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National Cipher Challenge Challenge 3 part A, 10/8/08 12:30

Lieut. General Viscount Wellington, K.B., to the Earl of Liverpool, Secretary of State.

My Lord,

The enemy's whole army, and all the cavalry which could be collected, gathered at Ciudad Rodrigo on the second of this month. They had fought, as we had expected, to the gates of Torres Vedras, where, under the command of Marshall Massena, one of the most talented of the French officers, they suffered a heavy defeat. We followed them out of Portugal, and further fighting has been concentrated around the border forts.

We surrounded the French garrison at Almeida, and Massena's forces were blocked as they tried to return to its defence. They were checked again and forced to retire at Fuentes d'Onoro, which was defended in a most gallant manner by Lieut. Colonel Williams, in command of the light infantry battalion belonging to Major General Picton's division.

Massena sent orders for the garrison to try to fight its way out, and several of his messages were intercepted by Scovell's Guides. It was to our great misfortune that one of the messengers evaded our scouts, and on May eleventh the French battalions broke out, leaving a mined and ruined fort.

This great misfortune notwithstanding, the French armies have been forced back on their heels. They rely increasingly on simple substitution ciphers to conceal their intentions, and the remarkable work of Scovell and his Guides in the interception and decryption of these messages does much to supplement our intelligence work.

I have the honour to be, etc., Wellington.

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National Cipher Challenge Challenge 3 part B, 10/8/08 12:30

To General Soult from the hand of General Latour Maubourg

A report on the action on the plains of Estremadura.

Our armies gathered on the plains of Estremadura preparing an attack on the British forces concentrated there under the command of Marshal Beresford. His troops were invested in Badajoz, presumably in preparation for an assault on Almeida, and it was clear that his lines of supply were extended.

The newly ennobled Wellesley, now Viscount Wellington, sent two divisions and some small suite of staff officers to reinforce Beresford's group, but your own heavy attack wrought serious damage on them, and, while it was repulsed, it is reported that around four in ten of his redcoats were killed or wounded. One notable victory - an entire infantry brigade allowed themselves to be flanked by our cavalry and of their fifteen hundred soldiers, over twelve hundred were killed, wounded or captured by our brave men and horses.

Beresford himself was engaged by a Polish Lancer and ordered a general retreat, perhaps demonstrating the lack of resolve of certain of the English officers. Regrettably, a brigade of fusiliers galloped forward from their reserve and our own lines faltered in the attack. Some credit the English officer Hardinge with this reversal in our fortunes, but there are lessons to be learned from the encounter, not least that we must stiffen our own resolve to press the advantage when it presents itself.

Vive la France

Maubourg