44) A-24; (45) A-13; (46) A-19

gun in the maintenance platoon of Service Company, was given credit for knocking one enemy plane from the skies. (47)

Morale in all units of the Division was very low at this time and a big build up was necessary prior to the second attack on Fondouk Gap. Hundreds of artillery pieces were massed, tanks assembled, and the Allied Air Arm was to give close support during this attack. Upon the seizure of this terrain feature by the Allies hinged the final outcome of the campaign to drive all Axis troops out of Africa. If this attack failed to cut the German forces in two and allowed Rommel's forces in the South to join with the Army of the North and there make a last desperate stand to stall off the inevitable Allied Victory.

For this attack on Fondouk Gap the 34th U.S. Infantry Division was attached to the British IX Corp, and immediately upon the fall of the Pass would revert to control of U.S. Army II Corp. (48)

After darkness on the 7th of April the regiment moved to a new assembly area in the valley directly west of Fondouk Gap, approximately 1000 yards behind the line of departure.

This attack was in conjunction with the British IX Corp on the left. Immediately upon capture of the pass, the British Sixth Armored Division, which was in reserve, was to go through the pass, occupy Kairouan, and move to the sea. Thus cutting Rommel's only route of retreat from in front of the British Eighth Army.

H-hour was to be at 0500 hours on 8 April 1943 and the Regiment would attack in column of Battalions, 3d Battalion in the lead, 2d Battalion following and 1st Battalion in reserve.

(47) A-24, Eye witness account; (48) A-17, p. 9

was in our left rear. The unit on the left flank, which was to attack Rhorab had bypassed this hill mass, as unimportant, and moved forward to take their final objective, which was Djebel Cherichera. (See Map D)

At 1745 hours a company of the 751st Tank Battalion was committed to assist two companies of infantry in an assault to overrun the objective. This attack gained considerable ground but was unable to hold these lines due to the intense enfilading fire coming from the left rear. An attack under cover of darkness was ordered for the 2d and 3d Battalion, but this failed also, as there was insufficient time for planning and coordination.

Command of the Battalion Sector was changed from the 3d Battalion to the 1st Battalion. Units and personnel in the front lines were so intermingled at this time that a relief of one Battalion by another was impossible. (50)

~~The fields of fire which the enemy had for automatic weapons positions and the maximum range used resulted in our machine guns not being able to support the attack of the Infantry.~~

Our artillery preparations and barrages were placed on the top of the objective, and the reverse slope, while enemy automatic weapon positions on the flat ground and the forward slope were not harmed. Forward Observers were not able to observe at any time due to intense small arms fire.

During this phase of the battle the British 6th Armored Division was observing the hills, while our units were assaulting and drawing fire, locating targets and would very successfully engage the enemy emplacements and neutralize them. (51)

(50) A-24; (51) A-18

While moving from the assembly area to the line of departure the 3d Battalion veered from its prescribed course and was not in position to attack at H-hour, and the 1st Battalion was then committed and were ordered to move from the assembly area to the line of departure in broad daylight, in full view of the enemy, and came under intense mortar fire from Mount Rharab (see Map D) on the left front, which was not being attacked by the unit on the left. At 0730 hours the leading troops were halted and ordered to withdraw so as to be 2000 yards from the objective, as a safety factor, until the bombing mission which was scheduled for 0800 hours was completed. The bombing mission was to be followed by an artillery barrage at 0930, and as this barrage lifted the Infantry would occupy the objective. As the leading elements were withdrawing the bombing mission was postponed until 0900 hours, due to the low ceiling over the target, and about 30 minutes later was postponed indefinitely. The artillery barrage would commence on schedule and the attack would continue. Preceding the artillery barrage the enemy air power was successful in a surprise bomb raid on our leading elements, by disorganizing the attack, a general breakdown of morale and causing numerous casualties in the 1st Battalion. Considerable time had to be spent reorganizing units and the attack moved very slow following the artillery barrage and by 1140 hours all forward movement had ceased. (49)

A final assault was ordered for 1545 hours while the artillery kept up harassing fire of all known enemy positions. This attack never materialized as accurate enemy artillery fire began falling on our positions from Rhoreb (see Map D) which

(49) A-24, Personal knowledge

On 9 April the British Infantry <sup>Attain</sup> Attack Rhorab (see Map D) on our left flank, and by late afternoon of the same day, were successful in neutralizing the hill. All during the day the British Armor was attempting to break the stalemate and the same evening <sup>was</sup> were able to do so at a loss of 55 tanks, in minefields, and by enemy antitank guns.

