

Whirlwind U.S.

Tactics Bared

Colonel Back From Africa

Tells How Small, Fast

Force Bluffed for Months.

BY LEWIS HAWKINS.

LONDON, Feb. 19 (AP).—Col. Edson Raff Friday disclosed that German gains this week in Central Tunisia were made in part of an area of 10,000 square miles which a handful of American soldiers and some Allied units had held for more than two months by sheer dash and bluff instead of numbers.

Head of the United States parachute formation which made a 1,500-mile flight from England to the Oran area to participate in the AEF occupation of French North Africa Nov. 8, Colonel Raff has just returned to London.

He told a press conference that his untried parachutists teamed with a few British engineers, one small American antitank unit and poorly armed French troops to wage a free-wheeling warfare against the Germans.

Colonel Raff said the enemy apparently had never learned what little real strength held them out of the great triangle between Tebessa, Algeria, Faid and Tozeur.

Number Not Stated.

(This dispatch, which passed through censorship, did not state the actual number of men in the Allied command, but the implication is that they were outnumbered throughout. A dispatch from Allied headquarters Thursday said the Germans had regained about 4,000 square miles in their four-day drive.)

The detachments first were based at Tebessa, near the Tunisian frontier. When the enemy failed to make a bid for that point, Colonel Raff obtained permission to roll on to Gafsa. He led his little expeditionary force to that Tunisian rail town with no opposition.

After the group held Gafsa a short time, there were indications the Germans were moving against it in force, Raff said, and he ordered a withdrawal. But the enemy's strength proved to be less than was expected, so a task force returned the next day and mopped up the few Germans who had pushed into Gafsa.

Hit Two Columns.

Informed that a tank column was headed toward Gafsa from Gabes, the Americans went out to meet them and learned on the way that another tank column was striking from Sbeitla, trying to cut off Gafsa.

The Americans met the enemy force from Gabes and knocked out six tanks and drove back the others. Then they made a quick reversal of the field to intercept the second German column. They knocked out eight tanks and sent these Nazis also into retreat.

Then came a period of fantastic warfare when the little Allied force would strike out swiftly at some point to drive the Germans out then turn the place over to French infantry. The Allied force would then move swiftly back to base or try another attack so the enemy could never learn where they were or how strong they were.

Gliders Used.

Using this device, they saw plenty of Tunisian scenery and managed to clean out their big triangle.

The Axis employed gliders considerably for sabotage missions at night, manning the sail planes with bold and able troops. A typically daring party of eight accomplished a mission near Gafsa and then, instead of striking out across the country back to their own lines, took the highway to Gafsa.

Challenged at the gates of the town by a Moroccan sentry, they said they were Americans. Their accent didn't suit the sentry so he fired, killing one and scattering the rest who escaped.

Colonel Raff highly praised the French and British Allies and his own men, but declined to talk of his own feats for which he won the Silver Star, the Purple Heart and the French Legion of Honor.