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Italian Bersaglieri Company, Afrika

'Trento' Motorized Division
7th Bersaglieri Regiment

Supported by
46th Artillery Regiment
Unidentified Guastatori Battalion

This Flames of War Bersaglieri Company represents units from the 7th Bersaglieri Regiment, of the 'Trento' Motorized Division, involved in fighting at the Battle of El Alamein during Operation Lightfoot in late October through early November 1942.



El Alamein Museum, Egypt



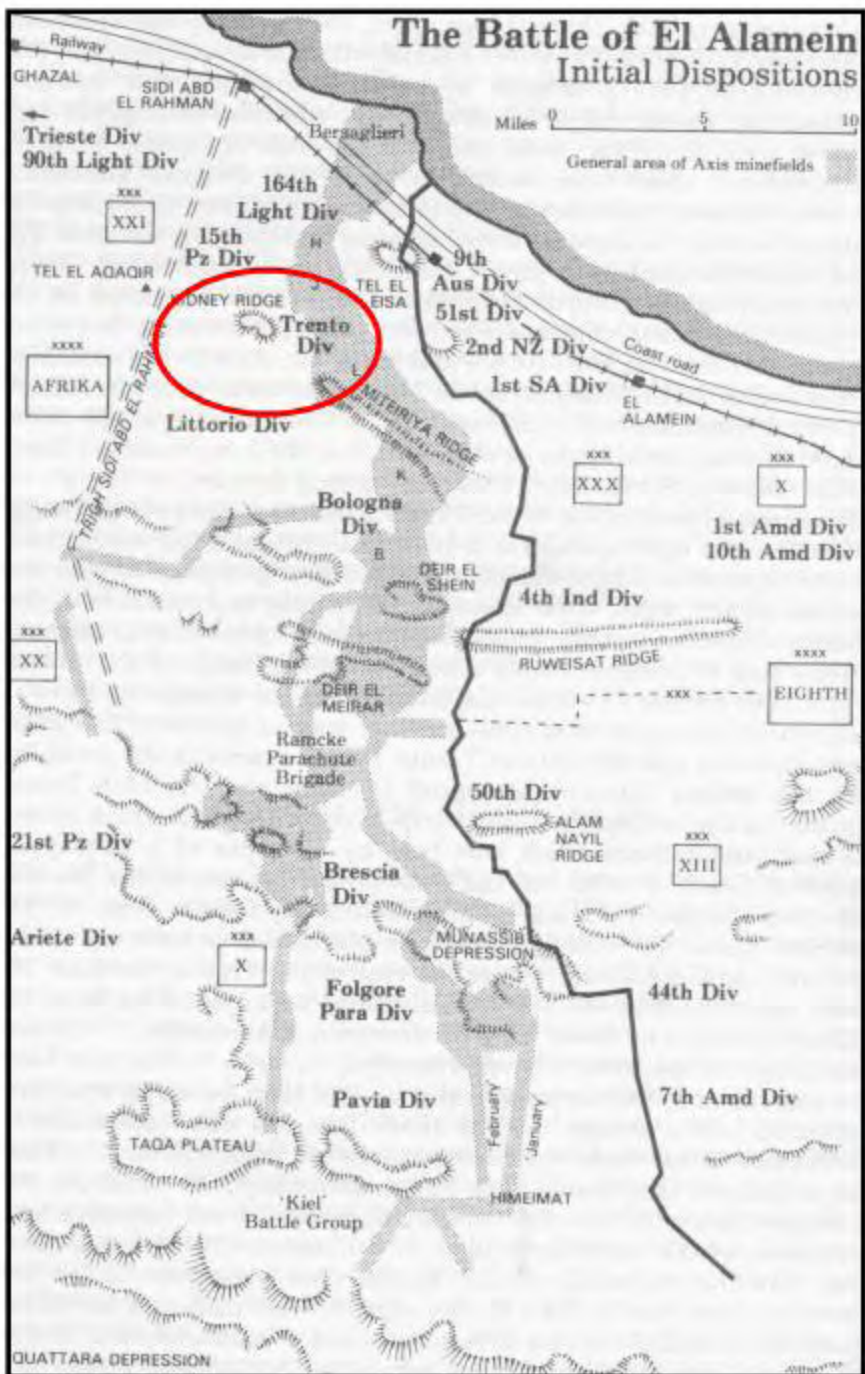
Bersaglieri



Italian Uniforms, El Alamein Museum



Bersaglieri crew with 47mm Anti-tank gun



Deployment of both armies on 23 October 1942, prior to Operation Lightfoot.

Operation Lightfoot began at approximately 10 p.m. on October 23, 1942 when the four infantry divisions of XXX Corps began to move, with the 2nd New Zealand and 1st South African infantry divisions attacking Trento. The objective of the attack was an imaginary line in the desert where the strongest enemy defenses were situated.

