

A

HEADQUARTERS  
EUROPEAN COMMAND  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF HISTORIAN

MS No. D 082

MANUSCRIPT DATA SHEET

- I. Author: Werner Reissmann, Major a.D. [Major, retired]
- II. Title of the report: Rommel's system of fortification in North-Africa (also contribution to study "Reasons for Rommel's success in North Africa) 1941/1942.
- III. Ordered: 4 May 1947.
- IV. Sources:
- A. Advisors: none
- B. Documentation (Amer., German, Documents, Diaries, others, etc.)  
(Own experiences as company commander and battalion commander of the 104th Rifle Regiment) Personal diary for the year 1941/1942.
- V. Abbreviations:  
(See next page).

HISTORICAL DIVISION SEAL.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF MILITARY HISTORY  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

ROMMEL'S SYSTEM OF FORTIFICATIONS IN NORTH AFRICA

(also a contribution to the study: "Reasons for  
Rommel's Success in North Africa")

1941/1942

(Manuscript No. 00 24)

by

W e r n e r R e i s s m a n n,

Major, Retired.

Written at: Mittenwald (Germany)

Completed on: 13 May 1947

Ordered on: 4 May 1947

Sources:

a) Personal Experiences gained as company commander  
and battalion commander of the 104th  
Rifle Regiment.

b) Documentation: Personal diary for the year 1941/1942

Sketches: 6 sketches in various scales

Abbfeviations: See next page.

HISTORICAL DIVISION SEAL

Abbreviations:

|                  |   |                               |                                      |
|------------------|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Batl.            | - | Bataillon                     | Battalion                            |
| Fallsch.Jäg. Br. | - | Fallschirm-Jäger-Brigade      | Parachute brigade                    |
| Hptm.            | - | Hauptmann -                   | Captain                              |
| Kdr.             | - | Kommandeur                    | Commanding officer                   |
| Komp.            | - | Kompanie                      | Company                              |
| l.I.G.           | - | leichtes Infanterie Geschuetz | Light infantry gun                   |
| l.M.G.           | - | leichtes Maschinen Gewehr     | Light machine gun                    |
| Pak              | - | Panzer-Abwehr-Kanone          | Antitank gun                         |
| Pz.B.            | - | Panzer-Büchse                 | Antitank rifle                       |
| Pz.Div.          | - | Panzer-Division               | Panzer Division                      |
| P.K.W.           | - | Personen-Kraftwagen           | Personnel carrier (passenger<br>car) |
| s.Gr.W.          | - | schwerer Granat-Werfer        | Heavy mortar                         |
| s.M.G.           | - | schweres Maschinen-Gewehr     | Heavy machine gun                    |
| S.R.             | - | Schützen-Regiment             | Rifle regiment                       |
| verst.           | - | verstärkt                     | reinforced                           |
| Zg.              | - | Zug                           | Platoon                              |

-----

HISTORICAL DIVISION SEAL

## 1.) Rommel's System of Field Fortifications in North Africa.

- Sketch 1: Schematic representation of the permanent fortifications at Tobruk. They were used as model for the new type of field fortifications.
- Sketch 2: Schematic representation of a squad strong point in a field fortification (for the smallest combat unit), known as "Rommel triangle" [Rommeldreieck].
- Sketch 3: Schematic representation of a strong point for a reinforced company.  
Example given: The strong point "Abu Talaqu" between Sidi Omar and Halfaya Pass on the Sollum front at the end of June 1941.  
Following instructions given personally by Rommel, the author reconnoitered this strong point and staked out the terrain for its construction.

Proposed strength: 9 light machine guns )  
 2 heavy machine guns )  
 2 heavy mortars ) 1 company  
 3 Pak )  
 1 Panzer battalion )  
 reinforced by 1 Pak platoon  
 and 1 light infantry gun platoon  
 4 Pak  
 4 light machine guns  
 2 light infantry guns.