During this engagement it was a common sight to see British tank crews service their vehicle in broad daylight within range of antitank guns, and the crews of knocked out tanks would build a big fire and brew a pot of tea in rear of their tank, with artillery and mortar shells dropping on all sides. (52)

The following morning 1st and 2d Battalion moved in and occupied the high ground vacated by the enemy the night before, and immediately organized defensive positions. The 3d Battalion organized defensive positions on Rhorab.

The casualties for the period of 8 April to 12 April <sup>were</sup> was as follows: killed in action 8 Officers, 68 EM; and wounded in action 8 Officers, 179 EM. A summary of the casualties for the period of 27 March to 12 April is as follows: killed in action 10 Officers, 91 EM; wounded in action 20 Officers, 340 EM; missing in action 1 Officer, 17 EM; and captured 1 EM. (53) The morale and esprit de corps at this time was very high, as having tasted defeat for so many days, revenge was indeed sweet.

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

A study of this operation by the 34th U.S. Infantry Division reveals a close adherence to the fundamental principles of war.

In my opinion, when assigning this type of mission, enemy locations must be known.

(52) A-18; (53) A-13

The movement from the assembly area must be criticized.

Units took up the approach march when leaving the line of departure, without definite knowledge of enemy locations. No effort was made to conserve the energy of the troops, who had occupied defensive positions for thirty days, with no opportunity for physical conditioning.

No opportunity was given Battalion and Company Commanders to conduct reconnaissance prior to the attack.

*Not mentioned in Narrative*  
Aerial photographs were not available for a thorough map reconnaissance.

No lateral communications were arranged prior to the attack, for control and coordination.

It is believed that large and aggressive patrols will gain more information and obtain better results at the same time economize on man power, when the enemy locations and strengths are not definitely known.

Once troops have advanced toward an objective they should never withdraw in favor of an artillery barrage or bombing mission, as ground once given is almost impossible to regain. Only as a last resort should any Air Mission be called off as cancellation of a mission has a very demoralizing effect on troops. All resistance on boundaries between units must be neutralized no matter how small the resistance.

The objective for the Division, was a head-on-assault of a strongly Fortified Position. I believe that this pass could have been bypassed.

The Infantry failed to engage the enemy with small arms fire. No support from machine guns and mortars.

Lack of a well planned and coordinated night attack.

The Battalion that went astray resulted in a daylight engagement of the regiment, causing numerous casualties before getting into positions to assault the objective.

Enemy forces holding this defensive position were never identified. Poor coordination at Higher Levels resulted in Fondouk Gap, the objective, being divided between two units. One unit should have the responsibility of an important terrain feature such as Fondouk Gap.

#### LESSONS LEARNED

Some of the lessons emphasized by this operation are:

1. ✓ The fundamental principles if followed produce results.
2. ✓ The conservation of energy of troops if of prime importance.
3. ✓ Communications is essential to success of any battle.
4. ✓ Enemy information is vital to the success of any operation.
5. Reorganization must be carried on throughout an action when the opportunity presents itself.
6. Training should be realistic and comprehensive in preparation for combat.
7. ✓ A well planned and coordinated defense can hold, and, inflict heavy casualties on a superior force.