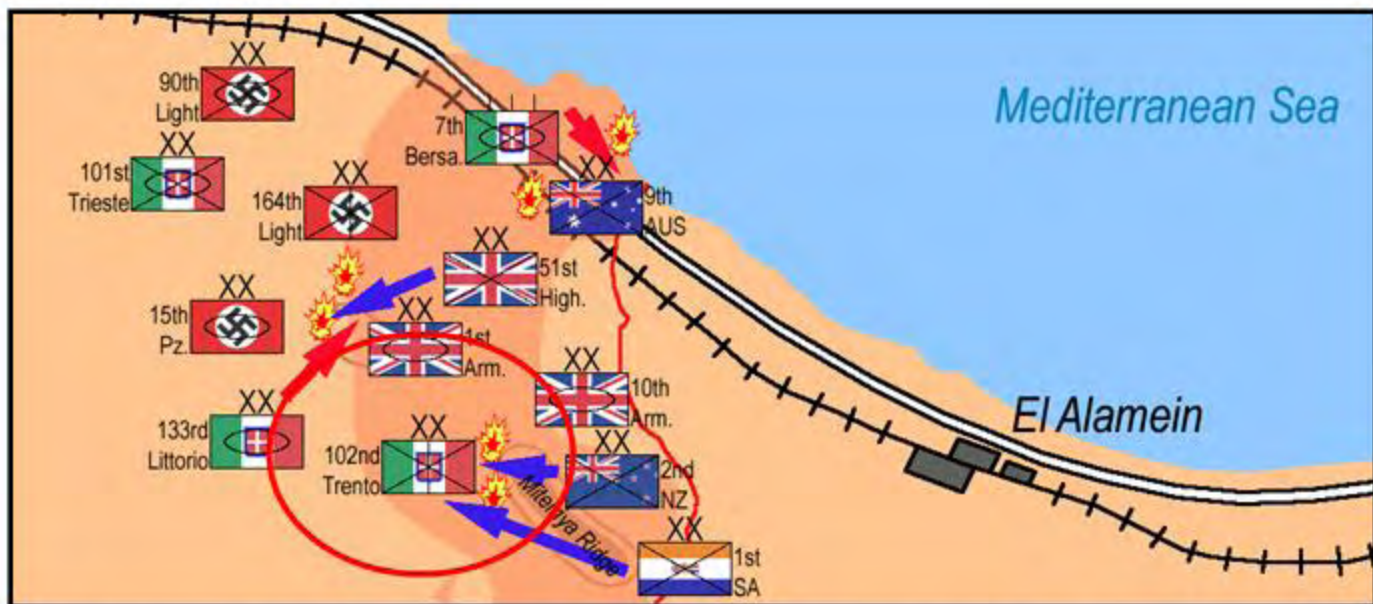
The initial Allied thrust had ended by Sunday, October 25, 1942; both armies had been fighting non-stop for two days. The Allies had advanced through the minefields in the west to make a six mile wide and five mile deep inroad. They now sat atop Miteriya Ridge in the southeast, but at the same time Axis forces were firmly entrenched in most of their original battle positions and the battle was at a standstill. Montgomery ordered an end to conflict in the south, concentrating the fighting at the Kidney feature and Tel el Eisa until a breakthrough occurred.



Guastatori



Heavy Machine-gun in action



By early morning on the 26th, the Axis forces launched a series of attacks around Kidney feature using 15th Panzer and Littorio divisions. The Panzer Armee was probing for a weakness, but found none. When the sun set the Allied infantry went on the attack. Around midnight 51st Highland Division launched three attacks, but no one knew exactly where they were. Pandemonium and carnage ensued, resulting in the loss of over 500 Allied troops, and leaving only one officer among the attacking forces.



Bersaglieri on the attack

General Rommel returned to North Africa on the evening of 25 October and immediately assessed the battle. He found that the Italian Trento Division had lost half its infantry, 164th Light Division had lost two battalions, most other groups were under strength, all men were on half rations, a large number were sick, and the entire Axis army had only enough fuel for three days.

The Trento Division's end came on November 4 when the Allies launched the final assaults. The 1st, 7th and 10th Armored Divisions passed through the German lines and towards the open desert. The Allies had won the battle, the Axis forces were in retreat. This day saw the liquidation of Ariete Division, Littorio Division, and Trieste Motorized Division. Ariete Armoured Division, under General Francesco Arena, fought valiantly at El Alamein effectively thwarting Allied plans to encircle and completely destroy the German forces. Bologna Division and the remainder of Trento Division tried to fight their way out of Alamein and marched in the desert without water, food, or transport before surrendering exhausted and dying from dehydration.



In mid-2006, my employer provided me the opportunity to travel to Egypt. One of the first places visited was the El Alamein Museum west of Alexandria. The museum had a number of static displays of Axis and Allied equipment, as well as unique items on loan from the British Museum.

It was here at the museum that I acquired the basing materials for my Bersaglieri Company.

Yes, I smuggled a tub of sand around Egypt for 16 days with the sole purpose of using it to base Flames of War armies.





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References

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