

COMMAND AND INITIATIVE IN NORTH AFRICA: PATTON VS. FREDENDALL, AND THE BATTLE OF KASSERINE PASS

By

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This thesis will compare and contrast General George S. Patton, Jr. and General Lloyd R. Fredendall throughout their service during the North African Campaign to argue that, had Patton commanded at Kasserine Pass, the battle would have ended as an American victory. Using Martin Blumenson's edited version of the *Patton Papers*, this study will pull examples from Patton's experience as a leader to decipher the possibilities of his command at Kasserine Pass. Three overall ideas will be covered: Patton's command style, Fredendall's leadership and failure at Kasserine Pass, and the consequences of General Dwight D. Eisenhower's decisions as supreme commander. The analysis of these points will enforce the theory that, had Patton commanded at Kasserine Pass, the outcome would have been a victory instead of a failure.

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PATTON VS. FREDENDALL, AND THE BATTLE OF
KASSERINE PASS**

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By

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Chapter One: Introduction

General George S. Patton, Jr. is one of the most analyzed generals written about in American military history. From Martin Blumenson's edition of the *Patton Papers*, to Carlo D'Este's flawless biography on the "Genius for War," to the more recent scholarly work of the North African Campaign, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa* by Rick Atkinson, all of these studies agree that he was a military paragon. This thesis will compare and contrast the general and Lieutenant General Lloyd R. Fredendall throughout their service in the campaign and discover the differences between their command styles. While these differences are reviewed, this study will cover three overall ideas: Patton as an outstanding commander, Fredendall's leadership and failure at Kasserine Pass, and the consequences of General Dwight D. Eisenhower's decisions as supreme commander. This study will justify the claims of historians and enforce the theory that, had Patton commanded at Kasserine Pass, the outcome would have been a victory instead of a failure.

Historiography

To justify the purpose of this thesis, one must first review the studies already presented on him. Since the publication of his wartime memoir, *War as I Knew It* (1947), two years after his death, many biographies followed. Most depicted the general as an exemplary battlefield commander, while others saw him as reckless. *Portrait of Patton* (1955) by Harry H. Semmes, who was a friend and served alongside him in both world wars, provided one of the first full biographies. Semmes called him "the greatest combat general of modern times."¹ *Patton: Ordeal and Triumph* (1967) by Ladislav Farago, a

¹ Harry H. Semmes, *Portrait of Patton* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1955), ix.

military historian and journalist, offered an in-depth biographical tome on the general, which became the basis of the 1970 movie, *Patton*, starring George C. Scott. In 1972, Martin Blumenson, military historian and an officer who served with the Third and Seventh Armies during World War II, edited and published the two volumes of the *Patton Papers*. This publication provided insight to his personality and philosophy of war, as well as opinions on both his subordinates and superiors. These papers became the backbone to many future biographies.

Further, Blumenson provided a concise biography of the general, *Patton: The Man Behind the Legend 1885-1945* (1985), which concentrated solely on Patton's personality and his motivation as a commander. Biographers then turned to look at him psychologically. More authors discussed his struggle with dyslexia and bipolar disorder. Carlo D'Este, an American military historian and retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel, wrote the most in-depth and well-researched biography of the general, *Patton: A Genius for War* (1995). D'Este's study commends the general for just that: a genius for war, and his research debunks the facades created following the movie *Patton*.

While there are military historians that conclude Patton was one of the greatest commanders of all time, there are also military historians who disapprove of his military career. For instance, Stanley P. Hirshon's *General Patton: A Soldier's Life* (2002). The author, a military biographer, attempts to create an antiheroic view of the general, although his arguments are heavily based on criticism from other commanders from World War II, instead of the outcome of campaigns. He also criticizes preceding biographies for scanty research. His argument does not hold well compared to the extensive research of historians such as D'Este and Blumenson.

Biographers still continued to research the general, focusing more on his personality, relationships with other commanders and his leadership qualities during certain campaigns during the Second World War, as well as providing insight to the mystery of his sudden death. For example, Bill O'Reilly's recent work, *Killing Patton: The Strange Death of World War II's Most Audacious General* (2014). O'Reilly, a political commentator and television host, explores an assassination plot to kill the general following the war. Unfortunately, the study is clumsily composited and lacks certain important passages in post-war engagements that would lead to the belief that he was assassinated following the war.

There are many studies on Patton during World War II. The published works on the North African Campaign are dwarfed compared to the press on Operation OVERLORD. Rick Atkinson, military historian and Pulitzer Prize recipient, wrote *An Army at Dawn: the War in North Africa, 1942-1943* (2002), an overall account of the campaign. Written from an American stance, it also includes British and German input. Atkinson also discusses his command skills in a positive manner throughout the study. General of the Army Omar N. Bradley provides insight to the general's command in his autobiography, *A General's Life* (1983). The General of the Army describes him as "a superb field general and leader perhaps our very best."² Although all these works recognize him as a great commander of armored warfare, they never attempt to apply his excellence to a what-if account had he commanded at Kasserine Pass, which is an object of this thesis.

² Omar N. Bradley and Clay Blair, *A General's Life: An Autobiography by General of the Army* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 85.

Patton has been compared to other generals of World War II. *Brothers, Rivals, Victors: Eisenhower, Patton, Bradley, and the Partnership that Drove the Allied Conquest in Europe* by Jonathan W. Jordan, an American military historian, underlines the influence of these three commanders. While British military historian Terry Brighton compares him with two other commanders of World War II in *Patton, Montgomery, Rommel: Masters of War* (2009). Brighton demonstrates in this extended essay that commanders established themselves in World War I, but developed into strong commanders during the interwar years leading to the Second World War. This acknowledges the general's understanding of tanks, but does not attempt to prove that he would have succeeded at Kasserine Pass. Another comparison and contrast work comes from Blumenson's *Masters of the Art of Command* (1975). Blumenson provides a comparative essay between Patton and Montgomery underlining that both were the best American and British commanders to come out of World War II.

In consideration of these previous works, this study will attempt to emphasize their validity and create a finalized argument that Patton should have been sent to Kasserine Pass. This thesis will then review the actions taken during the North African Campaign from start to finish to examine the flaws of the original plan and then the conclusion will revisit the Battle of Kasserine Pass and explore an alternate history using examples from the general's service prior to World War II. The conclusion will provide information and will not stray away from historical fact, but merely apply what he would have done in the given situation at certain points during the battle.

Chapter Two: The Generals

During the North African Campaign, many generals were involved on both the Allied and Axis side. Some of their assignments included planning, battlefield maneuvers and armistice negotiations. These generals were the reason that the United States had victories and, in some cases, failures during the campaign. Both turned into lessons learned as the U.S. Army constantly improved its fighting capability during World War II. For this thesis, the reader needs to be familiar with the background of these commanders to understand the development of their military careers, especially the relationships they created with one another.

By the time the Americans entered the war, a majority of the generals were already acquainted with each other. Patton and Eisenhower created a personal relationship during their time at Camp Meade, Maryland, after World War I. Eisenhower and Bradley were a part of “the class the stars fell upon” and graduated from West Point in 1915.³ Another important factor that tied most of these commanders together is that they gained their leadership skills working with the great General John J. Pershing at some point in their military careers. No matter if it concluded a personal or professional relationship, these leaders knew of each other and understood each other’s capability on and off the battlefield. These are the generals who made the decisions during the campaign.

³ “The Class the Stars Fell Upon,” Smithsonian Institution, accessed December 9, 2013, http://americanhistory.si.edu/westpoint/history_6b.html.

DWIGHT DAVID EISENHOWER

Figure 2.1: Dwight David Eisenhower



Source: U.S. Army Signal Corps archives.

Dwight D. Eisenhower was on the General Staff in Washington D.C. when the United States entered the Second World War. Not long after, General George C. Marshall (Chief of Staff of the United States Army) appointed him to the head of the War Plans Division. Impressed with his organizational skills, Marshall then selected him to be Commanding General of the European Theater of Operations. Following the North African Invasion (Operation TORCH), he was designated the Supreme Commander Allied Forces of the North Africa Theater of Operations. While in this position, he prepared “land, sea, and air forces, as well as handled logistical and governmental affairs.”⁴ Even though he never experienced action on the battlefield, he was the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe throughout World War II.

Eisenhower was born into a lower class family on 14 October 1890 in Denison, Texas to David and Ida Eisenhower. He was the third oldest of seven boys (one brother, Paul, died in infancy). His family was from a long line of German farmers in

⁴ Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., et. al., editor, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, The War Years: I* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1970), xxvii.

Pennsylvania. His father broke this tradition when he went to school for engineering. The family moved to Abilene, Kansas when he was still very young and it became his hometown.

Prior to Eisenhower, no one in his family had served in the military. The influence he received on joining the military came from outside the family. In school, he became fascinated with history, especially “Greek and Roman accounts.”⁵ Bob Davis (a hunter and fisherman from Abilene) was his “hero” and highly influential, teaching him how to shoot, fish, and trap.⁶

Everett E. Hazlett, Eisenhower’s high school peer, told him about Annapolis and becoming an officer in the Navy.⁷ The two friends studied together for the entrance exam, which were “almost identical to those for entrance to West Point.”⁸ Eisenhower wrote to Senator Joseph Bristow “requesting appointment as a cadet or midshipman,” the senator’s response was to take the entrance exam.⁹ Because of age constraints, he was ineligible to receive admission to Annapolis; instead, he received an appointment in spring 1911. He passed the examination appointment and reported to West Point on 14 June 1911.¹⁰

When Eisenhower arrived at West Point, he weighed “about 150 pounds” but by indulging at the mess hall and extensive exercise, he “bulked up to a very solid 174 pounds.”¹¹ With his added weight, he earned a spot on the varsity football team. During

⁵ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends* (Unknown: Eastern Acorn Press, 1998), 39.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 88-89.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 106-108.

¹¹ Carol D’Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier’s Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), 67.

one game, he twisted his knee, hospitalizing him for a short period of time. The injury brought his football career to “an abrupt end.”¹²

On the academic side, Eisenhower was an average student and his “indifference” towards his studies “only extended throughout his four years at West Point.”¹³ His attitude was poor, he argued with teachers; especially on one occasion, when a math teacher accused him of cheating.¹⁴ He also played poker at West Point, which was a “forbidden pastime” he embraced.¹⁵ Despite his reputation in his class and his choice to spend more time playing cards than studying, he graduated in June 1915.¹⁶

Upon his graduation, Eisenhower wanted to serve in the Philippines.¹⁷ He returned home to patiently wait for his commission and orders, though President Woodrow Wilson was in no hurry to sign papers because he was already trying to downsize the army at the time. The young officer’s orders, nevertheless, arrived in August, sending him to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, where he served with the 19th Infantry Regiment, Company F.

When President Wilson recognized the government of General Vanustiano Carranza, the border of the United States and Mexico became uneasy. An already small army needed more troops and National Guard regiments were activated to meet the demand. This led to Eisenhower’s trip from Fort Sam Houston to Camp Wilson, also located in San Antonio. There, he became a part of the 7th Illinois Infantry Regiment from Chicago. His responsibilities included: “close-order drill and training his charges in

¹² Ibid., 68.

¹³ Ibid., 76.

¹⁴ Ibid., 77.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 81.

¹⁷ Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 111.

trench warfare.”¹⁸ The young officer’s time at Camp Wilson encouraged him “to begin taking his profession more seriously.”¹⁹

By 1917, the troubles with Mexico ebbed and the entrance into World War I for the United States became inevitable. Eisenhower’s time with the 7th Illinois Infantry established his training and administrative skills. Because of his ability, he was selected to help establish the 57th Illinois National Guard and to prepare them to fight in the First World War. The training took him back to Camp Wilson. His job in the newly formed regiment was supply officer and he successfully equipped his regiment for battle.²⁰ For his success, he was promoted to captain and sent to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia to train promising soldiers for commissioning as officers.²¹

During Eisenhower’s time there, he successfully helped create replicas of the trenches in France that the candidates might encounter once deployed into battle. He trained the troops in infantry tactics as well as dismissed “the weak and the inept.”²² After helping create the program, he was ordered next to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to train “provisional second lieutenants.”²³ Although he requested to go overseas many times, he spent most of the First World War years training troops.

Following World War I, Eisenhower found himself at Camp Meade, Maryland. There, he met Patton and the two became close friends.²⁴ They both believed in the effectiveness of tanks in battle. Together, they studied the tank and compiled data to convince the war department that “tanks could have a more valuable and more

¹⁸ D’Este, *Eisenhower*, 115.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 116.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 118.

²¹ Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 132.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ D’Este, *Eisenhower*, 145.

spectacular role.”²⁵ Patton had experience with the tanks in battle, while Eisenhower drove across the United States in a convoy with a tank. By 1920, however, the Tank Corps was dissolved and added to the infantry.²⁶ Patton returned to the cavalry and Eisenhower went to Panama. Both remained close friends, despite some differences during World War II, until Patton’s death in 1945.

Late in 1922, he received orders to go to Camp Gaillard in Panama to work for his mentor, Brigadier General Fox Conner, who became the keystone to the young officer’s military career. The brigadier general guided him to many opportunities based on the potential he saw in him. In Panama, he taught Eisenhower military history and tactics, through “intense one-on-one tutelage.”²⁷ From these sessions, his “military education began to take shape.”²⁸

With the help of Conner, Eisenhower earned an appointment to the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth in 1925.²⁹ He concluded the one-year course first in his class of 245 officers. After graduation, he received orders to Fort Benning, Georgia, a move that he found disappointing after proving himself at the Staff College. His time there was not long as (now Major General) Conner gained him an appointment working with Pershing at the American Battle Monuments Commission in Washington D.C.³⁰

Before joining Pershing in Washington, Eisenhower was selected to attend the Army War College at Fort McNair in Washington D.C. Once he completed the course, he

²⁵ Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 170.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 174.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 177.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 190.

returned to the American Battle Monuments Commission. His job was to create a chronicle of the battles of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) during World War I. He was “a whiz at organizing and interpreting material.”³¹ Pershing was impressed by his attentiveness to detail and offered him a tour in France to “gather information for a revised guidebook.”³² He accepted and left for France in August 1928.

Eisenhower also helped organize Pershing’s war memoirs. There were notes about each battle and he suggested the general shape his diary entries into a narrative so that the reader could follow the story.³³ He presented an example by compiling a narrative of the battles of Saint-Mihiel and the Meuse-Argonne offensive. Pershing collected the notes that he composed and showed them to (then Lieutenant Colonel) Marshall, for his advice. Marshall, though impressed with the young officer’s work, still suggested that the general present his memoirs as is, without the narrative. The compilation of the memoirs left an impression on lieutenant colonel.³⁴

Eisenhower earned prodigious experience working with Pershing. In the early 1930s, he joined General Douglas MacArthur as an aide and learned to work with an extremely flamboyant general. He followed the general to the Philippines, where he continued to serve as aide until the end of 1939. In the Philippines, he also worked with President Manuel Luis Quezón, further preparing the future supreme commander for dealing with diplomats and leaders in the Second World War.³⁵

Eisenhower returned to the United States in 1939 to take on a series of staff positions. By the time the United States entered World War II, he was Deputy Chief in

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 192.

³³ Ibid., 197-198.

³⁴ Ibid., 202.

³⁵ Ibid., 237-240.

charge of Pacific Defenses under the Chief of War Plans Division. By 1942, the deputy chief was selected by Marshall to be the Commanding General, European Theater of Operations. From there, he rose to command all the allied troops, and drew up the plans for Operation OVERLORD (D-Day), the landings in Normandy. Despite the fact he had never saw combat before World War II.

OMAR NELSON BRADLEY

Figure 2.2: Omar Nelson Bradley



Source: U.S. Army Signal Corps archives.

Omar N. Bradley's first assignment during the Second World War was serving as Eisenhower's "eyes and ears" following the Battle of Kasserine Pass.³⁶ After the report on the poor condition of II Corps after Kasserine Pass, Patton was nominated to take command and he became deputy. Shortly after the Battle of El Guettar, he took over command of the II Corps led them through Africa and the invasion of Sicily. During Operation OVERLORD (D-Day, Invasion of Normandy), he took command of the U.S. First Army until the Germans surrendered on 8 May 1945 (Victory in Europe Day). Following the war, he succeeded Eisenhower as Chief of Staff and reached the rank of five-star general. He retired in 1953. He possessed effective leadership skills and a

³⁶ Omar N. Bradley, *A Soldier's Story* (New York: Modern Library, 1999), 31.

humble personality, which earned him the nickname, from Ernie Pyle, the “G.I.’s General.”³⁷

Bradley was born on 12 February 1893, in Randolph County, Missouri, into a poor farming family. His father was a teacher and his mother a seamstress. He also had a younger brother, Raymond, who died at the age of two. When he was three, his parents took in two of his cousins, Nettie and Opal, after the death of his aunt. In a sense, his cousins became “older sisters” to him.³⁸ Both of his grandfathers served in the Civil War. His maternal grandfather served in the Union Army, while his paternal grandfather served in the Confederate Army. At the age of fourteen, his father died. A few years later, his mother remarried and he gained two stepbrothers, David and Charles.

As a child, Bradley enjoyed history. His father, a teacher, encouraged him to read from an early age. He read stories about the French and Indian War and Civil War, which he imitated during his playtime, “using dominoes to build forts and empty .22 cartridges to represent lines of soldiers.”³⁹ He used whatever he could find and imagination, to recreate these battles that the “Americans always won.”⁴⁰

Bradley’s father was a large influence in his life, exposing him to reading, sports (particularly baseball), and hunting. At the age of six, he was given a BB rifle and began hunting with his father. Once he was acquainted with his BB rifle, his father gave him a .22 single shot rifle and taught him how to shoot accurately. When his father died, it affected him intensely, as most of his knowledge was gained through his father. He then

³⁷ David Nichols, ed., *Ernie’s War: The Best of Ernie Pyle’s World War II Dispatches* (New York: Random House, 1986), 358.

