

On this day, German General Erwin Rommel arrives in Tripoli, Libya, with the newly formed Afrika Korps, to reinforce the beleaguered Italians' position.

In January 1941, **Adolf Hitler** established the Afrika Korps for the explicit purpose of helping his Italian Axis partner maintain territorial gains in North Africa. "[F]or strategic, political, and psychological reasons, Germany must assist Italy in Africa," the Fuhrer declared. The British had been delivering devastating blows to the Italians; in three months they pushed the Italians out of Egypt while wounding or killing 20,000 Italian soldiers and taking another 130,000 prisoner.

Having commanded a panzer division in Germany's successful French and Low Countries' campaigns, General Rommel was dispatched to Libya along with the new Afrika Korps to take control of the deteriorating situation. Until that time, Italian General Ettore Bastico was the overall commander of the Axis forces in North Africa—which included a German panzer division and the Italian armored division. Rommel was meant to command only his Afrika Korps and an Italian corps in Libya, but he wound up running the entire North African campaign.

General Rommel and the Afrika Korps bought several tools and units to battle the British and their Allies in the deserts of Libya and Egypt. Of course Panzers were bought including Panzer I's, II's, III's, and IV's. Initially the Panzer II was the most numerous but the Panzer III with its 5.0cm gun soon became the most formidable and fearful tank in the German arsenal besides the Deadly German '88'. This gun was the most advanced at its time in the Western Desert, able to penetrate most of the Allied Armour at good ranges except for the Valentine, Matilda, and Char-B of its day. The '88' of course was able to even penetrate these tanks with ease when called upon. The Char-B of course was used mainly during the Battle of France.

With the retreat of the Allied Forces back to Tobruk and the Egyptian borders more specialized troops were needed to help dig the British, Australians, and other Allied troops out of their Tobruk Fortifications. For this the German African Korps and General Rommel called up the specialized troops of the Liechte Pioneer units. With their specialized equipment of explosives, anti-tank mines, pioneer defense building equipment the Liechte Pioneers were equipped to take on any specialized task. Be it from tearing down the hardest Fortifications that the Allies managed to erect, ie Tobruk, June, 1942 or building up Fortifications that would take the greatest effort to tear down, ie, El-Alamein, Oct/Nov, 1942. The Liechte Pioneers had at their disposal also anti-tank guns, half-tracks to assist in assaults, rifles, anti-tank mines, flame-throwers, fortifications and the equipment to build them. Of course the Liechte Pioneers also had their greatest secret weapon available at their beck and call, General Rommel himself.