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National Cipher Challenge Challenge 7 part A, 11/19/08 2:19

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

My Lord,

I write to inform you of our preparation for the final assault on the fort at Badajoz.

Held by the inclement weather and unable to cross the Guadiana once the pontoon had been cut we were forced to address the threat posed by the outlying fort at Picurina. We continued to bombard the walls until a sudden break in the weather enabled us to mount an infantry attack. In this we were encouraged by the intelligence provided by a double agent who had approached us bearing letters from Phillipon to Soult raising the alarm. Not wishing to alert Soult to the fact that we had intercepted this message we allowed the messenger to pass, after a suitable delay, and with sufficient incentive to continue working for us.

The initial attack came close to catastrophe, repulsed as it was by the deep ditch and the palisades. Captain Oates of the eighty eighth rescued the attempt by ordering scaling ladders to be laid over the ditch to provide a platform from which to climb the walls, and the attack succeeded despite the near loss of Captain Hardinge, who had volunteered to join Kempf's brigade.

With Picurina under our control the batteries have been set up within four hundred yards of the casements at the south east corner of the fort at Badajoz, and all our efforts will be directed to its capture at the earliest opportunity.

I have the honour to be, etc. Wellington.

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National Cipher Challenge Challenge 7 part B, 11/19/08 2:19

From the Governor of Badajoz to Marshall Soult at Seville

Marshall Soult, I write to alert you to the imminent loss of the Fort at Badajoz, and its garrison of five thousand of our finest troops. Enemy soldiers are even now within sight, and once Picurina falls they will be within artillery range.

Our gunners are trained and ready and any attempt upon the fort will cost Wellington dearly. Our engineers have reinforced the breaches in the walls with massive earthworks and chevaux de frise bristling with the finest Spanish steel. The ditches have been mined and our troops, hardened by their experience in the second siege, are kept at a high state of readiness to repulse the assault when it comes. For come it must. The rain, which hampers the efforts of our enemy to cross the Guadiana, will eventually stop and then Picurina will almost certainly fall.

Your previous engagement with Beresford's army at the Battle of Albuera bought us the time we needed to leave the fort and destroy most of the allied siege works. I beseech you to come once more to our aid lest the city should fall into enemy hands. Your most humble servant,

Major General Phillipon