- Sketch 4: Schematic representation of a battalion strong point.
- Sketch 5: Schematic representation on showing organization of strong points based on "Mine boxes" [see sketch] as they had been laid out on the northern flank of the El Alamein position (from the coast to the northern Ruweisat Ridge) between about August and October 1942, pursuant to instructions from Rommel.

1.) Rommel's System of Field Fortifications in North Africa.

Sketch 1: Schematic representation of the permanent fortifications at Tobruk. They were used as model for the new type of field fortifications.

Sketch 2: Schematic representation of a squad strong point in a field fortification (for the smallest combat unit), known as "Rommel triangle" [Rommeldreieck].

Sketch 3: Schematic representation of a strong point for a reinforced company.

Example given: The strong point "Abu Talaqu" between Sidi Omar and Halfaya Pass on the Sollum front at the end of June 1941.

Following instructions given personally by Rommel, the author reconnoitered this strong point and staked out the terrain for its construction.

Proposed strength: 9 light machine guns )  
  )  
  )  
  )  
  ) 1 company  
  )  
  )  
  )  
  )  
  )  
  )  
reinforced by 1 Pak platoon  
and 1 light infantry gun platoon  
4 Pak  
4 light machine guns  
2 light infantry guns.

Sketch 4: Schematic representation of a battalion strong point.

Sketch 5: Schematic representation on showing organization of strong points based on "Mine boxes" [see sketch] as they had been laid out on the northern flank of the El Alamein position (from the coast to the northern Ruweisat Ridge) between about August and October 1942, pursuant to instructions from Rommel.

Purpose: To smash the enemy armored attacks by frontal and flanking defensive fires, to hinder the enemy in his reconnaissance of the location of our mine fields, and in his efforts to clear or destroy them by artillery fire, -all this brought about by creating confusion among the enemy forces.

Sketch 6: Example of strong point organization, using a captured British mine field on the southern flank of the El Alamein position (October 1942) - 21st Panzer Division sector, Ariete Division, Parachute Brigade "Ranke".

## 2. Rommel's Maneuvers to Deceive the Enemy.

The following episode which occurred during the offensive of 1942 is being added since it seems to be a typical example of Rommel's methods in deceiving the enemy by raising dust in the desert.

The 3d Battalion of the 104th Rifle Regiment had been disposed since 18 June 1942 with front to the east on both sides of the Via Balbia, 5 kilometers east of Gambut. Here it had been providing security for the forces of the German Africa Corps which had assembled for the attack on Tobruk. On the basis of results of its reconnaissance in the area Bardia - Capuzzo - Sollum, this battalion was ordered by Rommel in person toward 18 hours, 19 June, to start marching immediately for the purpose of seizing the fortified area of Bardia.

When the battalion commander stopped about half way to Bardia in order to send out flank security to the south across a rise of the Dschebel [mountain] that ran up close to the march route, Rommel came up from the rear in a personnel carrier but driving off the road.

He called out to the battalion commander who was coming up to report to him, not to bother, stating that he, Rommel

**Purpose:** To smash the enemy armored attacks by frontal and flanking defensive fires, to hinder the enemy in his reconnaissance of the location of our mine fields, and in his efforts to clear or destroy them by artillery fire, -all this brought about by creating confusion among the enemy forces.

Sketch 6: Example of strong point organization, using a captured British mine field on the southern flank of the El Alamein position (October 1942) - 21st Panzer Division sector, Ariete Division, Parachute Brigade "Ramke".

## 2. Rommel's Maneuvers to Deceive the Enemy.

The following episode which occurred during the offensive of 1942 is being added since it seems to be a typical example of Rommel's methods in deceiving the enemy by raising dust in the desert.

The 3d Battalion of the 104th Rifle Regiment had been disposed since 18 June 1942 with front to the east on both sides of the Via Balbia, 5 kilometers east of Gambut. Here it had been providing security for the forces of the German Africa Corps which had assembled for the attack on Tobruk. On the basis of results of its reconnaissance in the area Bardia - Capuzzo - Sollum, this battalion was ordered by Rommel in person toward 18 hours, 19 June, to start marching immediately for the purpose of seizing the fortified area of Bardia.

