



Our Armour is Paper Thin,  
Our Transport is Non-existent  
BUT



We Have the Best Damned Hats of any Army

The Italian dictator, Mussolini, has long dreamed of building a fascist Roman Empire to dominate the Mediterranean and Africa. In June 1940 Mussolini seizes his chance, and declares war on France and Britain with the capitulation of France. The Italian armed forces are large – in addition to a powerful Navy and Air Force, the army has some seventy divisions.



"If you're looking for sympathy get a dictionary...I think it falls between shit and syphilis".  
Unknown Italian Soldier

Unfortunately, the *Regio Esercito* (Italian Army) is not ready for a major war. The state of the equipment and training is poor due having to pay for the expensive wars in Ethiopia and Spain. High ranking officers are afraid to report the true state of their units to Mussolini

The degree of training in the unit is entirely up to the unit's officers. The *Regio Esercito* frowns on too much training. Capitanos claim, "Training dulls the senses and blunts the natural courage and initiative of the Italian soldier."

Morale and experience varies greatly. The Veterans of the Spanish Civil War and the fighting in Ethiopia have some experience, most have little or none. Even the elite units suffer from this experience gap.



Members of the Babini Armoured Brigade prepare their "Rolling Coffin" to meet the advancing British in Africa.

The *Regio Esercito* (Italian Army) begins the war with an offensive against France in order to gain some extra territory. This hastily mounted and ill-conceived invasion results in heavy losses and few gains. The Army's morale plummets as officer quality becomes suspect.

Determined to restore some military prestige, Mussolini orders the invasion of Greece. This poorly planned invasion is a fiasco and siphons much needed men and material from the *Decima Regio Esercito* (10<sup>th</sup> Army) in Africa. By early 1941, it is the Greeks who are on the offensive. The Greek campaign is only ended when *Der Furher* sends German Troops in April.

There is worse news in the Italian Empire in Africa. After initial victories against the British, the British launch a counter-offensive which conquers *Africa Orientale Italiana*, (Italian East Africa). This loss takes a huge chunk out of the area controlled by Italy and an irate Mussolini vows to re-take the territory at all cost.

Marshal Rodolfo Graziani receives a promise of the resources necessary to commit to an offensive in Libya. Unfortunately, the disastrous invasion of Greece diverts his material and starves his advance. There is little to do now but defend the gaps between Italian outposts with the elite *Bersaglieri* troops on their motorcycles.

The British launch Operation Compass and devastate the *Decima Regio Esercito*. By January 1941 they had been driven back more than 500 miles. After only two months of fighting the British captured over 100,000 men. The demoralized *Regio Esercito* was left with four divisions to defend Tripoli.

Mussolini conceded the need for *Tedaschi* (German) aid and as 1941 begins Hitler contemplates the need to send *Feldmarshal Erwin Rommel* and equipment to secure North Africa. Rommel and his *Afrika Korps* arrive just in time to drive the British back to Egypt as the campaign for the Libyan Desert swings back and forth.

Of the four remaining Italian Divisions the Babini Armoured Brigade with its 57 M13/40 Tanks is organized into three Battalions. Each Battalion includes a *Compangia Motociclisti* which provides the indispensable reconnaissance on the desert frontier. The Battalion recently had its anti-tank capabilities improved with the addition of four German PaK36s.

As with all missions the Babini receive priority of fire from the 105s of the 55<sup>th</sup> Artillery Regiment. They also can call for sporadic air support from the now obsolete Fiat Falco, the last of the biplanes. They are indispensable we face the British Matilda as our shells just bounce off the armoured side of that monstrosity.

Now we few of the once proud *Regio Esercito* stand against the enemy and wait for the promised rescuer and his mighty Panzers. We long to rebuild the Roman Empire envisioned by the Great Mussolini.