³⁸ Bradley, *General’s Life*, 18.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

vowed that he “was determined, no matter how poor” his family was to further his education “all the way through college;” and to make something of himself.⁴¹

Following his graduation from high school in 1910, Bradley looked to college and decided that he “wanted to be a lawyer.”⁴² Unfortunately, he could not afford the tuition expenses and feared leaving his mother alone. After working for a year to save money, a Sunday school superintendent suggested West Point, with its free tuition, to him. This caught his attention; and “was made to order for” his financial situation.⁴³ On 27 July 1911, he received a telegram stating that he had been appointed to West Point.

On 1 August 1911, Bradley reported to endure, “the most rewarding”⁴⁴ four years of his life. He was one of fourteen to arrive late because of a recent legal change. With this change, he did not undergo the hazing that plebe year classmates witness during their first weeks. He and these plebes were dubbed “Augustines.”⁴⁵

In the beginning, Bradley performed poorly in his studies. Much of this was because of his dedication to athletics. His participation in sports affected his “grades and academic standing.”⁴⁶ Eventually, he graduated forty-fourth of 164. Upon the graduation of “the class the stars fell upon,” the most sought after branches in the army were the engineer corps and field artillery.⁴⁷ He was assigned to infantry and chose the 14th Infantry Regiment, in the Pacific Northwest.⁴⁸

⁴¹ Ibid., 23.

⁴² Ibid., 25.

⁴³ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 34.

⁴⁷ “The Class the Stars Fell Upon,” Smithsonian Institution, accessed December 9, 2013, http://americanhistory.si.edu/westpoint/history_6b.html.

⁴⁸ Bradley, *General's Life*, 36.

Bradley spent his first days as a lieutenant on the Pacific coast at Fort George, Washington on garrison duty. At the time, tensions on the Mexican border intensified. Soon, he was sent to the border (which postponed his own wedding) and shuffled around garrisons lining the Mexican border. He remained, even when the threat at the border calmed and attention was focused on a new threat looming overseas.

When the United States entered World War I, Bradley was in Yuma, Arizona, protecting the border states from a minor Mexican threat. When he finally returned to the Pacific, he hoped to be sent to France to test his “mettle in a real war.”⁴⁹ His 14th Infantry Regiment, however, remained stateside. It became “the most frustrating [time] of” his early career.⁵⁰ He did not see battle during World War I, but did his part protecting copper mines (vital to the war effort) on the home front.

Following the war, Bradley experienced a stint of instructor tours in the states. He requested to become a Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) instructor and was granted permission. He was appointed assistant professor of military science and tactics at the South Dakota State College. After only one year, he was ordered to report to West Point immediately to be a math instructor. He spent four years there, which benefited him “professionally in several ways.”⁵¹ As an instructor, he was able to study military history thoroughly. He was able to analyze and understand mistakes made by commanders in the past. From his studies of these predecessors, he concluded “that rapid, sweeping massed movement of forces deep into the enemy’s heartland was the best way to destroy an enemy army.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Ibid., 44.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 44-45.

⁵¹ Ibid., 54.

⁵² Ibid.

When the United States entered World War II, he was serving at the temporary rank of brigadier general, as the commandant of Fort Benning. Eventually, he was called to Africa to serve as aide to Eisenhower.

ERNEST NASON HARMON

Figure 2.3: Ernest Nason Harmon



Source: Norwich University

Ernest N. Harmon is significant for the actions he took following the events at the Battle of Kasserine Pass. Prior to the battle, he was selected as one of Patton's subordinates during Operation TORCH. In February 1943, Eisenhower sent him to observe Fredendall's command at the battlefield and save what was left of II Corps. His report resulted in the dismissal of the incompetent general. He was then offered command of the corps, to which he declined and suggested Patton for the job. He served in the invasion of Sicily, the Battle of the Bulge, and commanded the XXII Corps, attached to the Third Army, until the end of the war. He retired from the U.S. Army in 1948.

Harmon was born to a poor family in Lowell, Massachusetts on 26 February 1894. His mother and father “worked hard to pay for a new house they built”⁵³ and to provide for their family. He was the youngest of four children, Charles, the oldest, then sisters, Etta and Mabel. By the age of ten; he lost Mabel, his father and his mother. Charles and Etta went their separate ways, while he was sent to live with his mother’s friend “who lived on a small farm at West Newbury, Vermont.”⁵⁴ The friend was Minnie Bell Brock who became a second mother to him.⁵⁵

Harmon’s family had a prominent family history of military members, dating back to the Indian Wars and Revolutionary War, especially his “great-great-great grandfather, Josiah Harmon, [who] enlisted in George Washington’s army as a fifer in 1775.”⁵⁶ On his mother’s side, he was related to Joseph Spauldings, whose “first shot at Bunker Hill was fired...[and] killed Major Pitcairn,” a British soldier.⁵⁷ These family members were not what inspired him to join the military, as he found out about this family heritage later on in life.

In 1912, Harmon graduated from Bradford Academy and “was salutatorian of his class.”⁵⁸ He decided to attend Norwich University; a military college that prepared individuals to be engineers, surveyors, businessmen and teachers in times of peace, and in times of war, to serve in the armed forces.⁵⁹ He studied civil engineering. Over time, he became accustomed to the military lifestyle, but it was Colonel Frank Tompkins that

⁵³ Ernest N. Harmon, *Combat Commander: Autobiography of a Soldier* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

helped him decide on a military career. Tompkins suggested that he “apply for [an] appointment to West Point” for the class of 1917, that he successfully passed.⁶⁰

The class of 1917 experienced an expedited graduation because of the United States’ entrance into World War I. The cadets graduated at the end of April, instantaneously commissioned, and sent overseas. Harmon “immediately became a second lieutenant of cavalry and was assigned [to] the 2nd U.S. Cavalry at Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont.”⁶¹ From there, he deployed to France.

Harmon was on the front lines during World War I. His cavalry regiment, along with three others, went overseas at the same time. On 13 July 1918, his Troop F arrived in Gièvres, where the Provisional Squadron of the 2nd Cavalry participated in the St. Mihiel attack and the breakthrough at the Meuse-Argonne front.⁶² For their maneuvers, the squadron received “citations for distinguished conduct.”⁶³ During this operation, he led Troop F through battle. He and his soldiers, along with the other troops, were able to accomplish these feats with little experience and untrained horses.⁶⁴

During the interwar years, Harmon attended the cavalry school and once completed, reported to West Point to serve as an instructor (1921-1925).⁶⁵ After his stint, he spent two years with the 6th Cavalry at Fort Oglethorpe. From there, he served as Commandant of Cadets and Professor of Military Science at Norwich University, for four years, and received an honorary master’s degree in military science.⁶⁶ The following two

⁶⁰ Ibid., 11.

⁶¹ Ibid., 14.

⁶² Ibid., 32.

⁶³ Ibid., 44.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 46-47.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 48-49.

years, he attended the Command and General Staff College.⁶⁷ Before heading to the Army War College, he was sent to Winterset, Iowa, to help establish a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp.⁶⁸

In 1935, Harmon was assigned to the G-4 (Assistant Chief of Staff, Logistics) section at the General Staff in Washington.⁶⁹ He was then sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky to serve as supply officer to General Adna R. Chaffee (the father of the armored force).⁷⁰ By late spring 1941, he returned to Washington to serve in the War Plans Division, and shortly thereafter, transferred to become General Lesley J. McNair's G-4.⁷¹ By the spring of 1942, he was assigned to Fort Riley, Kansas to serve as brigadier general "with the newly formed Ninth Armored."⁷² Late in the summer of 1942, he was summoned to the east coast to command the 2nd Armored Division in the Carolina maneuvers.⁷³ From there, the division joined Patton's Western Task Force in the TORCH landings.⁷⁴

Unlike Eisenhower and Bradley who graduated from West Point two years earlier, Harmon saw combat action during the First World War. He was responsible for the observations made of Fredendall that lead to his dismissal from North Africa. Despite the mess made at Kasserine Pass, he was able to pull the II Corps out of complete annihilation by the Germans. He was a great leader that led by example and "never sent a platoon, a squad, or a regiment any place" that he would never go himself.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ Ibid., 49-50.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 50-51.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 56.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 57-58.

⁷¹ Ibid., 58-59.

⁷² Ibid., 62.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 67.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 16.

LUCIAN KING TRUSCOTT, JR.

Figure 2.4: Lucian King Truscott, Jr.



Source: U.S. Signal Corps archives.

By the start of the Second World War, Lucian K. Truscott was commanding the 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Bliss, Texas.⁷⁶ Early in 1942, he was given an assignment by Eisenhower to participate in Operation RUTTER, the Dieppe Raid.⁷⁷ His involvement in this operation gave way to the establishment of the 1st Ranger Battalion.⁷⁸ After meeting with Patton in London, he joined the Western Task Force for the TORCH landings. Following the operation, he became Eisenhower's staff officer and witnessed the Battle of Kasserine Pass, to which, the observations he reported also stressed the dismissal of Fredendall. He successfully led troops in Sicily, Anzio, France and even relieved Patton of his Third Army command at the end of the war. He retired from the army in 1947 and in 1951, with an appointment from General Walter Bedell Smith, he took a job with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) until 1959.⁷⁹ Prior to World War II, his military experience was "unlike that of many other Regular Army officers" of his "age group and background."⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., *Command Missions: A Personal Story* (New Orleans: Quid Pro Books, 2012), 16.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

⁷⁹ Wilson A. Heefner, *Dogface Soldier: The Life of General Lucian K. Truscott, Jr.* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010), 271, 288.

⁸⁰ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 532.

Truscott was born 9 January 1895 in Chatfield, Texas; to Doctor Lucian K. Truscott, Sr. and his wife, Maria Temple Tully (née), a teacher.⁸¹ He had three sisters: Loretta (1893), Patsy (1896) and Dixie (1904).⁸² His family spent a decade in Chatfield, and then moved the family to Maud, Oklahoma, thus beginning a pattern of moving the family every few years to “keep ahead of his reputation.”⁸³ As his father became addicted to laudanum (an opium based drug), he, along with his mother and sister were left to earn income for the family by working in a “cotton patch.”⁸⁴ In spite of his father’s actions, his parents “attempted to instill good values and habits in their offspring.”⁸⁵

In 1911, Truscott graduated from Stella High School at the age of sixteen. He then lied about his age in order to take the examination to become a teacher and passed.⁸⁶ From there, “he presumed his education would be his career.”⁸⁷ After six years of teaching, however, at twenty-two years old he took on a different career route.

Prior to Truscott, there were no family members who served in the military. His father was a doctor and his grandfather also was a teacher, but became a lawyer and eventually served as mayor of Maud, Oklahoma.⁸⁸ When the United States Congress announced the National Defense Act of 1916, that authorized the quick commissioning of officers, he answered to the demand.⁸⁹ In 1917, he enlisted and reported to Fort Logan H.

⁸¹ Heefner, *Dogface Soldier*, 9-10.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸³ Henry Ferguson, *The Last Cavalryman: The Life of General Lucian K. Truscott, Jr.* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), xix.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸⁹ Heefner, *Dogface Soldier*, 11-12.

Roots, Arkansas, for training and performed well.⁹⁰ He received his commission as a cavalry officer in August 1917.⁹¹

Truscott's first duty station was at Camp Harry J. Jones in Douglas, Arizona with the 17th Cavalry Regiment.⁹² In March of 1918, the 17th Cavalry combined with the 1st and 15th Cavalry Regiments "to form the 3d Brigade of the 15th Cavalry Division, which had been organized for overseas service."⁹³ Despite the unification into a brigade, the 15th deployed to France, while the 1st received orders to deploy as well, yet, the 17th stayed at Camp Harry J. Jones for the remainder of the war.⁹⁴ The first few years of his army career was commanding troops at garrisons along the boarder states. He never saw combat during World War I.

During the interwar years, Truscott gained experience in his army career serving as a commander, a student and an instructor. In 1925, he attended the cavalry school for two years, and served as an instructor there for another four years.⁹⁵ He then commanded another cavalry troop, with 3d Cavalry, at Fort Myer, Virginia for three years.⁹⁶ In 1934, he reported to the Command and General Staff School for two years and served an additional four years as an instructor.⁹⁷ By 1940, he secured an appointment to the War College, but because of the United States' impending entrance into the war, the college was "suspended to make officers available for training."⁹⁸ He experienced different

⁹⁰ Ferguson, *Last Cavalryman*, 8; Heefner, *Dogface Soldier*, 13.

⁹¹ Ferguson, *Last Cavalryman*, 8.

⁹² Heefner, *Dogface Soldier*, 13.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 532.

⁹⁶ Heefner, *Dogface Soldier*, 27.

⁹⁷ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 532.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

stages in the army that expanded his “military education” that developed him into a “battle leader.”⁹⁹

ERWIN JOHANNES EUGEN ROMMEL

Figure 2.5: Erwin Johannes Eugen Rommel



Source: German Federal Archives

Erwin Rommel is a well renowned German commander during World War II. He made the Blitzkrieg effective, held a successful campaign against the British in North Africa and then fought gallantly against the Allied invasion of Normandy. In 1944, he was thought to be conspired in the 20 July plot to kill Hitler.¹⁰⁰ On 14 October 1944, he was forced to commit suicide for his part in the conspiracy.¹⁰¹

Rommel was born 15 November 1891 in Heidenheim, Württemberg, Germany. His father, Erwin Rommel Sr., was a schoolmaster; and his mother, Helene von Luz, was daughter of the local *Regierungspräsident* (District President). He was the second of four children; he had one older sister, and two younger brothers. His father, prior to becoming a schoolmaster, served as an artillery officer in the German Army. One of his brothers

⁹⁹ Ibid., 532.

¹⁰⁰ David Fraser, *Knight's Cross: A Life of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 534.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 542.

also served as a pilot during World War I. Despite these family service members, the Rommel family did not have a lineage of military tradition.¹⁰²

Rommel expressed an interest in aviation at a young age and studied aircraft in the hopes to become an engineer at the *Zeppelin Works* in Friedrichshafen. His father disapproved of his plans and suggested a career in the army.¹⁰³ He then looked to become an engineer in the army, but because there were no spots open, he settled for joining the 124th Württemberg Infantry Regiment as a cadet in July 1910. He entered the Königliche Kriegsschule (Royal Military School) in Danzig in March 1911, and performed well. By January 1912, he was a newly commissioned lieutenant in the German Army.¹⁰⁴

During World War I, Rommel fought valiantly and built a reputation for himself as a leader and strategist. He successfully made decisions under fire, was wounded three times in battle, and pinpointed his opponent's vulnerable spots.¹⁰⁵ He also practiced chivalry and made sure that his soldiers received sufficient supplies and care.¹⁰⁶ By the end of World War I, he was decorated with distinguished military medals such the Iron Cross, Second Class and the Iron Cross, Class I, earned for his leadership and valor.¹⁰⁷

In the interwar years, Rommel went through a few stints as an instructor of infantry in Dresden and in Potsdam. He also spent some time as commander of a few infantry regiments. In 1937, a book was published about his battlefield experiences in World War I, titled *Infanterie Greift An* (Infantry Attacks). In his introduction, he states:

The notes, made directly after combat, will show German youth capable of bearing arms, the unbounded spirit of self-sacrifice and courage with which the

¹⁰² Ibid., 8.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 8-12.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 29 & 37.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 39.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 43.

German soldier, especially the Infantryman, fought for Germany during the four-and-a-half-year war. The following examples are proof of the tremendous combat powers of the German infantry.¹⁰⁸

Infanterie Greift became a source and guide for German soldiers training prior to and during World War II.

Rommel met Hitler for the first time in 1934, and once Germany invaded Poland in 1939, *Generalmajor*¹⁰⁹ he commanded Hitler's escort. During the fighting in France, he triumphed at the Battle of Arras and the Siege of Lille. After these successes, Hitler granted the German general command of the 7th Panzer Division and ordered him to lead the newly formed *Deutsches Afrika Korps*, or Afrika Korps, to help assist the badly beaten Italian Tenth Army in Africa. His objective was to win back the territory the Italians lost to the British.

The great British military strategist and editor of the Rommel Papers, B.H. Liddell Hart, describes him in the introduction of the papers:

No other commander has provided such a graphic picture of his operations and method of command. No one else has so strikingly conveyed in writing dynamism of *Blitzkrieg* and the pace of *panzer* forces. The sense of fast movement and quick decision is electrifying communicated in many of the passages.¹¹⁰

This is an apt description of the battlefield commander. His time in Africa created the image with which he is always associated in histories, the *Wüstenfuchs*¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Erwin Rommel, *Infantry Attacks* (New York: Snowball Publishing, 2014).

¹⁰⁹ The German equivalent to United States Brigadier General.

¹¹⁰ B.H. Liddell Hart, trans. *The Rommel Papers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1953), xiii.

¹¹¹ Desert Fox.

BERNARD LAW MONTGOMERY

Figure 2.6: Bernard Law Montgomery



National Archives and Records Administration

Bernard L. Montgomery is one of most recognized British commanders of World War II. He led the British Eighth Army through the remainder of the North African Campaign, Sicily and Italy. During Operation OVERLORD, he commanded the 21st Army Group, a combination of the British Second Army and the United States First Army. Following the war, he served as Chief of the Imperial General Staff and Deputy Supreme Commander Europe of NATO. He retired from the army in 1958.