When the battalion commander stopped about half way to Bardia in order to send out flank security to the south across a rise of the Dschebel [mountain] that ran up close to the march route, Rommel came up from the rear in a personnel carrier but driving off the road.

He called out to the battalion commander who was coming up to report to him, not to bother, stating that he, Rommel, was "just

kicking up dust". Whereupon he turned about and drove off toward the west, once more proceeding off the road and leaving a long dust cloud trailing behind.

Rommel did this in order to mislead the enemy armored scout cars on the Dschebel southwest of Bardia into believing that the advancing forces were stronger than this one battalion consisting of only 2 companies.

[Signed:] Werner Reissmann

(Werner Reissmann)

[Translated: July 7, 1948: M. Bauer]

[ Reviewed: HFKC 19 July 48 ]



Sketch 1

## [left top]

|                |   |                |
|----------------|---|----------------|
| Stützpunkt     | - | strong point   |
| Drahthindernis | - | wire obstacle  |
| Pz. Graben     | - | antitank ditch |
| Minenfeld      | - | mine field     |

## [right top]

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| betonierte Kampfanlage mit<br>3 Kampfkanzeln. Unterstände<br>unterirdisch. | - | concrete prepared position with 3<br>firing pits. Dugouts underground. |
| Panzergraben (Betonwände)  | - | antitank ditch (concrete walls)  |
| Drahthindernis   | - | wire obstacle  |

## [middle of page, all across:]

Schemat. Grundrisskizze --- einer Tobruk-Inf.-Kampfanlage --- Aufrissskizze  
Schematic plan of an infantry combat installation at Tobruk (cross-section)

## [middle of page, left]

|                                       |   |  |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Stufen                                | - | steps  |
| Leiter                                | - | ladder                                       |
| Unterstände mit Betondecke            | - | dugouts with concrete ceilings               |
| offener Verbindungsgraben<br>Laufgang | - | open communication trench<br>approach trench |
| offene Kampfkanzel                    | - | open firing pit.                             |

## [middle of page, right]

|              |   |                               |
|--------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Kampfkanzel  | - | firing pit                    |
| Laufgang     | - | approach trench               |
| Betondecke   | - | concrete ceiling              |
| Unterstand   | - | dugout                        |
| L.M.G. Stand | - | light machine gun emplacement |
| Verb. Graben | - | communication trench          |
| Pak Stand    | - | Pak emplacement               |

Sketch 2

[left top]

|                |   |                |
|----------------|---|----------------|
| Stützpunkt     | - | strong point   |
| Drahthindernis | - | wire obstacle  |
| Pz. Graben     | - | antitank ditch |
| Minenfeld      | - | mine field     |

[right top]

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| betonierte Kampfanlage mit<br>3 Kampfkanzeln. Unterstände<br>unterirdisch. | - | concrete prepared position with 3<br>firing pits. Dugouts underground. |
| Panzergraben (Betonwände)  | - | antitank ditch (concrete walls)  |
| Drahthindernis   | - | wire obstacle  |

[middle of page, all across:]

Schemat. Grundrisssskizze --- einer Tobruk-Inf.-Kampfanlage --- Aufrisssskizze  
Schematic plan of an infantry combat installation at Tobruk (cross-section)

[middle of page, left]

|                                       |   |  |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Stufen                                | - | steps  |
| Leiter                                | - | ladder                                       |
| Unterstände mit Betondecke            | - | dugouts with concrete ceilings               |
| offener Verbindungsgraben<br>Laufgang | - | open communication trench<br>approach trench |
| offene Kampfkanzel                    | - | open firing pit.                             |

