

Lesson #97 U.S. History North Africa & Italy

Mussolini took the opportunity to invade Egypt in September 1940 against his own generals advise that they were not prepared for the campaign.

North Africa

British 8th army

General Montgomery

Left damaged equipment in field

Drove tanks to battle used as calvary

Afrika Korps

Germans – General Edwin Rommel “Desert Fox”

Stayed in field to recover equipment after battle

Used decoys to draw British out

Truck tanks to battle

Carried gas in “jerry can’s”

outnumber 2-1 in men / 8-1 in tanks

Myth of German military genius Rommel was aided twice by Churchill

1st Greece – troops pulled out of North Africa – then moved back after defeat in Greece

2nd December 7, 1941 – troops pulled out of North Africa to aid troops in Far East

Mussolini moved to take North Africa and Suez Canal 1940 ----->

<-----British advanced out of Egypt to push Italians back 1940

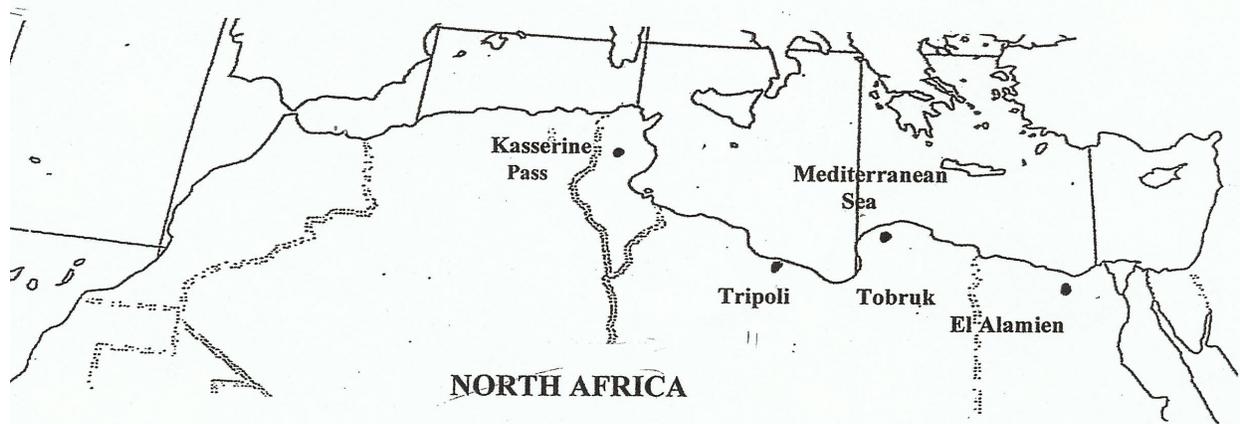
Hitler sent General Rommel with the Afrika Korps to push British back 1941 ----->

<-----British 8th Army under General Montgomery pushed the Germans

British troops pulled from North Africa for Greece 1941 Rommel pushed back---->

<-----British return and push Rommel back again

Pearl Harbor pulls troops out once more and Rommel on the march again----->



U.S. Agreed that effort would be Europe First in War:

American War Planning 1941-42

- 1. Operation Bolero – buildup of weapons in Europe**
- 2. Operation Round-up – troops**
- 3. Operation Sledgehammer - invasion**

Unable to carry out any of these in 1942

Japan and Germany on the move:

January 20, Wannsee Conference

21, Rommel on the attack once more

February 15, Singapore surrender

April 3, General O'Connor captured by Germans

9, Bataan Death March begins

18, Doolittle Raid

May 6, Corregidor surrender

8, Battle of Coral Sea

18, Red Army in retreat

20, Burma Falls to Japanese

31, Rommel is stalled

June 4, Battle of Midway

18, Manhattan Project begins

27, Convoy PQ 17 only 11 ship of the original 37 make it through

July 22, Treblinka open in Poland

August 13, General Montgomery takes command in North Africa

September 3, Battle of Stalingrad begins

8, November 1942 Operation “Northern Torch” Allied invasion of North Africa

U.S. -----> Afrika Korps <-----British 8th Army

The Afrika Korps was caught between the Allied Armies and plan to stop two German armies at the Kasserine Pass as the Germans tried to evacuate North Africa.

