Military Geologists and the German Afrika Korps 1940-43

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German Military Geologist Organization
German Military Engineers
Afrika Korps
Summary
References
German Military Engineer School

The building was a German military engineers' school in the late 30s.

Then, the site of the Armistice signing in May 1945.

Soviet General Marshall Zhukov also used it as his headquarters after World War II.
Military Engineer School
German Afrika Korps

- Commanded by Field Marshal Erwin Rommel
- Operated in Africa from 1941 – 1943
- Operation Torch, Nov 1942, opened up a second front on the Afrika Korps
- Germans, surrounded at Tunis and Bizeret by land and sea, begin surrendering in May 1943
- FM Rommel was withdrawn to Greece in Mar 1943 to organize defenses there
Northern Africa Geography
Terrain Feature Challenges

On land or at sea, the terrain challenged operations continuously.

First widespread use of half tracks
Water Requirements

One person requires 1 gal/day of water in the desert.
Adapting to Environment

• Tents with flaps rolled up.
• R&R in Mediterranean
Adapt and Overcome

Germans used camels for logistics when possible.
Other Adaptions

Dig, man, dig!
In the Trenches

Casualties in the African Campaign for the Germans totaled 18,594 killed and 3,400 missing.
Blitzkreig Engineers

- German military engineers, road builders, and demolition squads created paths for the German Army to move quickly.

- They blazed roads and paved highways to enable force mobility, using their armor effectively in a series of flanking maneuvers.
Assessing Trafficability

Tracked vehicles allowed far greater mobility through rough terrain and bomb damaged urban areas.
Other Transportation Difficulties

The BMO at work.

Mud? In the desert?
The 5 gallon “Jerry Can” was developed by the Germans for their Afrika Korps.
German geologists interviewed natives to find water sources.
Mixing materials
Rommel on inspection tour
SUMMARY

- Germans recognized importance of geological information during time of war by compiling comprehensive manual on War Geology in 1938.
- German geologists integral part of Army engineering activities in all theaters of World War II.
- Geologists also utilized in logistical support and design and construction of defensive works.
- Afrika Korps operations turned on logistical support, navigation and deception. Geologist’s knowledge was incorporated into maneuver planning and positioning of defenses.
REFERENCES

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