[middle of page, right]

|               |   |                               |
|---------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Kampfkanzel   | - | firing pit                    |
| Laufgang      | - | approach trench               |
| Betondecke    | - | concrete ceiling              |
| Unterstand    | - | dugout                        |
| L.M.G. Stand  | - | light machine gun emplacement |
| Verb. Graben  | - | communication trench          |
| Pak Stand     | - | Pak emplacement               |
| Unterschlupf  | - | dugout                        |
| Munit.-Nische | - | ammunition niche              |
| etwa 50 m     | - | approximately 50 meters       |

Sketch 2

Sketch 3

|                     |   |                     |
|---------------------|---|---------------------|
| Pz. Minenfeld       | - | antitank mine field |
| Drahthindernis      | - | wire obstacle       |
| Gruppen Stützpunkte | - | squad strong points |
| 800 m               | - | 800 meters          |

Sketch 4

|                 |   |  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| M.: 1:20000     | - | Scale 1:20000                                    |
| 0 500 1000 m    | - | 0 500 1000 meters                                |
| Drahthindernis  | - | wire obstacle                                    |
| Pz. Minenfeld   | - | antitank mine field                              |
| Pz. Minen       | - | antitank mines                                   |
| Schützen-Minen  | - | antipersonnel mines                              |
| im Streueinsatz | - | laid at random, not according to regular pattern |
| Btr.            | - | battery  |
| s. Pak          | - | heavy Pak [antitank gun]                         |

Sketch 5

|                                       |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Pz. Minenfeld                         | - | antitank mine field                                       |
| Schützenminen im Streueinsatz         | - | antipersonnel mines not laid according to regular pattern |
| Pz. Minen im Streueinsatz             | - | antitank mines not laid according to regular pattern      |
| s. Pak                                | - | heavy Pak   |
| 7,62 Pak V. od. 8,8 Flak              | - | 7.62 Pak V or 8.8 Flak [antiaircraft gun]                 |
| Kp. Pz.Jg. bewegl. einsatz-<br>bereit | - | T.D. Co., mobile, in readiness.                           |
| Btl. Stützpunkt                       | - | battalion strong point                                    |
| l.u.s.Art.                            | - | light and heavy artillery                                 |
| Inf. Sicherung                        | - | infantry security   |

Sketch 3

Pz. Minenfeld - antitank mine field  
Drahthindernis - wire obstacle  
Gruppen Stützpunkte - squad strong points  
800 m - 800 meters

---

Sketch 4

M.: 1:20000 - Scale 1:20000  
0 500 1000 m - 0 500 1000 meters  
Drahthindernis - wire obstacle  
Pz. Minenfeld - antitank mine field  
Pz. Minen - antitank mines  
Schützen-Minen - antipersonnel mines  
im Streueinsatz - laid at random, not according to regular pattern  
Btr. - battery  
s. Pak - heavy Pak [antitank gun]

---

Sketch 5

Pz. Minenfeld - antitank mine field  
Schützenminen im Streueinsatz - antipersonnel mines not laid according to regular pattern  
Pz. Minen im Streueinsatz - antitank mines not laid according to regular pattern  
s. Pak - heavy Pak  
7,62 Pak V. od. 8,8 Flak - 7.62 Pak V or 8.8 Flak [antiaircraft gun]  
Kp. Pz. Jg. bewegl. einsatz-  
bereit - T.D. Co., mobile, in readiness.  
Btl. Stützpunkt - battalion strong point  
l.u.s. Art. - light and heavy artillery  
Inf. Sicherung - infantry security  
Feind - enemy

---

Sketch 6

- |                          |   |                                     |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Minenfeld                | - | mine field                          |
| eigene H.K.L.            | - | our main line of resistance         |
| eigene Stützpunkte       | - | our strong points                   |
| etw. Verlauf feindl. St. | - | approximate trace of enemy position |
| etwa 1 : 50 000          | - | approximately 1 : 50 000            |

-----

Translated July 8, 1948

M. Bauer

Reviewed HFKC 19 July 1948