Montgomery was born 17 November 1887 in London, to Vicar Henry Montgomery and his wife, Maud. He was the fourth of nine children. In 1889, his father was appointed Bishop of Tasmania and moved the family to this location.¹¹² He received his education from “tutors imported from England.”¹¹³ When the family returned to

¹¹² Field Marshal Montgomery of Alamein, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal Montgomery* (South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword, 2014), 18.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 19-21.

England late in 1901, he attended St. Paul's School in London until he turned nineteen and decided he "wanted to be a soldier."¹¹⁴

Montgomery was the first in his family to serve in the British Army, much to his father's disapproval.¹¹⁵ In 1907, at the age of twenty, he entered the Royal Military College, in Sandhurst, and in the following year, was commissioned a second lieutenant of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.¹¹⁶ Not long after his commissioning, he was sent to Peshawar, in British India, to serve until 1913.¹¹⁷ When Great Britain entered World War I in 1914, he deployed to France and was wounded in battle. He received the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for his leadership and injuries.¹¹⁸ After spending time to recover, he returned to the Western Front of France in 1916 and by the close of World War I, he was serving as Chief of Staff (GSO 1) for the 47th London Division.¹¹⁹

During the interwar years, Montgomery realized that he served in the field, but had no "theoretical study" to back up his battlefield experiences.¹²⁰ He then secured an appointment to the Staff College, in Camberley, in January 1920 and graduated that December.¹²¹ Then, he was sent to fight in Ireland during the Irish Rebellion.¹²² With all of the proficiency he gained from the battlefield, he was selected to edit the Infantry

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 22.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 23-26.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 29.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 34.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 36.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 38.

¹²¹ Ibid., 38-39.

¹²² Ibid., 39.

Training manual in 1930.¹²³ By 1938, he was sent to Palestine to command army units against fighting in the Arab Rebellion until May 1939.¹²⁴

When the Germans invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, Montgomery was in command of the 3rd Infantry Division.¹²⁵ He became apart of the British Expeditionary Force, which was formed and sent to France, not long after the war began.¹²⁶ His most glorious moment came when he took command of the British Eighth Army and led them across the desert terrain of Africa. With the experience he gained prior to World War II, he was one of the stronger commanders for Great Britain.

LLOYD RALSTON FREDENDALL

Figure 2.7: Lloyd Ralston Fredendall



Source: U.S. Army Signal Corps archives

Lloyd R. Fredendall will always be affiliated with the failure at Kasserine Pass. His battlefield career was over in a matter of months. Prior to action in Tunisia, he was recommended to Marshall by Lieutenant General Lesley McNair to be the third commanding general for Operation TORCH. Following the invasion, he was sent to command II Corps against Rommel and his Afrika Korps. After the failure at the Battle

¹²³ Ibid., 41.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 46-47.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 48.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 49.

of Kasserine Pass, he was dismissed. Nevertheless, he was still recommended for lieutenant general by Eisenhower. He returned to the states to train troops in the Second Army in Memphis, Tennessee, where he served for the remainder of the Second World War.

Frendendall was born in Cheyenne, Wyoming on 28 December 1883 to Ira Livingston Fredendall, a career army officer, and his wife, Evelyn.¹²⁷ His father served during the Civil War and was stationed at Fort D. A. Russell in Cheyenne, Wyoming. During the Spanish-American War, Ira received a commission in the Quartermaster Corps. He was honorably discharged at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 1901.¹²⁸ During his time in the service, Ira was able to establish political relationships that aided his son in getting into West Point. Both his parents conditioned and readied their son to join the military.

The political connection that Ira had with Senator Joseph Warren secured Fredendall's entry into the United States Military Academy, class of 1905.¹²⁹ He "heeded his parents' wishes" to attend the academy at West Point.¹³⁰ He was only there for a semester, however, and was dismissed from the school for performing poorly in subjects such as trigonometry and analytic geometry. His behavior was also poor.¹³¹ His mother was not happy with this and requested that Warren appoint her son to the academy again the following year. He, once again unable to understand trigonometry and analytic geometry, dropped out of the academy. He enrolled at the Massachusetts Institute of

¹²⁷ Stephen R. Taaffe, *Marshall and His Generals: U.S. Army Commanders in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas), 62.

¹²⁸ "Ira Livingston Fredendall" Arlington National Cemetery Website accessed March 18, 2015, <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/ilfredendall.htm>.

¹²⁹ Stephen L. Ossad, "Command Failures," *Army Magazine*, March 2003, 45.

¹³⁰ Taaffe, *Marshall and His Generals*, 62.

¹³¹ Ossad, "Command Failures," 45.

Technology and took the officer's qualifying exam while attending the institute, scoring first of 70 applicants. He received his commission as an infantry officer on 13 February 1907.¹³²

During his first few years as a junior officer, Fredendall served in the Philippines and Hawaii.¹³³ Not much is known of his services at these stations. When the United States entered World War I, he was sent to France in August 1917 with the 28th Infantry Regiment, where he held assignments in the Army's overseas schools.¹³⁴ It was at these schools that he built a reputation as "an excellent teacher, trainer and administrator of troops."¹³⁵ This reputation helped develop his career experience in the interwar years.

Following the war, Fredendall continued to hold "staff and training duties."¹³⁶ In 1922, he was both a student and instructor at the Infantry School at Fort Benning; he became a "distinguished" graduate of the Command and General Staff School in 1923; and he attended the Army War College in 1925.¹³⁷ Following his stint in the schools, he served in Washington as Executive Officer, Office of the Chief of Infantry, from 1938-1939. The rapport he established in these positions during the interwar years helped him gain advances in his career, especially his relationships with Marshall and McNair.

Not much more can be explored about Fredendall as there are no personal papers or information on the general except for the essentials. There are only some letters and the papers of his aide, James R. Webb, available for review. All that is widely known is

¹³² Ibid., 46.

¹³³ Taaffe, *Marshall's Generals*, 62.

¹³⁴ Ossad, "Command Failures," 46.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 46.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

that he was a respectable teacher in the infantry field. He was a stubborn person and “was extremely critical of almost everyone, including subordinates, superiors, and allies.”¹³⁸

GEORGE SMITH PATTON, JR.

Figure 2.8: George Smith Patton, Jr.



Source: U.S. Army Signal Corps archives.

During World War II, George S. Patton, Jr. was an influential commander and widely known, especially to his soldiers. In North Africa, he and his men met the objectives of Operation TORCH and he was responsible for building a stronger II Corps. Following the defeat at Kasserine Pass, he and his troops successfully fought against the Germans in the Battle of El Guettar. During the invasion of Sicily, he once again personally led his troops against the Germans. He took command of the Third Army after the invasion of Normandy, fought in the Battle of the Bulge, and pushed through to Germany. He is known for his audacity and battle tactics, which made him one of the ultimate battlefield commanders of the war.

¹³⁸ Taaffe, *Marshall and His Generals*, 63.

Patton was born in San Gabriel, California on 11 November 1885, into an affluent family with a substantial military background. He had only one sibling, a sister, Nita. His Aunt Nannie, his mother's sister, lived with his family. The Pattons were based in Virginia and many Patton men before Georgie (as his family came to call him) served in the military. His grandfather organized a volunteer military called the Kanawha Rifles that served in the Confederate Army, his great uncle commanded the 21st Virginia Infantry, and his step-grandfather was also a Civil War veteran.¹³⁹

Patton was very close to his father because he was a Patton, "a descendant of the handsome and aristocratic Virginians who were members of the professions of law, the ministry and the military."¹⁴⁰ His father told him and his sister stories, such as the *Odyssey* and the *Illiad*. His father also told stories about their great military ancestors alongside stories about the great military figures in history, such as Napoleon Bonaparte and Robert E. Lee. All of these war heroes and stories inspired the young future general.

By the summer of 1902, Patton decided, with no surprise to his father, that he wanted to become a soldier in the U.S. Army. Unlike his ancestors before him who attended the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), he wanted to seek admission to the United States Military Academy at West Point because graduation from VMI "did not guarantee a commission in the Regular Army."¹⁴¹ Admission to West Point required a recommendation from a congressman. He wrote to Senator Thomas R. Bard, who advised him to take the entrance exam. Fearing failure, he did not take the exam and attended VMI.

¹³⁹ Martin Blumenson, *Patton: Man Behind the Legend, 1885-1945* (New York: Quill, 1985), 20-21.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁴¹ Carlo D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1995), 61.

Patton was only at VMI for one school year. He struggled in reading and writing, but excelled in military performance. By March 1904, he took the exam and was granted a recommendation by Bard to attend West Point. He telegraphed Patton's father: "I have today nominated your son as principal West Point."¹⁴² He gladly accepted. At West Point, he excelled militarily, but still struggled academically. He failed algebra and retaking the class prolonged his time at West Point. Despite this setback, he still managed to graduate forty-third in his class of 103 in June 1909. Finally, he was commissioned a cavalry officer in the U.S. Army.

Patton's first duty station was Fort Sheridan, Illinois under Captain Francis C. Marshall. The captain was a leader who he "tried hard to emulate."¹⁴³ It was here that he began to make a mark as a soldier and leader by gaining the respect of his men. He punished an enlisted man for leaving a horse untied in a stall. Patton's punishment for him was to go to the stall, tie the horse and return—all at a dead run. The culprit started slowly and he shouted, "Run, damn you, run." Instead of saying "damn it," he said "damn you," an unacceptable personal insult. Knowing this, he gathered his men after the incident and apologized to the enlisted man, thus gaining trust and respect of his men.¹⁴⁴

Later, Patton received head wounds from a horse riding accident. The incident happened when he was drilling his troops. He lost control of the horse and was thrown from it. He arose and remounted the horse, which bucked once again; but this time he stayed in the saddle. The horse reared its head, clipping his head and leaving a wound on his eyebrow. He started to bleed, but kept drilling his soldiers. The young officer

¹⁴² Blumenson, ed., *The Patton Papers, 1885-1940* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 92.

¹⁴³ Blumenson, *Man Behind the Legend*, 62.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

completed his tasks as a commander before worrying about his personal welfare. This demonstrated “coolness and courage” and his men respected him for it.¹⁴⁵

In 1912, Patton participated in the Olympic games in Stockholm, Sweden. He competed in the pentathlon, which consisted of fencing, freestyle swimming, show jumping, pistol shooting and cross country. All events were an appropriate test of a soldier.¹⁴⁶ He came in fifth place overall, but “impressed everyone with his enthusiasm and sportsmanship.”¹⁴⁷ It was here that the young officer met and competed against Adjutant M. Clèry, the best swordsman in Europe and an instructor at the Saumur Cavalry School. This was an opportunity he did not want to miss, so he took lessons from the paragon for two weeks. He improved on the “dueling sword and saber...[and] also learned Clèry’s method of instruction.”¹⁴⁸

When Patton returned to the states Major General Leonard Wood, Army Chief of Staff, asked him to dinner with the Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson. At dinner, he told stories of his experiences during the Olympic events and his two-week trial with Clèry. He was only a second lieutenant and already he was making connections that would advance his military career. This meeting opened many opportunities for him, including duty in the Office of the Chief of Staff. During his short time there, he wrote many papers, one appearing in the *Army and Navy Journal*.¹⁴⁹ The article argued that the straight sword should be used for the cavalry. After reading the article, the army was urged to manufacture a sword to his specifications and issue it to the troops. This sword came to be known as the Model 1913 Cavalry Saber, or the Patton Saber.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 64.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 71.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 74.

This accomplishment by Patton earned him a trip to France (at his own expense) to study under Clèry once again, to perfect his swordsmanship. For six weeks, Patton worked with the French swordsman to become “an expert...[and] also learned how to be a teacher.”¹⁵⁰ Following training, the newly dubbed “Master of the Sword,” reported to Fort Riley, to attend Mounted Service School.¹⁵¹ There, he attended as a student and as an instructor of the saber. He found teaching difficult, because most of his students outranked him. Despite the situation, in a mere two years, he made a name for himself by attending the 1912 Olympics and gaining recognition by the army’s top officers, as well as the Secretary of War and, more importantly, being accredited by the army as an expert swordsman.

After two years at Fort Riley, Patton was sent to Fort Bliss, Texas to fight against hostilities on the Mexican border near the end of 1915. In April 1914, American troops were sent to Vera Cruz to protect against the hostilities of Francisco “Pancho” Villa. The hostilities started because President Wilson recognized Venustiano Carranza “and gave his government de facto recognition.”¹⁵² This turned Villa against the United States and began his hostilities on the United States-Mexico border. At Fort Bliss, he met Pershing, who became one of the most influential figures in his life.

Patton was selected by Pershing to take part in the “Punitive Expedition” in Mexico that was ordered by Wilson in March 1916. He, luckily, became an aid to the general for the expedition, as the original aid was absent. He was ecstatic to finally be able to go to war. During the Punitive Expedition, he “proved himself indispensable.”¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ D’Este, *Genius*, 141.

¹⁵¹ Blumenson, *Man Behind the Legend*, 76.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 82.

In May 1916, Patton showed himself worthy during the “Punitive Expedition” when he led an assault to kill Villistas (Pancho Villas’ men) hiding in a village. During this encounter, he was the first to ever utilize vehicles in battle.¹⁵⁴ Six weeks after his arrival at Fort Bliss, he and his troops patrolled the villages near Saltillo and San Miguelito, seeking any Villistas. San Miguelito was home to a Villistas officer, Captain Julio Cárdenas. Patton, however, only found Cárdenas’ relatives during this patrol.

Two weeks after the patrol, Pershing sent Patton to buy corn for the headquarters. He observed the village of Rubio and its inhabitants acting suspicious. This directed him to Saltillo, six miles north of Rubio. He stopped outside of the town and devised a plan for his troops. Their target was a house inhabited by the culprits. The plan that he concocted went: the first car was to go full speed towards the house, while he and two soldiers ran across the northern part of the house. The other two cars stopped in front of the house and three soldiers from each car assembled at the southern end of the house. All of these troops converged on main entrance, while the remaining men stayed with the cars and provided covering fire.¹⁵⁵

Once Patton’s men were spotted, gunfire erupted. He brought down one Villista, with three rifle shots, trying to escape the attack. In the end, three Villistas were dead, one identified as Cárdenas. Pershing was pleased with his actions and this adventure made him “a national hero for several weeks.”¹⁵⁶ He finally got into a fight, something for which he had always longed as a soldier.

A couple of years after Patton’s victorious raid in Saltillo, the United States entered World War I. He once again proved himself a worthy soldier. This time, he

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 87.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 83-86.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 87.

helped establish the Tank Corps for the United States because “tanks resembled cavalry operations.”¹⁵⁷ This was his calling and established him as the commander he became during World War II.

Patton received orders to be an instructor of the new tank school and reported to Compiègne, France. He “would open and run the school, then organize and command a tank battalion.”¹⁵⁸ Before he opened the school, he familiarized himself with the tanks by driving and firing the tank’s weapons.¹⁵⁹ He opened his school in Langres. At the school, he enforced on his students such things as personal appearance, dress, and proper saluting. By April 1918, he successfully organized the 1st Light Tank Battalion and trained troops to accompany the new battalion.

In August 1918, Patton was summoned to First Army Headquarters to be briefed on an operation to lead his new tank battalion into battle. While commanding these tanks, he was wounded by a bullet that “entered his left thigh” and “came out near his rectum.”¹⁶⁰ Although he was hit, he still commanded his battalion through his orderly, Joe Angelo, who also cared for him after he was hit. Once they were no longer under fire, he insisted upon reaching division headquarters to report the action, before being taken to the hospital.¹⁶¹ His name was in the newspapers at home, as his tank battalion was a success.

By the time Patton was released from the hospital, the war came to an end. His experience in World War I took him from being “Master of the Sword” to “American

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 96.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 97.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 98.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 114.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

tank expert.”¹⁶² Not only did he establish himself as a tank commander, he also came to know “the best officers of the time,” including Pershing, George C. Marshall, and even Fox Conner. He came out of World War I a distinguished and well-known battlefield commander.¹⁶³

During the interwar years, Patton found educational opportunities to better himself as a leader. In 1923, he attended the Advanced or Field Officers Course at the Cavalry School at Fort Riley. After that, he attended the Command and General Staff College, where he was “an honor graduate of the class of 1924.”¹⁶⁴ In 1931, he attended the Army War College and performed excellent. After his education rounds, he traveled to Fort Myer and became the executive officer of a cavalry regiment.¹⁶⁵

Patton was commander of the 2nd Armored Division when the United States entered World War II. Early in 1942, he established the Desert Training Center (DTC) in order to prepare troops for battle in Africa and prepared his troops for the landings.¹⁶⁶ He commanded his tanks through Sicily, France, and Germany and became known for his battle tactics and pushing his men to their limit. He was a paragon field commander, highly respected, and a leader who the United States needed to win battles during World War II.

During the North African Campaign, these generals worked together to accomplish victory against the Axis forces. It is important to recognize their military background in order to understand the decisions they made that resulted in victories or failures in North Africa. There were some victories because the Chief of Staff, Marshall,

¹⁶² Ibid., 115.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 116.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 126.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 131.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 164-165.

assigned commanders who were competent to complete the job in Africa. His selection of Patton to command the Western Task Force brought triumph during Operation TORCH. There were failures with Eisenhower's leadership as he selected Fredendall (after expressing doubts) to move ahead to meet the Germans. Fredendall failed. The supreme commander redeemed himself by sending Patton to the front in Tunisia following Kasserine Pass. This decision helped the United States advance forward into Africa.

