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National Cipher Challenge Challenge 1 part A, 10/2/08 3:08

My Dear Scovell,

Following the most regrettable escape of General Soult's army through the hills to the north it is the announced intention of Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Wellesley to raise a corps of Mounted Guides, staffed by local sympathizers and led by our own officers. I have to desire that you will be pleased to assume the command of this force, and to carry into effect such instructions as you may receive. You will be assisted in this task by four lieutenants and four cornets as commissioned officers, and promoted to Assistant Quartermaster General, a most richly deserved promotion. It is also my intention to make my strongest recommendation that you should be promoted to Major, though as you are aware the power of appointing to commissions is not vested in me.

You and your staff are directed to keep a Journal, or other memorandum, descriptive of the movements of the enemy troops, and occurrences in which they are engaged; as also, you should take and collect plans of the roads, rivers, bridges, settlements, positions, or fortified places, in which the troops may be.

I do have one other more delicate assignment for you, which may excite your interest. The French use of field ciphers is frustrating our success in intercepting their communications. I would be most grateful if you would turn your particular attention to the attached memorandum which I hope may give us some indication of their intentions, should it yield to your forensic scrutiny.

Yours etc Murray.

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National Cipher Challenge Challenge 1 part B, 10/2/08 3:08

To General Loisson from the hand of Marshal Soult

The battle to secure our route north through the mountains has shown clearly that we must not underestimate the resolve and initiative of Wellesley and his officers. The rearguard action at Salalmonde came close to a pyrrhic victory when the British, with Portuguese support, attempted to sabotage the bridge at Ponte Nova. Even when we retook the bridge, the collapse of our rearguard led to many losses, and we were lucky that our pursuers missed the narrow road that we took out of the valley.

It is clear that command of troops is of secondary importance to command of the roads, bridges and other strategic objectives and this pales in significance to knowledge of our enemies' intentions. To this end you are commanded to secure a network of local sympathizers, afrancesados, who will assist us in mapping the terrain and in gathering intelligence concerning the movement and dispositions of the British troops.

Our first goal must be to bottle up the British army within Portugal, and to locate their forces. We have superiority of numbers and must take the initiative in engaging with their forces before they can entrench and mount a full assault. The afrancesados will play an important role in locating them, and you should make their recruitment and training your highest priority.

Vive La France

Marshal Soult