SPAIN

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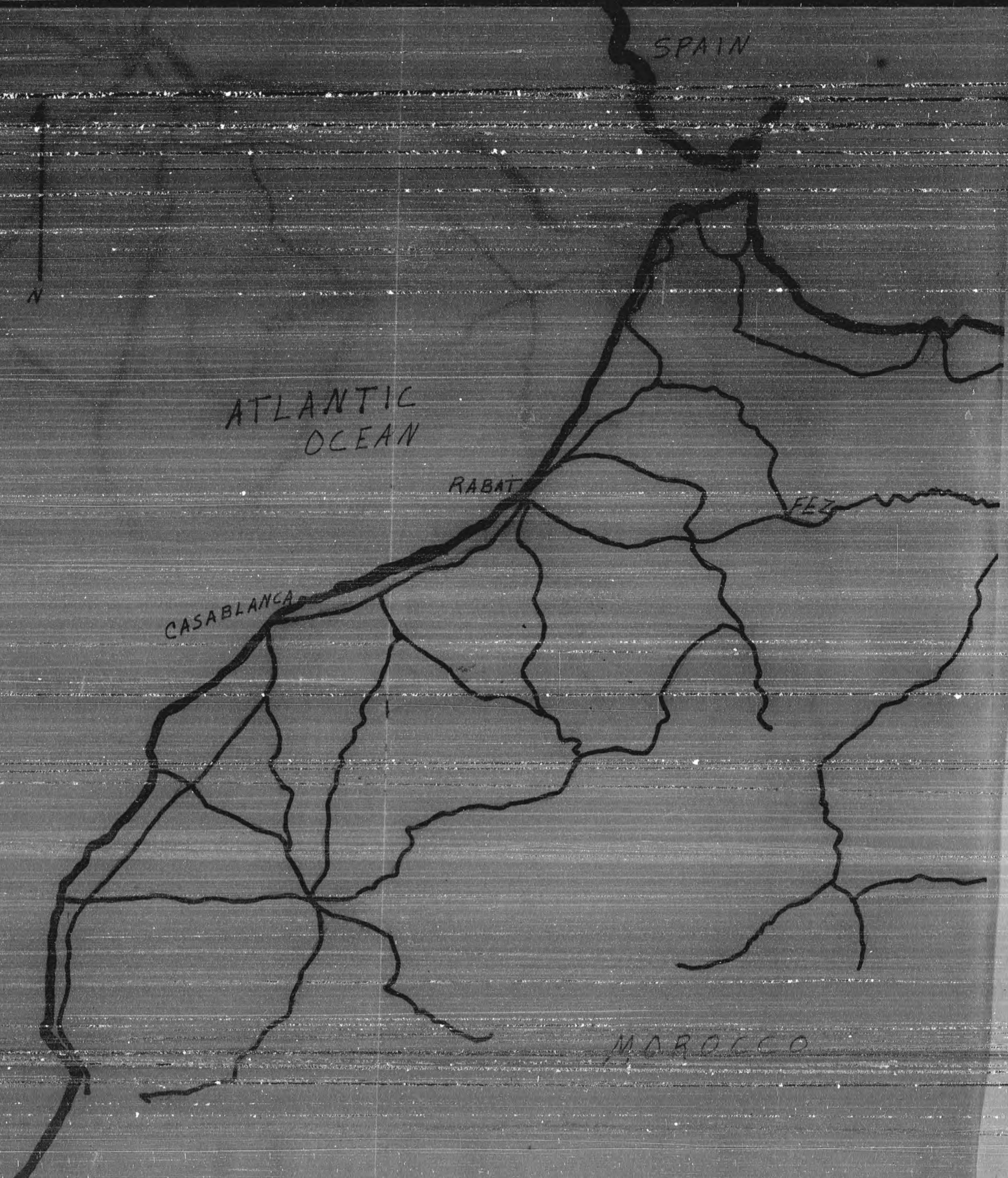
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OCEAN