Chapter Three: Prelude to Torch: Rommel vs. the British

In 1911, the Italian Empire claimed Libya as one of its colonies from the Ottoman Empire during the Italo-Turkish War. When Il Duce, Benito Mussolini, declared war on France and Britain, 10 June 1940, the Italian Tenth Army began fighting against the British forces based in Egypt, and “attacked by land, sea and air.”¹⁶⁷ There were more Italian troops than British, but the British “had a better and more modern air force, faster and more up to date tanks, longer-range artillery, and...its striking columns were fully motorized.”¹⁶⁸ The British forces dominated North Africa and defeated the Italians by February 1941. The British conquest forced Mussolini to seek support from the Führer of Germany, Adolf Hitler. The Führer’s response was the creation of the *Deutsches Afrikakorps* (DAK) or Afrika Korps. To command this new korps, he selected Rommel.

Rommel and the Afrika Korps arrived in February 1941 to reinforce the defeated Italian Tenth Army. The Italians lost to the British XIII Corps after months of fighting in Western Egypt and Eastern Libya. The British initiated Operation Compass, an attack on Italian positions in Egypt, such as Nibeiwa, Maktilla and Sidi Barrani.¹⁶⁹ The British had more contemporary equipment to use against their enemy, while the Italians “lacked many kinds of up-to-date equipment,” easily making the British victorious.¹⁷⁰ Rommel’s Afrika Korps brought in more modern equipment to assist the Italians in their fight, marking the beginning of the German Operation *Sonnenblume* (Sunflower).

¹⁶⁷ Alan Moorehead, *The March to Tunis: The North African War 1940-1943* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 17.

¹⁶⁸ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 92.

¹⁶⁹ Major General I.S.O. Playfair et al., *The Mediterranean and Middle East Volume I: The Early Successes Against Italy (to May 1941)* (Uckfield, UK: Navy & Military Press, 2004), 261.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 257.

Sonnenblume was the Afrika Korps' plan to bring support to the Italians and counter the British Operation Compass. *Sonnenblume* began as soon as the Germans reached Africa. The objective was to reinforce the Italians; however, Rommel sought another opportunity to run a "reconnaissance and to take the command at the front" immediately.¹⁷¹ He decided to focus his troops "as far forward as possible" and to let the British know that there were now German reinforcements in Africa.¹⁷²

The British XIII Corps advance diminished once Rommel and the Afrika Korps arrived. For the following month, the British began to withdraw some of their forces from Africa. The reason for this was a result of the fighting in Greece.¹⁷³ With the large void, the British troops fell back to the port city of Tobruk. There, General Archibald Wavell,¹⁷⁴ utilized the remainder of the Australian 9th Infantry Division to hold "the enemy's advance at Tobruk [and] to give time for the assembly of reinforcements... for the defense of Egypt."¹⁷⁵ Once the Germans reached this position, the struggle at the Siege of Tobruk began.

Early in April, Rommel wanted to attack Tobruk "as early as possible."¹⁷⁶ For the next few months, the Afrika Korps attacked the British position there. The British made many attempts to secure their garrison, but failed. The unsuccessful effort of Operation Battleaxe led to the replacement of Wavell as Commander in Chief, of whom the Prime Minister Winston Churchill commented, he "never had full confidence in."¹⁷⁷ General Sir Claude Auchinleck replaced Wavell in July in the midst of the Tobruk siege. The

¹⁷¹ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 101.

¹⁷² Major General I.S.O. Playfair et al., *The Mediterranean and Middle East Volume II: The Germans come to the help their Ally (1941)* (Uckfield, UK: Navy & Military Press, 2004), 14.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁷⁴ British Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, July 1939 – July 1941.

¹⁷⁵ Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume II*, 34.

¹⁷⁶ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 121.

¹⁷⁷ Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume II*, 243.

conclusion of the fighting came to a head in November with the success of Operation Crusader.

During the Tobruk siege, the Australian 9th Infantry Division held the position and fought against the Germans in a “spirited defence.”¹⁷⁸ On 18 November, Operation Crusader commenced by sending the British Eighth Army to relieve the fighting force in Tobruk. The Germans fell back and retreated from the Cyrenaica region of Libya.¹⁷⁹ The Germans were low on supplies and Rommel noted in his memoirs that he hoped “to get the bulk of” his “force through to make a stand somewhere.”¹⁸⁰ They needed the supplies to move forward and make a new offensive against the British. The operation was successful because the British “were able to introduce fresh troops and the enemy was not.”¹⁸¹ The war in North Africa shaped to be one battle after another of who had the most supplies and soldiers.

When Crusader concluded on 30 December, both Rommel and General Sir Alan Cunningham, commander of the British Eighth Army, sought supplies for their troops. At this time, the Germans retreated westward to Agedabia.¹⁸² They held position there, but would be “incapable of withstanding a major attack.”¹⁸³ As the Germans retreated, Auchinleck wanted to pursue, but decided against it for the risk of stretching what resources the British Eighth Army still had.¹⁸⁴ In the beginning of January 1942, tanks,

¹⁷⁸ Major General I.S.O. Playfair, *The Mediterranean and Middle East Volume III: (September 1941 to September 1942) British Fortunes reach their Lowest Ebb* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1960), 22.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁸⁰ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 175.

¹⁸¹ Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume III*, 70.

¹⁸² Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 175.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹⁸⁴ Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume III*, 135-136.

armored cars and other supplies arrived in Tripoli for the Germans.¹⁸⁵ With the arrival of these reinforcements, Rommel decided to turn his troops around and make an advance.¹⁸⁶

At the end of January, the Afrika Korps moved eastward from Mersa el Brega and took Agedabia; the British retreated to the east towards Gazala “about thirty miles west of Tobruk.”¹⁸⁷ The Germans retook Cyrenaica.¹⁸⁸ After the Afrika Korps’ success, Rommel found that they were low on supplies once again:

Our demands for additional formations were refused on the grounds that with the huge demand for transport which the eastern front was making on Germany’s limited productive capability, the creation of further motorized units for Africa was out of the question.¹⁸⁹

Much of Germany’s supplies and attention were going towards the fight at the Eastern Front against the Russians.

For the following months, there was a lull in fighting between the Afrika Korps and British Eighth Army. Much of the stalemate during this time was because both sides had complications receiving supplies. Rommel wrote his wife: “Nothing to report. Supply difficulties, particularly getting the stuff up overland, are still a great headache.”¹⁹⁰

Reinforcements were coming in at Tripoli for the Germans, but the biggest challenge was getting supplies through the terrain of the desert. He wrote to his wife “one day the two forces will measure their strength. You’ll hear about it soon enough from the papers.”¹⁹¹

He was ready to make another move as soon as his reinforcements arrived.

The British, on the other hand, took advantage of the lull in fighting following Rommel’s recapture of Cyrenaica. The retreat point was a weak line, but Auchinleck

¹⁸⁵ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 180.

¹⁸⁶ Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume III*, 139.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁸⁸ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 182.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 188.

ordered for “it to be made as strong as possible to preserve Tobruk.”¹⁹² By May 1942, he was anticipating an attack from the Desert Fox to capture Tobruk. Auchinleck did not want to see the port go into Axis hands.¹⁹³

Auchinleck’s expectation was confirmed on 26 May, when the Battle of Gazala began. Rommel launched an offensive on the Gazala line. The beginning of the attack did not go well for the Afrika Korps.¹⁹⁴ The fighting turned in German’s favor when, in the middle of June, the Eighth Army Commander, General Neil Ritchie, “decided to withdraw from the Gazala position” back towards Tobruk.¹⁹⁵ The Germans pursued the British and attacked the same way he did at the siege, on the southeast position at Tobruk.¹⁹⁶ On 21 June, he seized the port city and wrote to his wife that “the battle has been won and the enemy is breaking up.”¹⁹⁷ Tobruk fell into Axis hands, and the British retreated back into Egypt to El Alamein.

The conclusive loss of Tobruk at the Battle of Gazala forced the British to retreat and earned a promotion for Rommel to field marshal for his efforts.¹⁹⁸ The British Eighth Army fell back and prepared for more fighting and receiving reinforcements. By the end of June, Auchinleck took over command of the British Eighth Army from Ritchie.¹⁹⁹ The Germans were on the move with “war materials of all kinds” that they seized from the British.²⁰⁰ The Afrika Korps moved forward again to the British position to deliver the

¹⁹² Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume III*, 197.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 218.

¹⁹⁴ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 201, 203.

¹⁹⁵ Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume III*, 223.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 265.

¹⁹⁷ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 224.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁹⁹ Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume III*, 285.

²⁰⁰ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 233.

first attack, just as they did at Gazala. On 1 July, they attacked at the El Alamein line, beginning the First Battle of El Alamein.

At the battle, Rommel kept the momentum going on his pursuit of the British. His assault at the El Alamein line “at first made good progress,” he noted in his papers.²⁰¹ For the month of July, the British and German forces engaged in battle at El Alamein. The Desert Fox decided early on to fight defensively, but the situation was not going in his favor.²⁰² The British Eighth Army “had also exhausted itself.”²⁰³ Both sides were not in a strong position to make an advance, therefore, the First Battle of El Alamein ended in “a stalemate on the ground.”²⁰⁴

The conclusion of the First Battle of El Alamein led to changes in the British command. This included the dismissal of Auchinleck. General Sir Harold Alexander took over as Commander in Chief, Middle East and Montgomery took over command of the British Eighth Army.²⁰⁵

When the change in command came in August 1942, Lieutenant General William Gott was originally selected to take over the Eighth Army command. On his flight to take command, however, he died when German fighters shot down his plane.²⁰⁶ The Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), then recommended Montgomery eligible for the job and on 15 August 1942, he took command of the British Eighth Army.²⁰⁷

By August, both the British and Germans were preparing their troops to attack. Rommel complained to the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* about not receiving enough

²⁰¹ Ibid., 245.

²⁰² Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume III*, 359; Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 249.

²⁰³ Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume III*, 359.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 359.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 367.

²⁰⁶ Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume III*, 368.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 369.

supplies to get through the day, including, reserve supplies.²⁰⁸ The British, on the other hand, were gathering strength.²⁰⁹ The Desert Fox felt he needed to attack before the British could take advantage of the convoys they were expecting.²¹⁰ On 30 August, the Germans attacked “the southern bastions of the British El Alamein front,” beginning the Battle of Alam el Halfa.²¹¹

The fighting ended a few days later on 5 September in an Allied victory. The British were now the dominant force in North Africa. Rommel wrote to his wife, “We had to break off the offensive for supply reasons.”²¹² The Germans were in desperate need of new supplies, which were slow on arriving in Africa because of the Allied campaign to intercept Axis shipping in the Mediterranean.²¹³ Montgomery felt pleased with the performance of army and the morale of his men, “all in all, the battle had achieved” what he wanted.²¹⁴ He wrote to a friend on meeting the Desert Fox in battle for the first time:

My first encounter with Rommel was one of great interest. Luckily I had time to tidy up the mess and to get my plans laid, so there was no difficulty in seeing him off. I feel that I have won the first game, when it was his service. Next time it will be my service, the score being one-love.²¹⁵

He felt optimistic about his position in Africa and how his troops measured against the Germans.

At the end of September, Rommel left Africa to meet with Mussolini and Hitler about the need of supplies and also to get some rest. At this point in the campaign his

²⁰⁸ *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW)*, Supreme Command of the Armed Forces for the German Third Reich during World War II; Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 266.

²⁰⁹ Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume III*, 377.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 381.

²¹¹ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 277.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 282.

²¹³ Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume III*, 323.

²¹⁴ Montgomery, *Memoirs*, 112.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

health was starting to decline and, by order of his doctor, he took some downtime.²¹⁶ At the meeting with his superiors, he intended to underline “that if we were to hold out in Egypt for any length of time, a quite extraordinary effort would have to be made in the field of supply.”²¹⁷ General Georg Stumme replaced the Desert Fox during his temporary leave. During his time away, the British attacked, beginning the Second Battle of El Alamein.

On 23 October, the British attacked the German positions. The battle continued into the first weeks of November and coincided with the TORCH landings. During an Allied attack on 24 October, Stumme died, ostensibly of a heart attack.²¹⁸ Rommel returned to Africa following his death. The supplies that the Germans needed badly did not arrive in time to aid against the new British assault. The Afrika Korps, at this point, now defended themselves and made no advance. The strength of the Germans “was so exhausted.”²¹⁹ On 11 November, the Second Battle of El Alamein ended in an Allied victory. The Germans retreated out of Egypt west towards Tunisia. The Desert Fox concluded, “we had lost the decisive battle of the African campaign.”²²⁰

The struggle between the British and Germans during the campaign was more a battle of supplies and troops; whomever had the most of any victory teetered in their favor. By the time the Americans arrived in Africa, Rommel’s troops were in a weak position and merely defending themselves.

²¹⁶ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 290.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 293.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 305.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 319.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 327.

Chapter Four: Torch

Operation TORCH was the beginning of the North African Campaign for the United States. The main objective was to send support to the British fighting the Germans near Egypt and open a new front. The operation included three task forces, each landing at different ports along the coast of North Africa. This chapter will concentrate on the task forces of Patton and Fredendall, to compare the two generals' performances during the operation. From the planning and training process to the initial landings and occupation.

Patton and Fredendall both graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point and were commendable leaders in their fields. Fredendall, an infantry officer, became a reputable instructor, training the soldiers of the 28th Infantry Regiment; while Patton, a cavalry officer, became a distinguished tank commander of the 1st Provisional Tank Brigade during World War I. While Fredendall trained infantrymen to send into battle, Patton led his tank brigade into combat in France.

In between the wars, both commanders expanded on their military education. Fredendall and Patton both attended and graduated from the Command and General Staff School in 1923. There, officers attended a year-long program that covered instruction “on tactics and operations using practical exercises and problem solving as the Instructional methodology.”²²¹ The training they received prepared “officers for command and staff duties at the division and corps levels.”²²² After completing the course, they were both eligible for command positions in the operation.

²²¹ Robert H. Berlin, “United States Army World War II Corps Commanders: A Composite Biography,” *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 53, No. 2, 155.

²²² *Ibid.*, 156.

Prime Minister Churchill first proposed the landings in North Africa at the ARCADIA conference in Washington D.C. at the end of December 1941. This was the first meeting between the United States and the United Kingdom to discuss military stratagems. Although the Army Chief of Staff, Marshall, suggested an invasion of Europe (known as ROUNDUP and SLEDGEHAMMER), President Franklin D. Roosevelt decided that the prime minister's proposal to land on Vichy French territory in Africa was a preferable invasion plan that "required fewer resources, could go more quickly, and would perhaps meet little French opposition."²²³ With the Americans leading the assault, there was a chance that the French "would not offer serious resistance" to the landings.²²⁴ Planning for the invasion began on 31 July 1942.

In June 1940, the Germans defeated the French and signed the Second Armistice at Compiègne that divided France into two entities, the Vichy French and the Free French. The Vichy French, led by Marshal of France Philippe Pétain, swore allegiance to the Axis powers, while the Free French, led by General Charles de Gaulle, continued to oppose them.²²⁵ The Germans left the Vichy French "in control of its Northwest African colonies under pledge to defend them against attack from whatever side."²²⁶

The operation was a combination of sea, land, and air power that landed troops at nine ports scattered along the coast. Major General Charles W. Ryder (also commander of the 34th Infantry Division) commanded the landings of the Eastern Task Force (ETF) at the ports around Algiers. Once the ETF reached the shore, command passed to British

²²³ Martin Blumenson, ed., *The Patton Papers, 1940-1945* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974), 79.

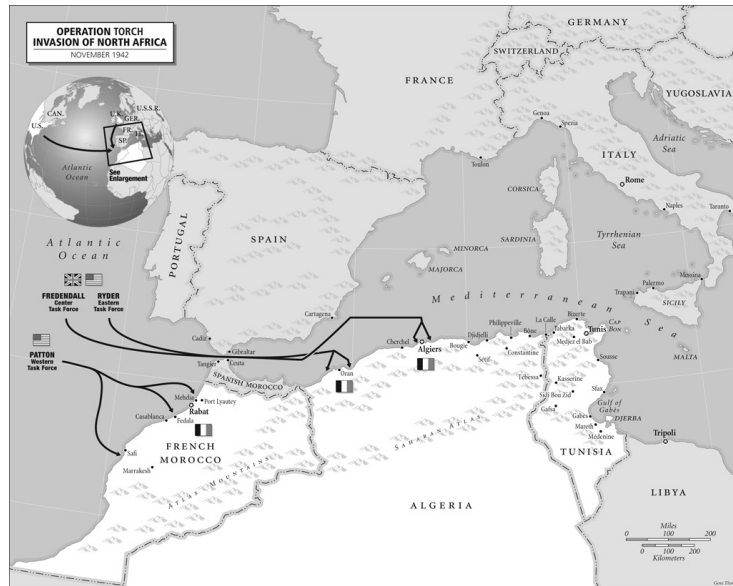
²²⁴ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 91.

²²⁵ John Gordon, IV, "Joint Power and Protection: Operation Torch," *Joint Force Quarterly*, Issue 4, unknown, 61.

²²⁶ George F. Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2005), 5.

Lieutenant General Kenneth Anderson. The task force consisted of both American and British troops two brigades of the British 78th Division and Ryder's 34th Infantry Division. The Royal Air Force and Royal Navy provided sea and air support to the task force.

