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Title - Rommel's Fatal Gambit: The First Battle of El Alamein**Presentation Type** - Oral (PowerPoint)**Mentor(s) and Mentor Email** - Dr. David Snead (dlsnead@liberty.edu)**Student name(s) and email(s)** - Nathan Landrum (nlandrum1@liberty.edu)**Category** - Textual**Abstract:**

“Thus after immense victories, the great summer campaign had ended in a dangerous lull.”¹ This reflective statement, written ex post facto by Erwin Rommel, poignantly summarizes his disappointment in the Afrika Korps’ inability to break through British defenses at El Alamein. Since 1940, Axis, British and Commonwealth forces engaged in a seesaw struggle for supremacy in North Africa. What began as an Italian colonial land grab, eventually developed into a major theatre of operations which served as a springboard for the Allied liberation of Europe. At the height of the campaign in 1942, the Afrika Korps embarked on a lightening offensive which reversed all British gains in North Africa thus far and presented the opportunity for Germany to seize the oil rich and strategically important Middle East. Unfortunately for Rommel, his Afrika Korps was initially halted by the British 8th Army in July at El Alamein and then resoundingly defeated in the autumn. Modern historians traditionally view the second engagement as the pivotal moment of the campaign. However, the events of June to July, 1942, would dramatically shape the subsequent course of events in the North African campaign.

Using key primary source material such as memoirs and British War Cabinet papers, along with scholarly secondary material, this research examined the significance of the First

¹ Erwin Rommel, *The Rommel Papers*, ed. B.H. Liddell Hart (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company 1953), 262.

Battle of El Alamein in the North Africa campaign of World War II. Research revealed that the failure of Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps to defeat the British 8th Army at the First Battle of El Alamein decisively ended the Axis summer offensive of 1942 and inexorably shifted the balance of power towards the Western Allies in North Africa. From the beginnings of the campaign, plagued by chronic shortages of supplies, to the suspension of offensive operations in July, 1942, the ensuing First Battle of El Alamein would subsequently alter not only the military fortunes of both Axis and Allied forces, but also their perceptions of the campaign as well.