RABAT

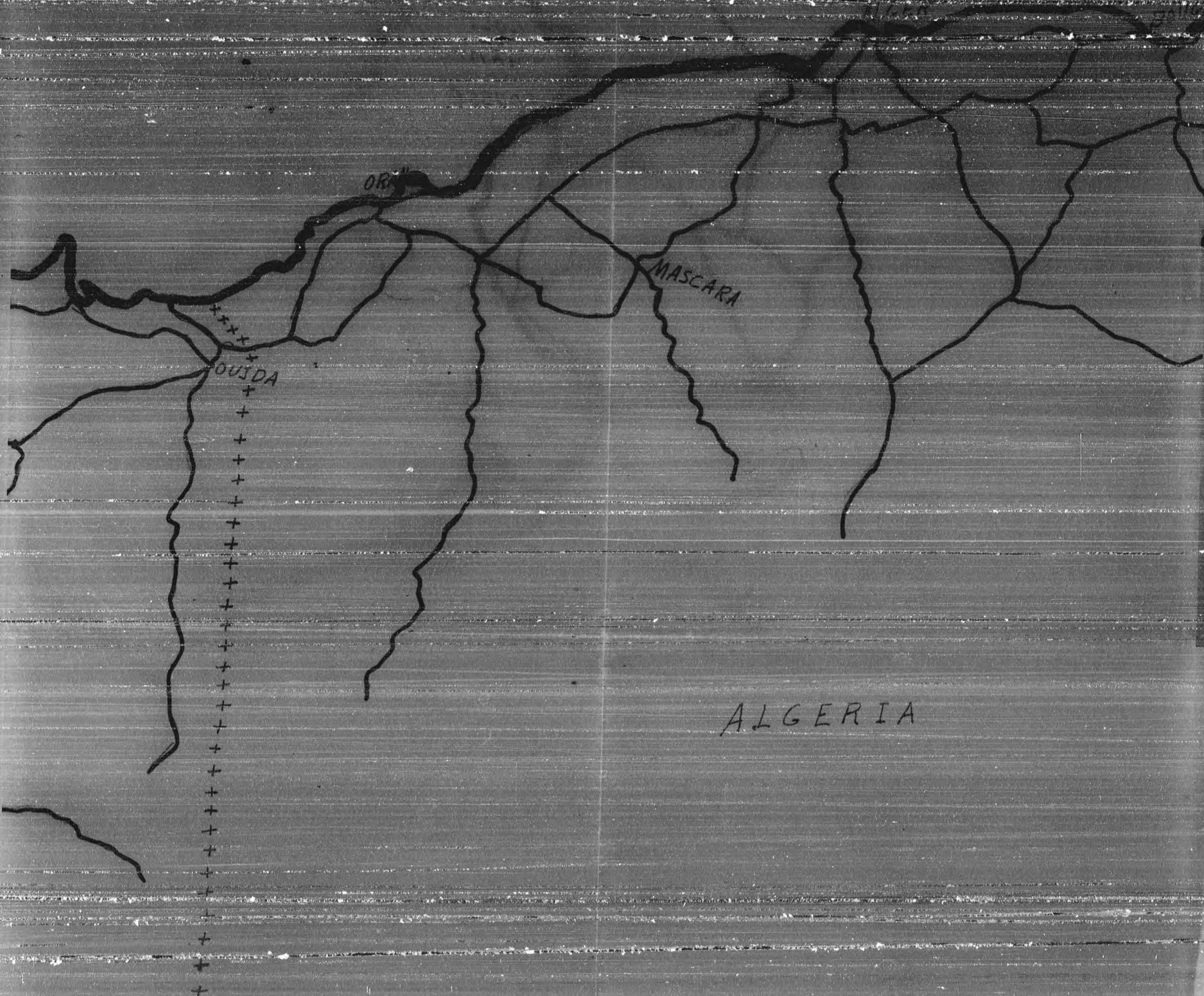
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CASABLANCA