Map 4.1: Operation Torch: Invasion of North Africa, November 1942



Source: Rick Atkinson. *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943* (New York: Holt Paperback, 2002), 24-25.

Patton commanded the Western Task Force (WTF) that landed at ports around Casablanca. This task force consisted solely of units of the United States Army. It included the 2nd Armored Division and the 3rd and 9th Infantry Divisions. Naval Task Force 34, commanded by the Navy's Rear Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, provided sea power. The Twelfth Air Force, commanded by Major General Jimmy Doolittle, provided air support. This task force was the only one to sail from the United States and was an amalgamation of American land, sea, and air power.

Fredendall commanded the Central Task Force (CTF) that landed at ports around Oran. The task force's ground support was entirely American and consisted of the 509th

Parachute Infantry Regiment, the 1st Armored, and the 1st Infantry Division (The Big Red One). The Royal Navy's Commodore Thomas H. Troubridge commanded the ships that provided sea power for the CTF.

The British wanted Marshall to be Supreme Commander of the operation, but President Roosevelt instead selected Eisenhower, designating Major General Mark Clark as deputy commander. Allied Forces Headquarters (AFHQ) was established at Gibraltar, where the supreme commander kept in contact with his subordinates by radio. He felt Fredendall was a poor choice for the operation. According to Bradley, Fredendall "had been Marshall's hand-picked choice for the Oran invasion...Ike dragged his feet and left Fredendall in place."²²⁷

Patton wrote plans and submitted them on 10 October 1942, just days after Fredendall was added to command the CTF and only a few weeks before the landings. He had already spent a significant amount of time preparing for this operation, while Fredendall was thrown into the operation much later. How did both commanders do during the battle against the Vichy French? Did either of them show initiative? How did both of these commanders handle the armistice and negotiations with the French following the conclusion of the landings? Did Patton go above and beyond as commander? This chapter will demonstrate Patton's audacity and the signs of Fredendall's noncompliant attitude.

²²⁷ Bradley, *General's Life*, 134.

Patton & The Western Task Force

Marshall selected Patton to be one of the commanding generals for the landings when the invasion was first proposed. He was tremendously involved with his task force's planning and training. The general went ashore as soon as he could to direct and lead his task force at Port Lyautey. He not only successfully took Casablanca, but also served as a suitable diplomat (no matter how much he disliked it) following the Vichy French surrender and during the Casablanca Conference. The operation was his first battle during World War II; and he and his task force were successful.

The War Department in Washington D.C. summoned Patton, on 30 July 1942, to take command of the WTF and begin preparations for the landings. The objective of the task force "was to secure the port at Casablanca and adjacent airfields and, in conjunction with the CTF at Oran, to establish and maintain communications between Casablanca and Oran."²²⁸ He had much to do in the few months before the landings.

Patton's subordinates followed him into battle to extinguish the targets of the WTF's Sub-Operations. Truscott landed north of Casablanca at Medhia to take Port Lyautey (Sub-Operation GOALPOST). Major General Jonathan W. Anderson landed fifteen miles north of Casablanca to take the port at Fedala (Sub-Operation BRUSHWOOD), where Patton went ashore. This is where the main attack was concentrated. Finally, Harmon led the invasion of Port Safi (Sub-Operation BLACKSTONE).²²⁹ Failure was not an option; Patton's letter to his subordinates read: "If you don't succeed, I don't want to see you alive."²³⁰

²²⁸ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 40.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

²³⁰ Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943* (New York: Holt Paperback), 36.

The Vichy French fortified shores were taken into consideration for the WTF landings. There was an estimated 55,000-60,000 French ground troops in Morocco. Along the Casablanca waterfront were four 15-inch guns, the *Jean Bart* (still in the process of being built) equipped with radar, and many submarines were present in the area. French aircraft was likely to be 13 reconnaissance, 74 fighters and 81 long-range bombers.²³¹ Patton was facing a strongly secured Casablanca. The plan was to land around these larger defenses in order to gain the upper hand and close in on Casablanca, otherwise a “frontal assault would have been extremely costly.”²³²

Patton’s outline for his task forces’ invaded the ports of Safi, Fedala, and Mehdia (near Port Lyautey). Troops landing at Fedala were to attack Casablanca and armored forces landing at Safi would provide support. The rest of the troops were to prevent the garrison at Marrakech from sending reinforcements to Casablanca. The seizure of the airport at Port Lyautey was the main concern of the Mehdia force. The airport needed to be taken “no later than noon on D-Day” so that aircraft could be operated in Africa.²³³ Once the airport was captured and occupied by American soldiers, the allies could bring in their aircraft and establish air power in Africa.²³⁴

Before the decision was made for the landings, Patton was already training his troops. Earlier in 1942, Lieutenant General McNair assigned Patton to establish a desert training area. He found a place adjacent to Riverside, California that “was the ideal place to condition and harden troops and to train them in the rigors of realistic campaigning.”²³⁵ This region became known as the Desert Training Center (DTC). As he trained his

²³¹ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 40.

²³² *Ibid.*, 40.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 46.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ Blumenson, *Patton Papers, 1940-1945*, 59.

soldiers, he kept McNair and Major General Jacob L. Devers (Patton's classmate at West Point) up to date with the training progress.

Patton's I Armored Corps (later designated the Western Task Force) followed him to the DTC to begin training. Upon their arrival, the soldiers saw the training area as "the place that God forgot."²³⁶ It was desolate, but there was plenty of room to perform military maneuvers. After troops first arrived at the DTC, Patton made it mandatory that all troops "be able to run a mile in ten minutes while wearing full field packs and carrying their rifles."²³⁷ He wanted his men to be acclimated so that they could effectively fight in the desert for an extended period of time.

Patton participated in every march, exercise, and activity held at the DTC. Once during maneuvers, a soldier got his tank stuck in the mud. He at first scolded him, but then proceeded "to help him pull it out."²³⁸ Another time, he impatiently witnessed troops unloading tanks at the railroad yard. The general jumped in to show his troops a more effective way by placing "the timbers... to allow tanks to roll down smoothly from the flatcar to the ground."²³⁹ The DTC was a success, as his superiors observed. Devers "was happy that Patton was putting his emphasis on essential matters like radio communications, accuracy in shooting, air support, and mobility."²⁴⁰

Before Patton left for the operation, he paid some visits. One was to the president, where he expressed that he would "leave the beaches either a conqueror or a corpse."²⁴¹ Another was to his old mentor, Pershing, at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center at

²³⁶ Ibid., 61.

²³⁷ Ibid., 62.

²³⁸ Ibid., 75.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 72.

²⁴¹ Ladislav Fargo, *Patton: Ordeal and Triumph* (New York: Astor-Honor, INC, 1964), 195.

Washington D.C. The retired general told him, “I am happy they are sending you to the front at once. I like generals so bold they are dangerous.”²⁴² Before he left, he asked Pershing for his blessing. He squeezed the general’s hand and replied: “Goodbye George, God bless and keep you and give you victory.”²⁴³

Patton departed from Norfolk, Virginia on 24 October at 0810 aboard the *Augusta*, the flagship of Admiral Hewitt. On the way to the Moroccan coast, while the task force zigzagged to avoid U-boat torpedoes, the general thought it was appropriate to read the *Qu’ran* and found it to be “a good book and interesting.”²⁴⁴ During the two-week voyage, a pamphlet was distributed to the soldiers that familiarized them with the unusual terrain and culture they were about to meet.

As the task forces moved towards their targeted landing zones, vague reports were received as to how the Vichy French would react to the allied landings: would they resist or welcome the allies? Patton issued a letter to his troops reminding them that, if “the French soldiers seek to surrender, you will accept it and treat them with the respect due a brave opponent and future ally. Remember, the French are not Nazis or Japs....”²⁴⁵

On the evening of 7 November, Task Force 34 approached the Moroccan coast. Patton went to bed dressed at 2230. At 0200, he woke up to witness “Fedhala lights and lights at Casa burning, also lights on shore. Sea dead calm, no swell—God is with us.”²⁴⁶ At 0530, the landings commenced, it was still nighttime as troops crowded into the landing crafts and made their way to the shore. Over the radio he heard the signals “batter

²⁴² Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 93.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 97.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

up” (enemy firing) and “play ball” (fighting) called in by Truscott and Harmon.²⁴⁷ The French were resisting; they did not hear the president’s message in French that guaranteed the French that the Americans wanted to “solely defeat and rout” their enemy and that the Americans did not want to cause them “any harm.”²⁴⁸

At 1320 on 8 November 1942, Patton arrived on the shore of Fedala. The radios went out because of the tremors of *Augusta’s* guns, so “Eisenhower was receiving garbled messages of” his maneuvers.²⁴⁹ Patton was finally in the war, up at the front, where he liked to be. He was determined to make this stint longer than the few days he spent in fighting during World War I. He wanted his presence in battle to be known. The shores of Fedala were in utter chaos.

While on the beaches of Fedala, Patton found the beach in disorder. Capsized landing craft and corpses from overturned boats floated in the water. He waded through the surf and helped to collect some of the dead. The general reported, “the beach was a mess and the officers were doing nothing.”²⁵⁰ He gave orders to get the situation on the shore straightened out: “Come back here! Yes, I mean *you!* *All* of you! Drop that stuff and come back here. Faster than that, goddamn it. On the double!”²⁵¹ He got waist deep in the water with his soldiers and personally directed them, “Lift and push. Now! *Push*, goddammit, *push!*...Don’t you realize that boat has other trips to make? How do you expect to fight a war without ammunition?”²⁵² He successfully reorganized the beach at Fedala. A few miles to the north was Casablanca, and he was ready to besiege it.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 105.

²⁴⁸ Franklin D. Roosevelt: “Radio Address to the French People on the North African Invasion.,” November 7, 1942. Online Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16190>.

²⁴⁹ Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 108.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ D’Este, *Genius*, 436.

²⁵² Ibid.

Eisenhower wired him, “The only tough nut left is in your hands. Crack it open quickly and ask for what you want.”²⁵³

Patton was ready to attack Casablanca at 0730. At 0200 on 11 November, his operations officer, Colonel Kent L. Lambert, woke him to inform that the French Resident General and the French Navy Admiral wanted to negotiate an armistice. The general replied “that they had nothing to talk about: if he did not receive their unconditional surrender by 0730 a naval and air bombardment would be followed by a full ground assault.”²⁵⁴ He alerted Hewitt that he was going to adhere to his plans and upon his signal, to cease fire if the French were to surrender. At 0640, the French surrendered. Patton jotted in his diary: “Again the hand of God, I said I would take Casa by D plus 3, and I did. A nice birthday present.”²⁵⁵

Once the fighting ceased, Patton requested the Frenchmen have a drink with him. “I then produced some champagne and suggested a toast to the happy termination of a fratricidal strife and to the resumption of the age-old friendship between France and America. They drank \$40.00 worth of champagne, but it was worth it.”²⁵⁶ The general then transitioned from a combat commander into a diplomat and enjoyed the formality of diplomacy, but still wanted to be elsewhere. He “resented the circumstances that compelled him to fulfill a non-combat role.”²⁵⁷

Patton became Resident General for the United States in Morocco. After the surrender of Casablanca, he met with Auguste Paul Noguès, the French Resident General

²⁵³ Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 109.

²⁵⁴ Terry Brighton, *Patton, Montgomery, Rommel: Masters of War* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2008), 165-166.

²⁵⁵ Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 110.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 111-112.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 117.

of Morocco. Both men met at Noguès's residency where the general was cordially received. Greeted by a battalion of Moroccan cavalry, he noted that the French Resident General's bodyguards were "Moroccans, dressed in white uniform with red leather equipment."²⁵⁸ The two generals "talked for about twenty minutes," until it was "time to proceed to the palace of the Sultan."²⁵⁹

Upon arrival at the palace, Patton was in awe of its structure. "The floor was covered with the thickest and most beautiful rugs I have ever seen." As he entered the room where the Sultan sat on a raised platform, he found that meeting the Sultan was a ritual, "When you first enter, you halt and bow from the hips. You advance halfway up the room and repeat the operation. You then advance to the edge of the platform and bow a third time."²⁶⁰ The general shook hands with the Sultan, and all three men sat down to talk. The Grand Vizier was present and acted as an interpreter. The Sultan spoke Arabic (although he could speak perfect French) to the Grand Vizier who translated it to French for both leaders. The general expressed satisfaction to the Sultan by saying that "his people and the French and ourselves were again reunited and assured him that our one desire was to unite with his people and the French in making common head against the enemy."²⁶¹ He reassured the Sultan that there would be peace within the realm and that, together, they could defeat the enemy.

At the ceremony for the Sultan's accession, both the Sultan and Noguès gave speeches. Patton started to feel that the United States' role at that moment was starting to

²⁵⁸ George S. Patton, Jr., *War As I Knew It* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1947) 11.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁶¹ Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 121.

be pushed to the side. When the French Resident General finished with his speech, the general spoke.

Your Majesty, as a representative of the great President of the United States, and as the commander of a huge military force in Morocco, I wish to present the compliments of the United States on this occasion...I wish to assure you that so long as Your Majesty's country, in co-operation with the French Government of Morocco, co-operates with us and facilitates our efforts, we are sure, with the help of God, to achieve certain victory against our common enemy, the Nazis.²⁶²

Patton was always concerned about the morale of his troops and he was always willing to honor those who fought in battle, more importantly, those who died in battle. He attended funeral and memorial ceremonies honoring the American and French who died at Casablanca. The general went to church at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. The Bishop of Morocco was present. Towards the front "were two biers: the Americans on the right, covered with an American flag...and the French on the left, with a French flag."²⁶³ Patton showed respect to these fallen soldiers who did what only he could dream of, die an honorable death in battle. He noticed the widows of the French troops at the church and stated in his memoirs, "They cried a good deal but did not glare at us."²⁶⁴ The ceremony continued at the cemetery where, in between two flagpoles (American on the right, French on the left again), both he and Noguès placed a wreath on a table between the flagpoles to commemorate the dead. This was a symbol of unity between the French and the United States.

In January, Patton was responsible for making sure the visiting diplomats, coming to Morocco for the Casablanca Conference, were comfortable. "As the local commander, he was responsible for the billeting and feeding of the visitors, their security, and their

²⁶² Patton, *War*, 16.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁶⁴ Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 128.

comfort.”²⁶⁵ Leaders such as President Roosevelt, advisor Harry Hopkins, and Prime Minister Churchill were among many who came to attend the conference. Eisenhower decided to hold Patton back in preparation for Operation HUSKY (the invasion of Sicily) and sent Fredendall east to command the II Corps. It was unsettling to the general as he wrote to his wife Beatrice: “Nothing seems to be happening and I just sit.”²⁶⁶

Fredendall & The Central Task Force

Fredendall was recommended to Marshall by McNair to command the Central Task Force (CTF) for the TORCH invasion. The task force he inherited, just a few weeks before the landings, was in their last phase of training. Despite his delayed addition to the operation, the CTF was still able to take Oran. Not much is known about his actions during the initial landings, as he did not go ashore until Oran surrendered and fighting eased. Clearly, he was not as directly involved in the invasion as Patton.

On 10 October 1942, Fredendall joined the planning group as the commander of the CTF, just six days before Patton submitted his plans for the Western Task Force landings. That date was also “a few days before the final stage of ship loadings and landing rehearsals.”²⁶⁷ Most of the training and planning for the operation was already underway and completed. The objective for the CTF was to establish communications with Casablanca and “seize airdromes and block approaches...to gain and hold air superiority.”²⁶⁸

The task force landed at ports around Oran and was comprised of all American ground troops and sea power provided by the Royal Navy. The task force was made up of

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 152.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 130.

²⁶⁷ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 47.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 48.

the 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Edson Raff; the 1st Infantry Division, commanded by Major General Terry de la Mesa Allen; and the 1st Armored Division, commanded by Major General Orlando Ward. These divisions were divided into sub task forces, designated GREEN and RED.

These sub task forces of the CTF invaded the beaches around Oran. Their total strength was 37,100 American and 3,600 British troops. X Beach was the westernmost landing that occurred, at Mersa bou Zedjar, where sub task force GREEN landed. The GREEN task force consisted of one-third of Combat Command B (CCB), 1st Armored Division commanded by Colonel Paul M. Robinett. The RED task force landed at Les Andalouses (where the other larger armored task force landed) and consisted of CCB led by Brigadier General Lunsford E. Oliver. Les Andalouses was Y Beach, while just outside of Oran between Golfe d'Arzew and St. Leu was Z Beach, which received the major concentration of the attacking force.

The landings at Oran Harbor was designated Operation RESERVIST. The assault group, commanded by Royal Navy Command, was made up of “two small shiploads of American troops and naval personnel.”²⁶⁹ The capture of Oran Harbor established an important supply base operated by Americans. Two days after the landings, aircraft from Gibraltar arrived with 160 short-range fighters, 13 observation-bombers, and 13 medium bombers.²⁷⁰ More aircraft came from Casablanca.

The planned objective for the CTF was “double envelopment by forces landing simultaneously at three major beaches and one minor beach.”²⁷¹ American and British troops comprised the task force; they were to attack inland to capture airfields, shore

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 49.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 50.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 48.

batteries, and block approaches. Air superiority was again important for Fredendall's task force. In order to achieve this, British airborne troops planned to drop before daylight outside of Oran; dive-bombers and fighters from aircraft carriers were to counteract any defending French aircraft. After serving the objective, land-based planes of the Twelfth Air Force could be rebased from Gibraltar.

