

## TO BIZERTE WITH THE II CORPS - 23 April - 13 May 1943 [Illustrated Edition] (American Forces in Action)



Illustrated with 18 maps and 24 Illustrations. A DELEGATION OF GERMAN OFFICERS arrived at American Headquarters south of Ferryville at 0926 on the morning of 9 May 1943. Their mission was to surrender the remnants of a once proud unit of the Wehrmacht, the formidable Fifth Panzer Army. On the same morning, two German staff officers reported at the Command Post of the 1st Armored Division southeast of Bizerte to request an armistice. Three days later, General Jurgen von Arnim was captured at Ste. Marie du Zit. Marshal Giovanni Messe, commanding the Italian First Army, surrendered unconditionally to the British Eighth Army on 13 May. The long battle for North Africa was ended. These events were the culmination of grand strategy but were made possible only by the heroic struggle of Allied soldiers across the coastal areas of North Africa, through deserts, mountains, and swamps. Troops of the II Corps, U. S. A., who had entered the fight for Africa with the invasion on 8 November 1942, played a prominent role in the decisive final battle which opened on 23 April. The stage had been set for that battle by a campaign, lasting for months, in which German and Italian troops were finally penned into the northeastern part of Tunisia. Starting 23 October from El Alamein, General Sir Bernard L. Montgomerys Eighth Army had pushed the Afrika Korps 1,500 miles along the desert coast of North Africa and into the Mareth Line in southern Tunisia. Within 2 weeks of the November landings in Northwest Africa, British and American forces under General Dwight D. Eisenhower were driving from Algeria into western Tunisia in an effort to seize the great ports of Tunis and Bizerte. German reinforcements, rushed into Africa in the nick of time, stopped the advance just short of the Tunis plain. With operations now made difficult by the rainy winter season, the Allied

Army fought bitter engagements in the mountains from Sedjenane Station to Medjez el Bab. To the south, American units in hard fighting stopped savage German drives through Kasserine Pass toward the Allied base at Tebessa and kept pressure on the long Axis communications between Field Marshal Rommel and Tunis.

In late March, Rommels forces were driven from the Mareth Line toward the north. Protecting his line of retreat, the enemy fought a stubborn delaying action against the Americans and the British in the El Guettar-Gafsa area. By 22 April the equivalent of 5 Italian and 9 German divisions were at bay for what they planned to be a protracted defense of Tunis and Bizerte. But the Axis was not allowed a breathing space to strengthen its defenses. The Allied forces, united under General Sir Harold R. Alexander as the Eighteenth Army Group, were already preparing the blow that was to destroy the enemy forces in a battle lasting 21 days.

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