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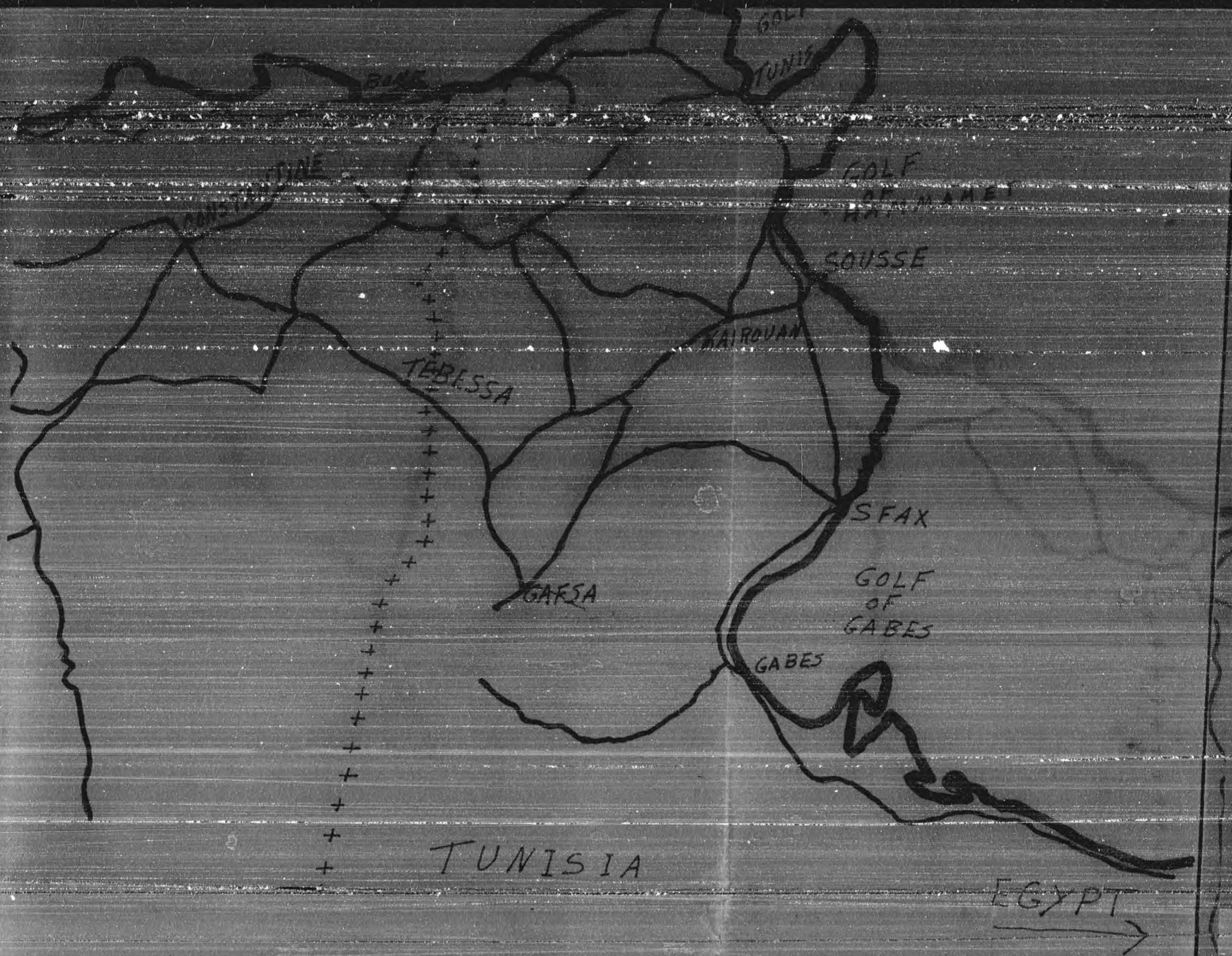