The CTF expected to meet resistance from the forces at Oran. The strength of the Oran Division "was stationed partly in barracks near the port and the main approaches to the city from southwest, south, and east."²⁷² Included in their line of defense was an army airfield at La Sénia, a navy airfield at Tafaraoui, and a naval seaplane base at Arzew.²⁷³ Their defense also included coastal guns in Oran, Arzew, Djebel Santon, and Djebel Murdjadjo, with four 7.6 guns and antiaircraft artillery at Fort du Santon. Once the CTF occupied Oran, it "was to be an American operated supply base."²⁷⁴

When planning maneuvers for the landings, Clark was still in command of II Corps. The plans were compiled in London and began with materials originally prepared for Patton. Organization for this task force took place at Norfolk House with a group consisting of the AFHQ and commanders of the II Corps' divisions in September and early October.²⁷⁵ Colonel Arthur Nevins, Colonel Edwin B. Howard, and Doolittle were among the main planners, accompanied by Allen, Robinett, and Clark.

Training for the task force "simulated the actual conditions likely to be met ashore."²⁷⁶ Both the CTF and ETF trained in ship-to-shore landings in the United Kingdom. Much of the training for the CTF took place in parts of the United Kingdom.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 50.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 46.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 61.

Different designated Regimental Combat Teams (RCT) from the 34th Infantry and 1st Armored Division commenced landing exercises in Inverary, Inverchaolain Peninsula, and in Northern Ireland.²⁷⁷

Fredendall was selected to replace Clark as II Corps' commanding general during the final stages and preparations. He was a friend of McNair, who recommended him to Marshall. During his first few days in London, Eisenhower wrote about his observations of Fredendall to Marshall on 20 October 1942:

He was not one of those in whom I had instinctive confidence, but my opinion of him has becoming increasingly favorable ever since he came. In no instance, do I now have any key subordinate that I would like to trade off. If I did, I would get rid of him instantly because I am not going to trust any party of this expedition to a person who, in my opinion, is not up to the job.²⁷⁸

Eisenhower sensed Fredendall was disgruntled even before the TORCH operations began. At this time, senior officers were hard to come by and Eisenhower had to use him. Had it not been for Marshall sending Major General Joseph Stilwell to China to help keep them in the war against Japan, Stilwell would have been commander of the CTF. The supreme commander had no choice but to keep him on and declared that, despite the task force commander's irritated attitude, the operation would "have a chance to score a real success."²⁷⁹

Just a few short days after Eisenhower's letter to Marshall, the CTF and ETF's soldiers began to assemble at the Firth of Clyde. The convoy deployed in different parts because it consisted of entities from both the task forces, making the armada very large. One group, consisting of "46 cargo vessels with 18 escorting warships," departed the port

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 63.

²⁷⁸ Chandler, *Eisenhower: The War Years: I*, 628-629.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 629.

by 22 October.²⁸⁰ Another cluster, consisting of “39 vessels with 12 escorting warships, comprised the combat-loaded transports of the Eastern Assault Force and the Center Task Force.”²⁸¹ Fredendall boarded the HMS *Largs* with Commodore Troubridge. They departed the port on 22 October for the landings at Oran.

Late on the night of 7 November, the CTF convoy approached the Oran coast. Ashore, lights can be seen “still burning shortly before midnight.”²⁸² The assault on Oran Harbor began in the early morning hours of 8 November because “the French had been aroused by a general alarm which gave them time to man their defenses.”²⁸³ The task force Operation Officer (G-3) reported, “Don’t start a fight unless you have to.”²⁸⁴ While the direct invasion of Oran commenced, the remainder of the armada began its landings. The armored forces “were expected to thrust inland before daylight to insure the early capture of the airfields,” the 1st Infantry was to “gain and hold a division beachhead line” between Djebel Khar and Fleurus, while the 26th Infantry “was to capture Djebel Santon and Djebel Murdjadjo dominating the western approach to Oran.”²⁸⁵

The details of Fredendall’s involvement with his task forces’ movements during the landings were not recorded in intricate detail like Patton’s involvement with his task force. From what is widely known, the task force commander stayed aboard the *Largs* until fighting was over. This is a legitimate move for a commanding general, as most tend to stay behind the line, but still close enough to observe his troops’ progress. The general,

²⁸⁰ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 71.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 192.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 203.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 192.

as well as Allen, led from the front and liked to get as close to the front-line as they possibly could.

By 10 November, fighting started to conclude. Fredendall went ashore and rode into Oran in a tank, escorted by Colonel John K. Waters (Patton's son-in-law). By 1215, Admiral Rioult and General Robert Boissau, the Vichy French Commanders, acknowledged the armistice and "a cease-fire order was issued."²⁸⁶ Both sides negotiated that "French forces should be confined to quarters but retain their arms, while American troops were to occupy key positions near sea coast defenses."²⁸⁷ Boissau also retained his position as commander. Another agreement was that "all allied and French prisoners were to be released at once."²⁸⁸ Fredendall moved the CTF Headquarters from the *Largs* to the Grand Hotel in Oran; from there he managed the occupation. Mr. Leland L. Rounds was sent to aid the task force commander in political matters.²⁸⁹

The operation was over. Back home, Fredendall was declared a hero in the newspapers. The *Memphis Press-Scimitar* declared Fredendall "hero of the American landing at Oran in North Africa."²⁹⁰ Even Eisenhower retracted his statement and reported in a letter to Brigadier General Smith, Chief of Staff AFHQ, on the successes of the Oran landings and confesses that he is the "first to admit that Fredendall has done a fine job."²⁹¹ In another letter to Marshall, Eisenhower proclaimed "I bless the day you

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 224.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 225.

²⁹⁰ Unknown, "He's No. 2 in Command at Second Army," *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, March 31, 1943, 1.

²⁹¹ Alfred D. Chandler, Jr. et. al., editor, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, The War Years: II* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1970), 685-686.

urged Fredendall upon me and cheerfully acknowledge that my earlier doubts of him were completely unfounded.”²⁹²

Each task force had landed successfully on the Vichy French occupied shores of North Africa. After overcoming resistance coming ashore, the task forces were able to compress the Germans between the newly landed forces and Montgomery’s troops. Both task forces went ashore at their respected ports at Oran and Casablanca to occupy the area. The American forces met resistance and fought diligently. This led to the armistice and renewed alliance between the Vichy French and Allied Forces.

²⁹² Ibid., 690.

Chapter Five: The Battle of Kasserine Pass

The Battle of Kasserine Pass is one of the biggest combat blunders of World War II. The United States needed to protect an Allied supply point at Tébessa from Axis forces and build up troops to prepare an offensive. Instead of sending a veteran of combat, the inexperienced Fredendall commanded the Americans to defend the supply point and help the offensive in Tunisia. During his mission, he met Rommel and General Hans-Jürgen von Arnim in battle and the II Corps was quickly defeated. This forced the Americans to retreat, losing supplies and American lives. The loss coerced the Allies to reorganize their high command.

This chapter will examine the Allies' movements in Tunisia and look at the decisions made at the Casablanca Conference; the presence of Rommel and the Battle of Kasserine Pass will be assessed. Fredendall's leadership skills will also be evaluated, as well as Eisenhower's actions. Truscott and Harmon worked closely with the corps commander during the battle; their accounts will be thoroughly examined. Did von Arnim's attendance in Africa make a difference? What were the end results of the failure at Kasserine Pass? What were the lessons learned?

The Casablanca Conference

In January 1943, the Combined Chiefs²⁹³ met with President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill in a series of meetings called the Casablanca Conference. The topics discussed at the meetings covered plans for the invasion of Sicily and plans for Operation SATIN. After Anderson was unable to make an offense in Tunisia, to discuss the idea of an offensive to include French, American and British forces. The plan included sending

²⁹³ The Combined Chiefs combined the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and British Chiefs of Staff Committee.

the II Corps to the “south Tunisian front in preparation for an attack toward Sfax.”²⁹⁴ The operation involved all of the cooperation of American, French, and British troops.

During the TORCH landings, the chain of command was Eisenhower as supreme commander and Clark as deputy. Under them were the task force ground troop commanders, which included Patton and Fredendall. With plans to move east, the chain of command went through a change in order to buffer French and British relations. French General Henri Giraud did not want British troops “in command of French forces.”²⁹⁵ In response to this, the supreme commander, along with Marshall, fabricated a compromise that resulted in the reorganization of Allied troops in Africa. This resulted in the establishment of the U.S. Fifth Army, the British First Army, and the British 18th Army Group.

Eisenhower remained supreme commander and the British General Alexander became deputy.²⁹⁶ Truscott was added to Deputy Chief of Staff.²⁹⁷ The newly formed U.S. Fifth Army came under command of Clark. The supreme commander wrote to Marshall, stressing the importance of the formation:

Organization of the Fifth Army is most important from two standpoints of which only one is safety of communications. The other is early development of a thoroughly trained striking force under American command which may be needed at any time.²⁹⁸

The U.S. Army Chief of Staff entrusted the supreme commander with the decision and confirmed his decision, writing, “your judgment throughout has been sound and your

²⁹⁴ Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, 23.

²⁹⁵ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 350.

²⁹⁶ Major General I.S.O. Playfair, *The Mediterranean and Middle East Volume IV: The Destruction of the Axis Forces in Africa* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1960), 265.

²⁹⁷ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 125.

²⁹⁸ Chandler, *Eisenhower, The War Years: II*, 800.

action in each instance completely justified.”²⁹⁹ On 5 January 1943, the new army was activated. This formation became an alternative plan for fighting in Tunisia, but the idea was denied. Instead, the newly formed army was responsible for staying back to protect the areas of Morocco and Algiers and to “prepare a striking force for amphibious operations” to invade Sicily.³⁰⁰

The HUSKY Operation was a topic of discussion at the conference. The Combined Chiefs of Staff looked at Sicily “because it was a greater political and military prize.”³⁰¹ Further meetings at the conference began the planning for the new operation, set for August 1943. The Allies wanted to remove Italy from the war.³⁰² Eisenhower kept Patton behind to help in the planning process of the invasion, because he would command the U.S. Seventh Army along side Montgomery and his Eighth Army.

Eisenhower selected Fredendall to move east to command the II Corps and join General Kenneth Anderson and Juin’s troops to establish a front in eastern Tunisia. These entities along with the British Eighth Army, made up the 18th Army Group. This was another resolution reached at the Casablanca Conference.³⁰³

The decision to send more troops east came after Anderson attempted to make an advance in Tunisia late in 1942, Eisenhower then presented ideas for Operation SATIN. On 11 January 1943, the supreme commander met with Fredendall, Anderson, and Juin in Constantine to discuss mission plans. The objective for the operation was to “cut

²⁹⁹ Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens, editors, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, Volume 3: The Right Man for the Job, December 7, 1941-May 31 1943* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), 479.

³⁰⁰ General Mark W. Clark, *Calculated Risk: The War Memoirs of a Great American General* (New York: Enigma Books, 2007), 122.

³⁰¹ Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume IV*, 263.

³⁰² Truscott, *Command Missions*, 174.

³⁰³ Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume IV*, 282.

Rommel's line of communication with Tunis."³⁰⁴ This was the responsibility of II Corps. The three entities that made up the II Corps, including the U.S. 1st Armored Division, commanded by Ward; the U.S. 26th Combat Team, commanded by Colonel Alexander N. Stark; the British 1st Parachute Brigade, commanded by Brigadier Edwin Flavell; and the French Constantine Division, commanded by Major General Joseph Edouard Welvert.³⁰⁵

Fredendall drafted plans for the corps' involvement in the operation and Eisenhower approved.³⁰⁶ In a message to the Combined Chiefs of Staff and British Chiefs of Staff, the supreme commander explained the plan for the troops being sent to Tunisia. In the message, he explained the corps' objective to "first secure his southern flank by capturing and holding Gabés and then move north and seize Sfax."³⁰⁷ In the same letter, he also informed the Combine Chiefs that "Fredendall and Anderson are collaborating closely with Juin and will give him the assistance he requires."³⁰⁸ Did the U.S., British and French commanders work closely together? What relationship did these commanders have with one another? Did their relationship affect the outcome of the Battle of Kasserine Pass?

The Battle

Following the Second Battle of El Alamein, the Eighth Army pursued Rommel and his Afrika Korps "from Egypt, from Cyrenaica and across the boarder into Tripolitania" where he stopped near the Mareth Line.³⁰⁹ The Germans were not in a

³⁰⁴ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 125.

³⁰⁵ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 352.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 352.

³⁰⁷ Chandler, *Eisenhower, The War Years: II*, 901.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ Montgomery, *Memoirs*, 150.

position to make any new advances.³¹⁰ They had Montgomery to their rear, and the newly acquired Allied troops to the west. In the beginning of December, von Arnim arrived in Tunis with the Fifth Panzer Army to reinforce the German lines in Africa.³¹¹ There was “little co-ordination” between him and Rommel.³¹² By the end of December, he began attacking points around the Eastern Dorsal. His arrival marked the beginning of the end for the Axis in Africa. The Germans would, however, deliver one last crippling defeat to the Allies at the Battle of Kasserine Pass.

After the landings, Anderson moved eastward and wanted “to attack Bizerte and Tunis in about a week’s time” and capture Tunis.³¹³ The force he had was “little more than an infantry division and an armored brigade.”³¹⁴ To help support this scanty amount of troops, CCB of the U.S. 1st Armored Division and the 26th Infantry RCT of the 1st Infantry Division were sent to support Anderson’s forces.³¹⁵ By the end of December, he felt “he would have ready the largest force that could be maintained in the forward area,” but heavy rain prevented the plans.³¹⁶ Eisenhower postponed any further attempt to advance in Tunisia to “wait for better weather.”³¹⁷

In the meantime, Eisenhower began proposing ideas for “an operation farther to the south where the country was more arid and weather conditions would permit operations.”³¹⁸ In order to fulfill this attack, more troops needed to move into Tunisia. The supreme commander moved the II Corps from “Constantine to Oran on 4 January” to

³¹⁰ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 376.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 372.

³¹² *Ibid.*

³¹³ Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume IV*, 169; Truscott, *Command Missions*, 126.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹⁶ Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume IV*, 189.

³¹⁷ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 125.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 125.

join the British effort.³¹⁹ Fredendall established his headquarters, Speedy Valley, near the Tébessa and “was far up in a canyon accessible only by a difficult road constructed by the corps engineers.”³²⁰ The U.S. 1st Armored Division, commanded by Major General Orlando Ward, already split into different combat commands, joined the British First Army. Combat Command A (CCA) in Sbeitla, CCB moved to Bou Chebka and Combat Command C (CCC) in Gafsa.³²¹

On 23 January 1943, the Eighth Army seized control of Tripoli.³²² Rommel depended on the port of Tripoli to receive supplies; because of the lack of fuel and ammo, he had no choice but to “retire to the west” into Tunisia.³²³ The British drove the Germans “fifty miles west of Tripoli” into Mereth, where the Desert Fox planned his counterattack in western Tunisia.³²⁴ Montgomery’s troops held position in Tripoli and started receiving ships in the port on 3 February.³²⁵

Rommel’s health continued to deteriorate. He received word on 26 January that, once he reached the Mareth Line, he could leave Africa. Italian General Giovanni Messe, fighting at the Russian front, became his replacement. He wrote to his wife to tell her that his “present state of health” did not enable him to carry out his duties.³²⁶ Once the Italian general arrived, however, the Desert Fox felt he could not hand over the command until the “position was reasonably firm for some time ahead.”³²⁷ He did not want any loose ends when he turned over command. Further along, he decided, with the situation as it

³¹⁹ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 351.

³²⁰ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 146.

³²¹ Combat Command B at this point was already under Anderson’s command.

³²² Montgomery, *Memoirs*, 154, 156.

³²³ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 385.

³²⁴ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 397; Truscott, *Command Missions*, 150.

³²⁵ Montgomery, *Memoirs*, 156.

³²⁶ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 391.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 393.

was, that he would “stick it out to the limit.”³²⁸ He then began shaping plans to attack the American and British troops in eastern Tunisia.

In the interim, Fredendall and the II Corps were ready to launch the new operation the morning of 30 January.³²⁹ Von Arnim and the 21st Panzer Division had different plans and attacked ill-equipped French soldiers at Faïd Pass, located around the Eastern Dorsal.³³⁰ The corps commander sent the CCA, to counterattack at Faïd to help the French restore order without weakening defenses around Sbeitla.³³¹ The combat command was unable to ward off the Germans, however by the next day, they gained Faïd.³³² The pass served as “a starting point for a thrust on Sidi Bou Zid and Sbeitla.”³³³ From there, the situation along the Eastern Dorsal went awry.

After the capture of Faïd, Eisenhower had many concerns about Fredendall. First, the 1st Armored was divided into multiple smaller elements, because of this, the supreme commander worried that the corps commander “might be too rash and expend men and materiel in unproductive operations.”³³⁴ Second, there was a concern with the relationship between the U.S. commander and Anderson and directed Truscott to “stress the importance of complete cooperation with General Anderson,” as the British general was the commander of the Tunisian front.³³⁵

³²⁸ Ibid., 394.

³²⁹ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 133.

³³⁰ Martin Blumenson, *Kasserine Pass: Rommel's Bloody, Climatic Battle for Tunisia* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 105; Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 388.

³³¹ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 391; Truscott, *Command Missions*, 149.

³³² Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 392.

³³³ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 397.

³³⁴ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 150.

³³⁵ Ibid., 151.

