

The siege of tobruk: rommel against the australians



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Erwin Rommel was a German Lieutenant that commanded the attack on Australians in Tobruk.

Rommel's plan of attack was for his tanks to sweep around Tobruk to the eastern side and attack from the Bardia road, which cut the town off from Cairo. When Rommel was approaching Tobruk, he ordered General Heinrich von Prittwitz to take the three battalions from his division and to attack Tobruk directly from the west along the Derna road. Rommel expected that the Allied forces would crumble under his attack. However, the two Australian brigades which had been west of Tobruk had succeeded in withdrawing to Tobruk and were placed in covering positions outside the perimeter.

The newly arrived 18th Australian Infantry Brigades were holding defensive positions on the perimeter. Soldiers from the Australian battalion fired the first shots of the siege using two captured Italian field guns, when they spotted three cars. The cars retreated quickly. The Australians blew up approaching tanks as they were crossing a bridge on the perimeter of Tobruk. Von Prittwitz urged his staff car driver to drive him through the wadi and towards the Australians. Some of his men told him to stop, but he replied that the enemy was getting away.

As they drove towards the Australians, the car drove into the firing line of an anti-tank gun, whose gunner fired which destroyed the car and killed both von Prittwitz and his driver. Meanwhile, the Allies continued to work on their defences, laying barbed wire, mines and other obstacles. Major-general Leslie Morshead, the commander of the 9th Australian division, divided the

50km perimeter of Tobruk into three sections. Morshead also ordered all Italian signal cables to be re-laid. He wanted to know what was happening, and where, so he could adjust his forces. With his forces regrouped, Rommel went back to his original plans, which was to send his tanks around the Bardia road in Tobruk.

By the 11th of April, Tobruk was surrounded with 5th Light Division to the east, the Prittwitz group to the south, and the Brescia division approaching from the west.