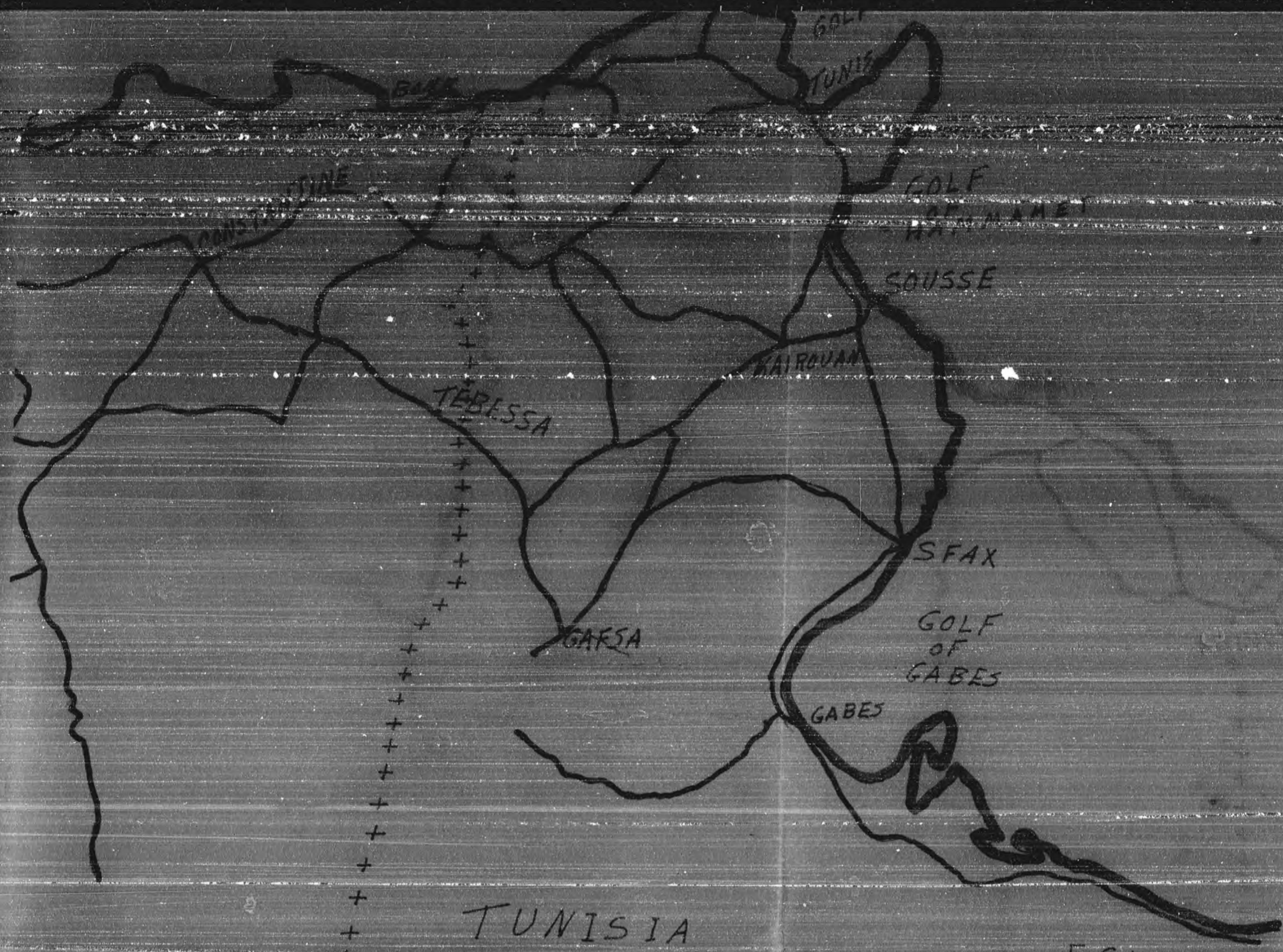
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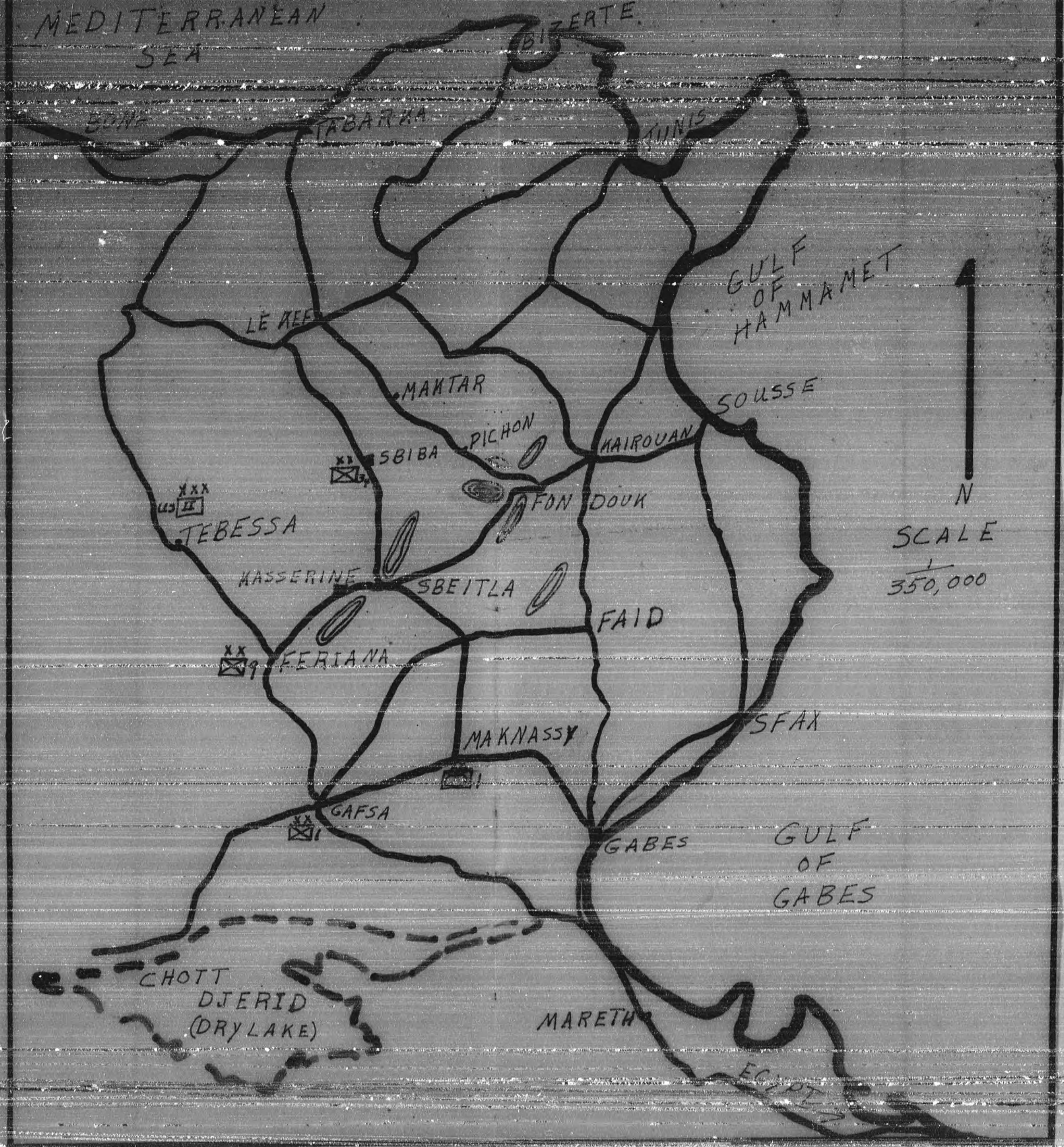
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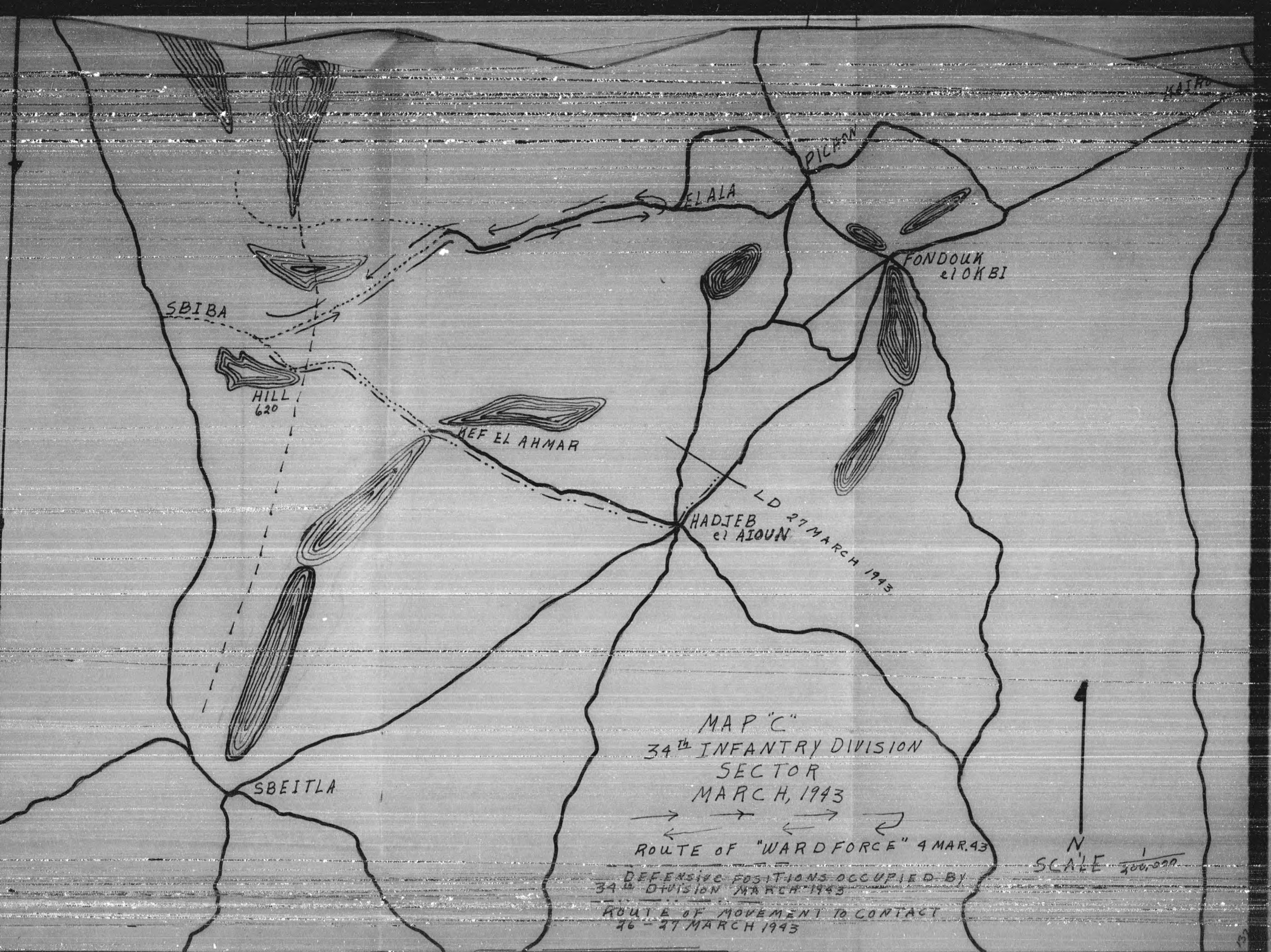




EGYPT  
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MAP "B"  
GENERAL SITUATION



KAIROUAN

SAOUS

K. TROZZA

ASSEMBLY  
7 JAN 1943

LD  
8 APR. 1943

DEFENSIVE  
POSITIONS  
2-7 APR 43

1st PHASE LINE

ROUTE #3

135  
168

LINE HELD  
27 MARCH - 1 APRIL  
1943

ROUTE #3

27 MARCH 1943

135  
168

SCALE

50 500

N

MAP "D"  
ATTACK ON

NADJEB  
EL  
AIOUAN

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