The Allies anticipated another attack from the Germans by the beginning of February.³³⁶ CCA remained at Sidi Bou Zid, CCB held at Maktar and CCC held the area twenty miles north of CCA.³³⁷ With these different combat commands, another flaw of Fredendall's became apparent when he issued exact orders to Ward on how CCA "was to be disposed for defense at Sidi Bou Zid."³³⁸ Eventually, the corps commander bypassed the division and gave orders directly to the combat command.³³⁹

Eisenhower visited Fredendall's headquarters on 13 February and witnessed his command. Truscott warned the supreme commander that there were preparations of fortification still in progress at the time of their visit and he was less than pleased to see this.³⁴⁰ The corps commander employed the 19th Engineer Corps to build underground shelters, even though the area was already protected by mountains and hidden by trees.³⁴¹

In Tébessa, Eisenhower reviewed the disposition of the American, British, and French troops, then discussed a new plan with Fredendall and Anderson.³⁴² The new plans were drafted "to cope with possible enemy moves through that defile or through the gaps immediately north or south of it."³⁴³ After the headquarters meeting, the supreme commander visited the Tunisian front and spoke with Ward, who informed him on how "his division was dispersed."³⁴⁴ He then drove to meet with Brigadier General Raymond E. McQuillin, who explained the disposition of the CCA.³⁴⁵ The supreme commander

³³⁶ Ibid., 152.

³³⁷ Ibid., 154.

³³⁸ Ibid., 152.

³³⁹ Bradley, *General's Life*, 135.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 154.

³⁴¹ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 146.

³⁴² Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 405; Truscott, *Command Missions*, 154.

³⁴³ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 411.

³⁴⁴ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 154.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 154.

finished his tour of the front throughout the night and, late the next morning, Valentine's Day, he left.

While the Allies planned the counterattack at Sidi Bou Zid, the Germans were organizing their attack. Von Arnim and Rommel met with Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, of the German *Luftwaffe*, to discuss plans on 9 February. The German troops needed "to break up the American assembly areas in south-west Tunisia...[and] dispose of the American garrison in Gafsa."³⁴⁶ Referred to as the Gafsa Operation, the Desert Fox "would command all armored and mobile elements of the two panzer armies."³⁴⁷ On 14 February, the 21st Panzer Division attacked Sidi Bou Zid.³⁴⁸

The German's were stronger than the Americans anticipated, and McQuillin's counterattack failed.³⁴⁹ The remaining troops fell back towards Sbeitla, "leaving two infantry battalions surrounded upon the Djebels."³⁵⁰ Rommel described that the attack destroyed a great portion of the American force "and the remainder fled to the west."³⁵¹ The Germans "succeeded through outflanking operations supported by considerable number of tanks."³⁵² The American troops in the southern position in Tunisia needed support.

With the success of the German attack, Rommel "urged the Fifth Army...to push straight on during the night, keep the enemy on the run and take Sbeitla," however they did not pursue the Allies.³⁵³ In the meantime, Fredendall pleaded with Anderson to return CCB to his command to use for a counterattack to relieve the two infantry battalions

³⁴⁶ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 397.

³⁴⁷ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 406.

³⁴⁸ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 398.

³⁴⁹ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 156.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 398.

³⁵² Chandler, *Eisenhower, The War Years: II*, 953.

³⁵³ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 398.

surrounded by the Germans.³⁵⁴ The British commander was unwilling to release the combat command from the position at Maktar because he believed the attack at Sidi Bou Zid was a distraction from the real attack. Instead, he released a medium tank battalion to move to Sbeitla to join CCC to relieve the infantry battalions.³⁵⁵

Fighting between Sidi Bou Zid and Sbeitla continued through 15 February. The American advance was slow.³⁵⁶ At this point, Anderson realized that “his attempt to hold onto forward positions had become too ambitious, that ‘a very exposed southern flank’ existed in the light of current and impending operations, and that the whole Allied force was in danger of being outflanked and cut off from the south.”³⁵⁷ By 16 February, he finally decided to release CCB to Fredendall.³⁵⁸ The Americans continued to fall back to the Western Dorsal. The Germans did not take Rommel’s suggestion to pursue the retreating American troops and, because of that, the Allies were able to rally and create a defensive line at the dorsal.

The Allies decided to fall back to “positions insuring the security of Sbeitla, Kasserine, and Feriana, while retraining a mobile reserve capable of operating to the northeast, east, south, and southwest.”³⁵⁹ The night of 16 February, the Germans pursued the retreating Americans.³⁶⁰ The fight for Sbeitla began that night.

The Americans made a stand against the Germans and fought back “skillfully and bitterly.” They were able to organize a defense during the lull in fighting, which Rommel

³⁵⁴ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 156.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 157.

³⁵⁷ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 423.

³⁵⁸ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 157.

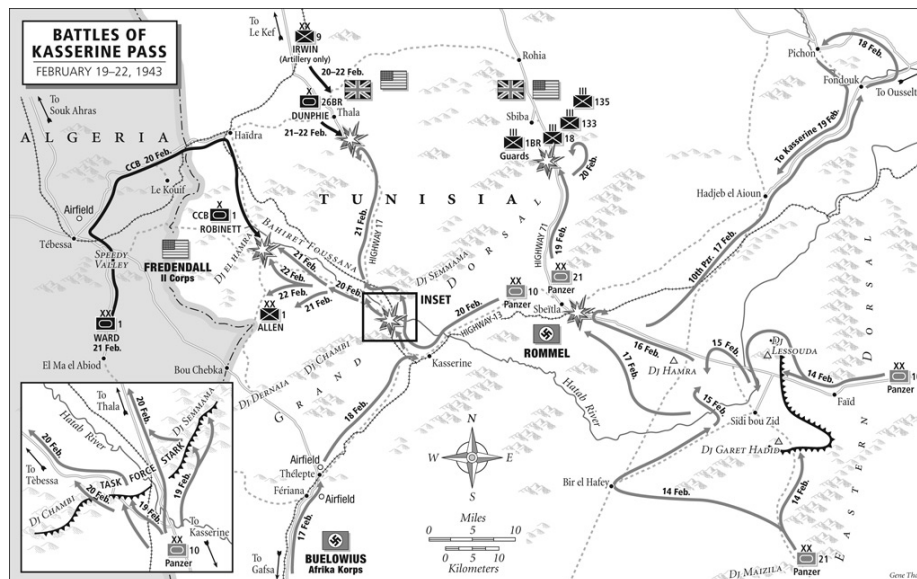
³⁵⁹ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 423.

³⁶⁰ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 398.

advised against. The Germans, however, were still able to take Sbeitla.³⁶¹ Fredendall complained to Truscott, after his troops withdrew, that Anderson not only told “you what to do, but how to do it.”³⁶² The relationship between both commanders was discouraging for the Allies’ progress in Tunisia.

On 19 February, the Americans began to prepare to hold Kasserine Pass. The 19th Engineer Corps, “a battalion of the 39th Infantry, a chemical mortar company, a company of medium tanks, and the 805th Tank Destroyer Battalion (less than one company)” held the pass.³⁶³ By 20 February, the Germans were able to get through the “poorly organized” American “small infantry forces placed too far out in front” of Kasserine Pass.³⁶⁴ The Americans retreated further towards Tébessa.

Map 5.1: Battle of Kasserine Pass: February 19-22, 1943.



Source : Rick Atkinson. *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943* (New York: Holt Paperback, 2002), 358.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Truscott, *Command Missions*, 162.

³⁶³ Ibid., 166.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 167.

The situation looked bad for the Allies. Eisenhower received news that Fredendall complained about Ward's command and requested his replacement.³⁶⁵ In addition, the supreme commander received reports that the corps commander "was losing the confidence of the men under his command by his tactical handling of the battle."³⁶⁶ To investigate this, the supreme commander sent Harmon to either take over command of II Corps or take over command for 1st Armored.³⁶⁷ He wanted to fix the situation in Tunisia, especially since he worried that "Rommel would continue his advance and strike at Tébessa."³⁶⁸

Harmon left for the II Corps headquarters on 22 February.³⁶⁹ He arrived in Tébessa to find the town "virtually deserted and at the headquarters, found "Fredendall sitting in a chair near a stove in this dugout working with his operations officer."³⁷⁰ He turned to him and the first thing he said was, "we have been waiting for you to arrive...shall we move the command post?"³⁷¹ Harmon replied to stay where they were. At that point, Fredendall handed him an order, that he "was to take battlefield command of the 1st Armored and the British Sixth Armoured Division."³⁷²

Fredendall explained the situation to Harmon, turned over command to him, and went to bed.³⁷³ The temporary commander then left the headquarters to visit 1st Armored at Haidra to present the orders from the II Corps commander to Ward. He knew the division commander prior to their meeting and felt embarrassed to tell him "that he had

³⁶⁵ Harmon, *Combat Commander*, 111.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Truscott, *Command Missions*, 169.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid., 115.

been put under” his command.³⁷⁴ After explaining the situation to the cooperative armored commander, he left for Thala to meet with the British Sixth Armoured.³⁷⁵

After his meeting with the British, Harmon returned to Fredendall’s headquarters to report that the front “seemed secure.”³⁷⁶ He revisited Ward’s position to plan a “counterattack to regain Kasserine Pass.”³⁷⁷ The proposal assigned Allied infantry “to seize two promontories overlooking the Pass while artillery pounded the Pass itself. Then after the infantry had won control of the heights, we would run forward with the tanks and drive the Germans through the Pass.”³⁷⁸ This was successful and the Germans began to withdraw. Harmon’s temporary command prevented a total loss for the Americans.

The Germans began to retreat through the night. Rommel “stood up well...to the exhausting days of battle” but he was unable “to hold the ground” the Germans gained.³⁷⁹ Harmon then returned to Fredendall’s headquarters to update the situation. Harmon witnessed a call that the corps commander took that was not pleasant. After the call, he was asked if he Ward would be relieved. He responded, “as far as I could see Ward was doing all right...if you will let General Ward command the division and you command the division through Ward, I think you’ll find he will give you good cooperation.”³⁸⁰ The corps commander paused and then responded, “If you’re not going to relieve Ward, you might as well go back home.”³⁸¹

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 115-116.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 116.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 117.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 118.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 408.

³⁸⁰ Harmon, *Combat Commander*, 119.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

Harmon returned to Algiers to report his observations.³⁸² He spoke “bluntly” about what he witnessed and explained to Eisenhower that Ward “was doing well, but had been badly handled by Fredendall...[and] had bypassed Ward and given orders directly to Combat Command B.”³⁸³ The supreme commander then asked if he would like to take over command of II Corps. He responded:

No, ethically I can't do that. I have reported to you that my superior is no good. It would look like I had sold him down the river to better my own assignment. My recommendation would be to bring Patton here from Morocco—let him take command of the II Corps. Let me go back to my Second Armored. That's the best way out of this mess.³⁸⁴

The Battle of Kasserine Pass ended, but there was still much to do in the aftermath. General Marshall grew concerned about the situation in Tunisia and chose Bradley to send to Eisenhower “for the detail in question.”³⁸⁵ By the time he arrived in Algiers on 24 February, the Germans had already retreated and there was a lull in fighting on the front. He met with Eisenhower to discuss the assignment to be “Ike's eyes and ears at the Tunisian front.”³⁸⁶ The supreme commander wanted to get his opinions on how the front looked and to make any suggestions he might have.³⁸⁷

Bradley went to Fredendall's headquarters, accompanied by Smith and his aides, in Djebel Kouif, fifteen minutes north of Tébessa.³⁸⁸ There, he observed the corps commander living in a comfortable home. II Corps' staff was bitterly anti-British and blamed Kasserine Pass on Anderson and the British. Smith came to the conclusion, “that

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Ibid., 120.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Bradley, *General's Life*, 131.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 133.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 135.

Fredendall was incompetent or crazy or both and went back to Algiers and recommended to Ike that he relieve him immediately.”³⁸⁹

For the next few days, Bradley visited commanders at the front. His first stop was his old friend from West Point, Ward. 1st Armored spent the entire campaign broken into smaller combat commands and never fought as an integrated unit.³⁹⁰ He reported, “Fredendall took personal command” of some of his units, circumventing the division commander and “when those units failed, Fredendall demanded Ike relieve” him.³⁹¹ The situation created a low morale among the units and they “lost all confidence” in the II Corps commander.³⁹²

Bradley next met with Ryder and the 34th Infantry. He testified to Bradley that he came “under severe criticism from Anderson and Fredendall.”³⁹³ The performance of his division wavered and he put the II Corps commander at fault. The infantry commander claimed that the corps commander “ordered him to take the wrong positions—low ground rather than high.”³⁹⁴ This order was a tactical fault and Bradley sided with Ryder on his claim.³⁹⁵

After Bradley reviewed the rest of corps, he went to Eddy’s headquarters. While he was there, he learned that Eisenhower had returned to II Corps headquarters. Fredendall “discourteously” failed to inform him of the supreme commander’s arrival and the infantry commander was the one to deliver the message that Eisenhower wanted

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid., 136.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

to see Bradley immediately.³⁹⁶ Once he reached the II Corps headquarters, the supreme commander pulled him to the side, “what do you think of the command here?” He responded, “pretty bad.” Assured Eisenhower replied, “Thanks, Brad...you’ve confirmed what I thought.”³⁹⁷

The British proclaimed the Americans lost their battle because of inexperience. Alexander felt that things were a “terrible mess when he went over to join Eisenhower” in January.³⁹⁸ Montgomery observed that Kasserine Pass “was the old story: lack of proper training allied to no experience of war, and linked with too high a standard of living.”³⁹⁹ Whatever he and other British commanders thought, the Americans did receive some training in England and “there never was anything wrong with the marksmanship of American gun crews or the speed with which they shifted from one target to another.”⁴⁰⁰ The problem for the Americans at Kasserine Pass was their command.

The problems with Fredendall in Tunisia started with his relationship with Ward and Anderson. His rapport with these commanders was an underlying flaw. Another strong weakness was the location of the headquarters, located sixty miles behind fighting lines, while employing the 19th Engineer Corps to dig a superfluous shelter for him and his staff. He bypassed command of CCB and blamed the 1st Armored commander when the combat command failed. All of these flaws caused a “lack of discipline and coordination” among his subordinates.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 137.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Montgomery, *Memoirs*, 157.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 158.

⁴⁰⁰ Edwin V. Westrate, *Forward Observer* (New York: American Book-Stafford Press, Inc., 1944), 55.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 115.

Chapter Six: Patton in Tunisia: The Battle of El Guettar

When Patton arrived at II Corps he improved their morale and led them in battle against the Germans. El Guettar was a proving point for the Americans, as their maneuvers helped aid the British with their operation to break through the Mareth Line. This success was accredited to the general's reform by instilling discipline and leadership to the previously misled troops. This chapter will demonstrate the improvements he made and also review his performance as commander. The heightening in confidence of the corps' ability to fight emphasizes that Eisenhower should have selected Patton to lead the men at Kasserine Pass.

After Kasserine Pass, the Allies, especially the Americans, rearranged their command. On 5 March 1943, Eisenhower returned to corps' headquarters to dismiss Fredendall. The supreme commander informed Marshall in a letter that the former corps commander had difficulty "handling personnel."⁴⁰² Following Fredendall's replacement, Alexander proclaimed that II Corps no longer be under the command of Anderson's First Army and moved them to his 18th Army Group.⁴⁰³ The newly promoted Lieutenant General Patton was responsible for the American sector.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰² Chandler, *Eisenhower, The War Years: II*, 1007.

⁴⁰³ Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 180.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Figure 6.1: Eisenhower promotes Patton to Lieutenant General



Source: U.S. Army Signal Corps archives

The Allies planned to have Patton serve just “long enough to kick II Corps in the butt” and “mount a threat” that would aid Montgomery and the Eighth Army’s operation to seize Mareth.⁴⁰⁵ The Americans needed to create a feint and add pressure to the Germans, as Alexander did not believe that the corps could withstand a counterattack to wedge between the Germans located in the north (von Arnim) and south (Afrika Korps).⁴⁰⁶ This limited role disappointed the general, and from then on he “tugged against the restraining leash” and sought opportunity.⁴⁰⁷

Immediately following Patton’s arrival at the headquarters, he began molding the corps “into a tough, highly disciplined, battlefieldworthy outfit.”⁴⁰⁸ The general observed that the “staff in general [was] poor. Discipline and dress poor.”⁴⁰⁹ He had ten days to instill new reforms.⁴¹⁰ To enforce the new reform, troops were fined if they were not within dress regulations, as every soldier needed to wear “helmets, leggings, and neckties

⁴⁰⁵ Bradley, *General’s Life*, 137; Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 187.

⁴⁰⁶ Bradley, *General’s Life*, 141.

⁴⁰⁷ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 544.

⁴⁰⁸ Bradley, *General’s Life*, 140.

⁴⁰⁹ Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 181.

⁴¹⁰ Bradley, *General’s Life*, 142.

at all times in the corps sector.”⁴¹¹ Officers were fined up to \$50 and enlisted men, up to \$25.⁴¹² The general demanded, “discipline consists of obeying orders. If men do not obey orders in small things, they are incapable of being led in battle. I *will* have discipline...”⁴¹³ Bradley believed his methods were over the top, yet, the method improved morale and created a stronger corps in a short amount of time.⁴¹⁴

As for the former corps commander, his reassignment was back in United States to serve as deputy commander of the U.S. Second Army in Memphis, Tennessee. He remained there for the remainder of the war. Upon his return to the United States, he received a hero’s welcome home, along with a promotion to lieutenant general.⁴¹⁵ One newspaper reported that “Army tank specialist,” Fredendall’s, “experience in North Africa” would benefit the Second Army.⁴¹⁶ Patton, however, concluded that he “just existed” and “did not command, and with few exceptions, his staff was worthless due to youth and lack of leadership...”⁴¹⁷ The general never saw “so little order or discipline.”⁴¹⁸

While Patton rehabilitated II Corps, Rommel planned an attack on the British Eighth Army at Medenine (just south of the Mareth Line). The attack “was bound to be an extremely difficult undertaking” for the Germans.⁴¹⁹ He felt that Montgomery might attack and wanted to strike first.⁴²⁰ On 6 March, the Desert Fox, along with three panzer divisions, attacked the British Eighth Army “before it had assembled in full force near the

⁴¹¹ Bradley, *Soldier’s Story*, 44.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 189.