First battle at was at Faid Pass at Sidi Bou Zid in the eastern end of Dorsal Mountains on January 30 , 1943 Free French beaten and fell back.

U.S. Command General Fredendall set his command 80 miles back of the front line and had engineers building bunker for his staff. General Eisenhower notice the weak command and that the troops were unprepared and halted plans.

Second battle on February 14, 1943 at Sidi Bou Zid and the U.S. army lost 100 tanks and 1,500 captured troops to Germans.

Battle at the Kasserine Pass in the western end of Dorsal Mountains on February 19, 1943 the American tanks charged forward in a “V” formation like the old west causing a huge dust cloud for the Germans to see and the American tankers blinded by the dust.

The M-4 Sherman Tank was called the “Honey” by the Americans. The Germans called it the “Ronson” after the cigarette lighter because the tank would burst into flames when hit. The Americans learned with a change in battle command.

American intelligence had the right information wrong interpretation of that information. American military objective for first contact with German Afrika Korps was to cut off the German movement to the coastal port based on reliable intelligence of the fuel supply available to the Germans.

Reliable sources (spies) stated that the Germans had 1,500 pallets of fuel.

Known Information:

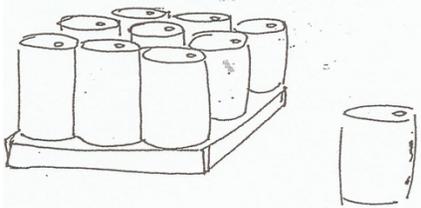
The calculations of mileage per Vehicle:

Tanks = 150 miles at 5 mph

Trucks = 200 miles at 200 mph

Americans had 150 tanks and 200 trucks required 85,000 gals

Plus 50% for reserve at 42,000 gals a total of 127,000 gals on 3,000 pallets holding 9 drums of 5 gals for each drum



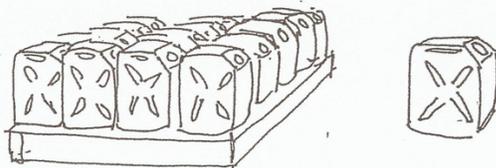
Germans had 100 trucks and 120 tanks requiring 56,000 gals

Plus 50% for reserves at 28,000 gals a total of 84,000 gals

They had 67,500 based on good intelligence and would be out of fuel at the Kasserine Pass

Right information wrong conclusion – the Germans did have only 1,500 pallets of fuel the

problem was the Germans had developed the “Jerry Can” a 5 gal can that allowed 20 drums per pallet given the Germans 150,000 gals of fuel.



Americans assumed the German pallets were the same as the American pallet



General Patton was placed in command. The Germans claimed that the American artillery was deadly and on point. The American army was well trained before the war in artillery coordination on a single point. Artillery and the Tanks and Air Corp took the best technical men and left the rest for the infantry.

Lessons learned:

- 1. Germans saw the Americans as poor fighters and poorly trained**
- 2. Americans recognized failures and up graded tanks and place General George S. Patton in command**
- 3. Never assume anything**
- 4. Reputations are made on results and not necessarily on the facts**

The cost of the battle at the Kasserine was 6,600 Killed, wounded, or captured. That was 20% of the force.

The Americans were introduced to the *Nebelwerfer* a multiple rocket weapon that the Americans called the “Screaming Meemies”

View of the Allied Troops of each other:

The British saw the Americans as their Italians!

In England the phrase was “...over-paid, over sexed, and over here!”

Americans saw the British as Tea Breakers” BEF stood for “Back Every Friday”!

Free French and General Charles De Gaulle was not liked by British or U.S. leadership



Montgomery



Rommel



Patton



De Gaulle