⁴¹⁴ Bradley, *General’s Life*, 140.

⁴¹⁵ Harmon, *Combat Commander*, 120; Chandler, *Eisenhower, The War Years: II*, 685.

⁴¹⁶ Unknown, Newspaper, Memphis Press 31 March 1943. unknown, “He’s No. 2 in Command at Second Army,” *Memphis Press*, March 31, 1943.

⁴¹⁷ Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 188.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., 189.

⁴¹⁹ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 414.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

Mareth Position.”⁴²¹ They effortlessly warded off the attack and gained ground for the advance towards Mareth.⁴²² The defeat convinced the Desert Fox that keeping the Axis troops in Africa any longer would be “plain suicide.”⁴²³

Rommel left Africa after Medenine to take long overdue leave.⁴²⁴ Command was handed over to von Arnim. The Desert Fox departed for the Ukraine, where on 10 March, he met with Hitler at his Russian headquarters. He emphasized that the African “troops must be re-equipped in Italy to enable them to defend” the “southern European flank.”⁴²⁵ Hitler denied his request and told him “to take some sick leave” to get ready for a counter offensive on the Americans in Casablanca.⁴²⁶ He never returned to Africa, leaving von Arnim, Messe, along with three Italian infantry divisions, three German infantry divisions and two Panzer divisions, in Africa.⁴²⁷ The Allies would not find out about his absence until much later through Ultra, until then, the Allied troops thought they were up against him.⁴²⁸

Patton selected Bradley to serve as his deputy and “had to make do with Fredendall’s staff.”⁴²⁹ They never served together previously and were total opposites of one another, however, their service together was most effective.⁴³⁰ The corps’ two main components were the Big Red One and the 1st Armored. Two divisions were held back in reserves, the 9th Infantry and held between Kasserine and El-Ma-el-Abiod; and the 34th

⁴²¹ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 514.

⁴²² Montgomery, *Memoirs*, 159.

⁴²³ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 416.

⁴²⁴ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 519; Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 418.

⁴²⁵ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 419; Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 519.

⁴²⁶ Hart, *Rommel Papers*, 419.

⁴²⁷ Brigadier General Oscar W. Koch and Robert G. Hays, *G-2: Intelligence for Patton* (Atglen: Schiffer Military History, 1999), 34.

⁴²⁸ Bradley, *General’s Life*, 141.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁴³⁰ Carlo D’Este, *World War II in the Mediterranean, 1942-1945* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 1990), 26.

Infantry and held between Sbiba and Kasserine.⁴³¹ In addition, the 13th Field Artillery Brigade; and seven battalions of the 1st Tank Destroyer Group, were also distributed throughout the corps.⁴³²

In order for II Corps to create a feint against the Germans, Allen and the 1st Infantry had to take Gafsa and then move on to El Guettar to “recapture the area southeast of Kasserine, drive through the Maknassy Pass, and threaten to break out into the coastal plains on the other side.”⁴³³ While the 1st Armored needed to “drive eastward through Kasserine Pass to Station de Sened” and then take “the heights around Maknassy.”⁴³⁴ This assignment was minimal and disappointing to Patton, yet, he still treated the assignment as a large undertaking and felt it was an “honor to be given” to him.⁴³⁵

The night of 16-17 March, the 1st Infantry began the first of the corps’ maneuvers and embarked on Gafsa. Even though there were “mines and booby traps” they took the town with ease and moved on down the road towards El Guettar in pursuit of the town’s defenders.⁴³⁶ Patton went with Allen to observe 1st Infantry’s maneuvers, while Bradley accompanied Ward and the 1st Armored’s thrust “toward Station de Sened.”⁴³⁷ This area was also taken with ease and was the II Corps deputy’s first time on the battlefield.⁴³⁸

The 1st Armored was able to seize Station de Sened, but needed to move on to Maknassy.

⁴³¹ Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 187; George F. Howe, *The Battle History of the 1st Armored Division*, (Combat Forces Press: Washington, 1954), 205.

⁴³² Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 546.

⁴³³ D’Este, *World War II*, 29.

⁴³⁴ Bradley, *General’s Life*, 142.

⁴³⁵ Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 190.

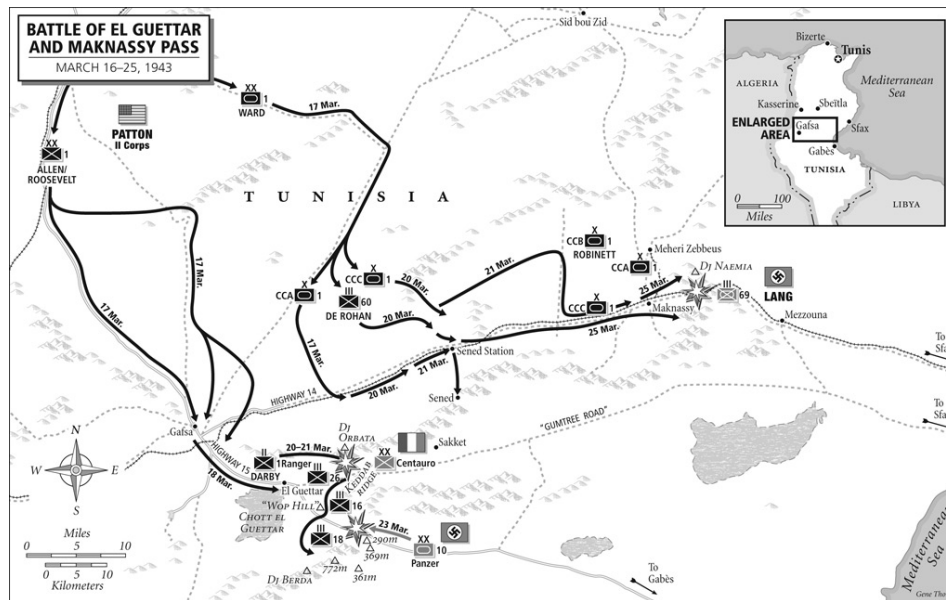
⁴³⁶ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 548; Bradley, *General’s Life*, 143; Howe, *1st Armored*, 207.

⁴³⁷ Bradley, *General’s Life*, 142.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

That is when the division's vehicles became "bogged down" in the mud.⁴³⁹ Patton felt that Ward did not do enough to keep 1st Armored moving to accomplish objectives. This caused the general to push the division commander more than the others.⁴⁴⁰

Map 6.1: Battle of El Guettar and Maknassy Pass: March 16-25, 1943.



Source: Rick Atkinson. *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943* (New York: Holt Paperback, 2002), 432.

On 20 March, the Eighth Army launched the main attack against the Mareth Line.⁴⁴¹ The assault did not go well and Montgomery proposed a plan to Alexander that "a thrust by the Americans to [the] east of Maknassy would be most helpful."⁴⁴² He denied the proposal, suggesting that this role was "too ambitious for II Corps."⁴⁴³ After the Eighth Army continued to struggle, Alexander reconsidered and on 22 March, passed orders to Patton for his men "to prepare for a possible effort to disrupt the enemy's line of communications and destroy his supply dumps southwest of Maharès."⁴⁴⁴

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 143.

⁴⁴⁰ Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 195.

⁴⁴¹ Bradley, *General's Life*, 143.

⁴⁴² Playfair, *Mediterranean and Middle East Volume IV*, 339.

⁴⁴³ Bradley, *General's Life*, 143.

⁴⁴⁴ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 552.

Intelligence observed the German *10th Panzer Division* moving southward.⁴⁴⁵ Colonel Benjamin A. Dickson, confirmed, “an attack...was imminent” at either “Maknassy or El Guettar.”⁴⁴⁶ The 1st Infantry met the *10th Panzer Division* on 23 March, which escalated into the Battle of El Guettar. The Big Red One fought off the counterattack and gained the Americans’ first victory against the Germans. This was a great success for Patton and the defeat demonstrated that the Americans could handle maneuvers. Their efforts deterred these German troops away from Montgomery’s troops and alleviated the fighting for the British to move forward with their mission.

Patton praised the 1st Infantry’s success at El Guettar, however, his patience with 1st Armored began to deteriorate. He personally called Ward on the phone and “told him to personally lead the attack on the hills and take them.”⁴⁴⁷ Although upset and appalled by his command style, the general felt guilty giving the order, feeling that he may “have ordered him to his death.”⁴⁴⁸ The armored division carried out his wishes and was able to briefly gain the hills. After losing the heights, the attack was called off. Despite the inability to hold the hills, he still awarded the division commander with the Silver Star for his efforts and injuries during the attempt.⁴⁴⁹ The division was then ordered to hold at Maknassy and brought up a more aggressive commander, Colonel Clarence C. Benson, to take on a task force that became known as Benson Force.⁴⁵⁰ The colonel served under Patton during World War I and had an aggressiveness that the general admired. This task force assisted in the breakthrough down the Gabes road.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁵ Koch, *G-2*, 34.

⁴⁴⁶ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 553.

⁴⁴⁷ Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 197.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁴⁵⁰ Bradley, *General’s Life*, 147.

⁴⁵¹ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 570; Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 200.

Alexander expressed his disapproval of Ward's command to Eisenhower and asked that he be relieved.⁴⁵² Patton selected Harmon to replace Ward as 1st Armored commander. The general sent Bradley, on 5 April, to relieve the division commander and did not hide behind the fact that Alexander gave the order. He felt that he should have relieved Ward sooner, but he did not like making changes to command during a mission.⁴⁵³

On 7 April, Benson Force connected with Montgomery's Eighth Army and the Axis forces began their retreat.⁴⁵⁴ On 15 April, at midnight, Bradley inherited a reformed and strong II Corps. The change in command was kept a secret, as Patton's posed a treat to the Axis.⁴⁵⁵ The general returned to Morocco to continue planning the invasion of Sicily, where he commanded the U.S. Seventh Army.

II Corps drove to Bizerte and on 13 May, the Axis forces surrendered to the Allies, concluding the North African Campaign.⁴⁵⁶ Without Patton's leadership, the corps would not have received the reformation they needed in order to be successful in during the campaign. The general pushed his men harder to reach more objectives and went to the front to observe battles. He examined his command and removed leaders who did not meet his expectations. II Corps was pushed to get results: victory in battle against the Germans, while aiding the British in their maneuvers. This is proof that much of the American success in North Africa is credited to his reform and command.

⁴⁵² Bradley, *General's Life*, 148.

⁴⁵³ Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 211.

⁴⁵⁴ Bradley, *General's Life*, 149.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁴⁵⁶ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 665.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Patton returned to his WTF in Morocco to continue planning for the Allied invasion of Sicily. Patton's task force was designated the U.S. Seventh Army for the invasion. Later, he commanded the U.S. Third Army in Europe through Normandy and into Belgium leading troops through the grueling Battle of the Bulge and to push into Germany for an Allied victory in May 1945. The general's career during World War II only secured his reputation as a paragon in the art of war.

The conclusion of this study will provide an alternate history of Kasserine Pass, had Patton commanded American soldiers, by reviewing key events that led to the failure at Kasserine Pass: first, Eisenhower's choice to send the general to Tunisia; second, planning to avoid being outnumbered by the Germans; and lastly, the relationship with the British and French. Piecing these examples together will prove that the general would have won the Battle at Kasserine Pass.

Patton's (Hypothetical) Defense of Kasserine Pass

Following the TORCH landings Anderson and the British First Army attempted to make an advance to capture Tunis, but to no avail. Eisenhower then began to devise a plan to send more Allied troops east to help aid Montgomery and the Eighth Army's efforts to push the Axis forces out of Africa. The supreme commander selected Patton to command the American troops based on his past experience in tank warfare. During World War I, the general trained and commanded the Tank Corps of the American Expeditionary Force in Bourq, France. Further, he trained with Adjutant M. Cléry, the best swordsman in Europe, and he could speak French fluently. Eisenhower was a long-time friend of him and knew what he was capable of accomplishing. The American

soldiers of the WTF and CTF had some battle experience with the TORCH landings, but they fought against the weak Vichy French. Patton had the means and experience to prepare these inexperienced American soldiers and French troops to fight against the Germans..

On 11 January 1943, Eisenhower called a meeting with Anderson, Juin and Patton at Constantine to discuss their mission. During the initiative planning, the general took advantage of this opportunity to suggest he command an army size unit of American soldiers, coupled with French troops, to the supreme commander. Prior to the amphibious landings, Patton expressed his disappointment that Clark was labeled deputy of the mission in his diary.⁴⁵⁷ Now, that the former deputy was in command of the newly formed U.S. Fifth Army, which would be held in reserve in Morocco to prepare for Sicily, Patton sought the opportunity to take the troops of the WTF and CTF with him into Tunisia.

The Allies needed to protect the supply point at Tébessa and create pressure on the Germans to remove them from Tunisia. The key to this was the protection of Kasserine Pass. Anderson's First Army remained north of the pass to cover Patton's left flank and occupy Thala and Sbiba to create pressure. The American command covered ground at the mouth of the pass with a combination of armored and infantry, as well as the high ground flanking the pass. The general planned to send an infantry division coupled with a handful of tanks to Thélepte to protect the airfield and watch the right flank. About a mile to the rear from the mouth of the pass, the general placed more tanks and infantrymen to create a barrier. He took two more infantry divisions to put into

⁴⁵⁷ Blumenson, *Patton Papers: 1940-1945*, 83.

reserve. The French troops were incorporated into his defensive lines, as their equipment would not allow them to stand-alone against the Germans. During the initial landings, the general demonstrated this same tactic by organizing a majority of his troops at Casablanca while dispersing two smaller groups on either flank to support the main landing.

Patton submitted his plan and, after reviewing with Anderson and Juin, Eisenhower approved. In his message to the Combined Chiefs of Staff and British Chiefs of Staff, the supreme commander explained the plan for the Allied troops in Tunisia and reassured them that American, French and British commands were collaborating closely to carry out the new mission. The general was the perfect buffer between the French and British relations in this mission. With the plans set, the Allied commanders positioned their troops.

On 23 January 1943, the Eighth Army gained control of Tripoli. Rommel depended on this port to receive supplies; because of the lack of fuel and ammo, he was forced into western Tunisia. The Eighth Army pushed the Germans towards Tripoli. The Desert Fox and his Afrika Korps moved into Mareth and began to compile plans to attack the Allied forces accumulating in western Tunisia.

After fighting in Africa for over two years, Rommel's health began to deteriorate. Upon his arrival at the Mareth Line, he had the opportunity to leave Africa. Messe, fighting at the Russian front, became his replacement. The Desert Fox's poor health affected his ability to carry out his duties. He felt he could not hand over his command to the Italian commander until he felt his men were in good standing before their new

commander took over. As any good leader, he wanted to make sure his troops were organized once he was gone.

On 30 January, Patton's troops began to dig in to their positions around Kasserine. He had the 1st Armored, the 1st Infantry, the 2nd Armored, and Truscott's 60th and 66th Regiments, along with the 9th Infantry and the 34th Infantry in reserve. The general established his headquarters ten miles northwest from the mouth of Kasserine Pass so that he could closely monitor the impending battle. The Big Red One took the right flank at Thélepte, near the air station, while 2nd Armored positioned troops at the mouth and high-ground flanks of the pass. One mile to the rear, Truscott readied his 60th Infantry Regiment and 66th Armored Regiment. Ward's 1st armored, that was previously split into different combat commands, was reunited and coupled with Harmon's position to reinforce the entrance to the pass. Additionally, a handful of Ward's tanks were sent to Thélepte to support the 1st Infantry. The front for the upcoming battle was set.

On 17 February, a small portion of the Afrika Korps attacked near the airfield, but Allen was able to ward off the attack. Rommel attacked at the mouth of the pass on 19 February 1943. Harmon and his armored unit were prepared, but Patton, having sped to the location, directed Truscott's troops to rush in with more support to repel the attack. The Germans could not get through the pass, as the Americans not only dug into the mouth of the pass, but also held the high ground and had the upper hand against any advances by the Germans. The Americans only fell back three miles into the pass before the Germans realized their supplies would not allow them to proceed any further. The Desert Fox then gave the order to retreat.

The Germans retreated to Sidi Bou Zid and the Allied armor, pressed by an aggressive Patton, pursued the retreating Germans. In the southeast, Montgomery received word of the withdrawal and moved his army north to Gabes in order to apply more pressure. They retreated further to Faïd and then, finally, to Sfax, where they began to surrender the North African territory.

* * *

As this alternate history suggests, Patton would have brought more aptitude to the mission when Allied troops were first moving into Tunisia. His close relationship with the French would have created a buffer between the British and French on the battlefield. The general's domineering charisma would have been felt, especially since he would have established a headquarters closer to the front. Rommel's deteriorating health and German supply shortage also gave the general an upper hand. He also would have taken the initiative to pursue the Germans until their initial surrender after being surrounded by the American and British troops at Sfax. There would still have been American lives lost and a battle over territory, but there extensive losses of men and equipment, and expenditure of irreplaceable supplies to the Germans, that occurred in the original Battle of Kasserine Pass, would have been avoided. Patton's Kasserine Pass would have been an asset to the Allied advance during the war in the Mediterranean, possibly ending the War in North Arica shortly thereafter.

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