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Alec Torvton

Section M

THE GUIDE TO NORTH AFRICA ADDS A NEW
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ACHTUNG! Cthulhu™

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Foreword from Glyn White

I'm particularly excited to be involved in this project, not simply for the prospect of writing and playing **Call of Cthulhu** in this period, but because my father took part in the war in North Africa from the Second Battle of El Alamein onwards (I know, it dates me). He gave up a reserved occupation and joined up in 1941, knowing that waiting for German paratroops with a shotgun as part of the Home Guard wasn't going to win the war. After basic training he took an army driving course in wartime Blackpool and was assigned to a Royal Artillery Anti-Aircraft Battery. They were shipped out to Egypt, travelling all the way around Africa. He saw a torpedo miss the boat off Dakar and climbed Table Mountain during the stop at Cape Town, before finally disembarking at Port Said. Though they arrived in time for the battle, they were neither acclimatised or equipped and were warned by officers that their unit would be surrendered if the battle was lost in order to hold up the German advance. Digging out their tent, my father and his Scottish mate hit rock after several inches and gave up well short of the regulation depth. It passed inspection, but once the enemy barrage opened up this shortcut was deeply regretted.

From this point, however, he was always travelling west with the 8th Army, pursuing the Axis in stages as far as Tunis. Strict driver rotation meant that he should have delivered shells to the gun sites as often as the next driver but he was usually kept on water cart duties, which involved driving a tanker truck east to collect water from the nearest safe well operated by sappers (Royal Engineers), often some distance behind the advance. My father's commanding officer, Captain Marsh, wanted to leave the desert in full health and held the opinion that when White collected the water, it was safer (other drivers were less keen on long, slow dusty drives in the desert and took shortcuts, using unsafe wells). Dad also had a good relationship with the cookhouse and, by bribing sappers with supplies such as sugar, he could get a full tank of water rather than the strict allowance per man for the unit. This cemented him in the water cart role.

There was danger, of course. He joined the war as a non-smoker and, in the early days, he could use his cigarette issue as currency (after all, everybody needs cigarettes!). But, during the numerous advances, he was one of a group who liberated two truckloads of Italian cigarettes. When various schemes to sell them failed, the only way to share in the profits was to smoke his share of them, gaining a nicotine habit that would contribute to his death 60+ years later.

After victory in Tunis, his unit crossed to Italy and was stationed at Bari and Barletta before being broken up and redistributed. On sage advice from the officer in charge of reassignment, he joined a non-combat fit unit and worked in the motor pool, occupying Rome, where a good night out consisted of egg and chips and the opera. These are not the exploits of a heroic soldier, nor were they ever imagined to be. My dad came out of the army with the same rank he started with, through various ups and downs; he never collected the medals he was entitled to and steered clear of services-based organisations when back in civvy street. He had seen enough of the army, and enough of the rest of the world, but nobody was ever going to be able to tell him he didn't do his bit. His war informs my contributions to this book.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Glyn White
Spring 2014



CHAPTER 1

Welcome to North Africa

*"Ideas govern the world, or throw it into chaos."
- Auguste Comte*

The Sikh NCO saluted sharply and conducted the group to the edge of the wadi without waiting to be asked or told. Dr. Niels-Viggo Schou was concerned to see the unit's British officer poking about in the wreckage, completely oblivious to the dangers it contained.

"We'll take over from here," he called, his voice strained. The officer gave a casual wave of his stick in acknowledgement and began to clamber his way out of the debris.

The dry river bed, carved out by rare torrential rains, was not much to look at, but it had swallowed the downed plane almost whole. Schou had been informed of the costly firefight at the airfield as d'Arezzo had attempted to make good his escape from Tripoli. Despite the Brass' fear of the operation's failure, the Junkers hadn't made it more than 100 miles beyond the Tunisian border and must have lain here, undisturbed, for weeks.

As Schou and his small team climbed down the dusty bank, the officer of the Sikh unit was virtually carried up it by a chain of his men. The officer waved his stick again in lieu of a real salute as he passed. His moustache twitched, but it was not a smile. "Nasty business, this. Rather you than me."

It was soon clear that he meant the smell. At the bottom of the wadi the stench of rot assaulted their nostrils, and Schou was grateful that he had not eaten recently. After a careful inspection of the plane's exterior, the team waded gingerly into its smashed carcass.

There was a lot of blood in the interior. A lot of blood. There were no large calibre bullet holes in the shattered fuselage from, say, a fighter attack, so what had caused such carnage? The good Doctor shook his head, glancing knowingly at his associates by way of warning.

"Ferrety" Cheetham, seemingly the least affected by the vile odour, handed him a torn section of a suitcase bearing the Count's monogram. Schou nodded his thanks and registered, almost absent-mindedly, that a man's legs were part of the wreckage not far away from where he was standing, the trousers

torn away, flies queuing up to lay eggs in gaping wounds already squirming with maggots. Schou was glad the upper part of the body was not visible.

"Sir?" It was Cheetham again.

"Yes, what is it?" But he could already see: fragments of carved wood, marked with hieroglyphics and heavily pitted with small arms fire; all that remained of a sarcophagus of some sort.

Schou rose to his full height and addressed his team. "Find the Count's notebooks, documents—anything and everything you can. That's top priority. But be careful." He turned to Cheetham and muttered under his breath, "We'll have to learn from his mistakes."

The dry river bed, carved out by rare torrential rains, had swallowed the downed plane almost whole.

WHAT IS ACHTUNG! CTHULHU?

Achtung! Cthulhu is a World War Two-inspired setting for Lovecraftian roleplaying, where player characters investigate the dark machinations of madmen and monsters whilst battling to defend the world they know from the all-encompassing chaos of war.

This book has been created for use with Chaosium's **Call of Cthulhu, Sixth Edition** roleplaying game and Pinnacle Entertainment Group's **Savage Worlds** system. This book, in conjunction with *Achtung! Cthulhu: the Investigator's Guide to the Secret War* and *Achtung! Cthulhu: the Keeper's Guide to the Secret War*, contains all you need to



set games in North Africa during World War Two. Within these pages you will find a Desert War Timeline; new types of player characters, weapons, and equipment; rules for desert combat; tomes, artefacts, and weird weapons; new and expanded information on occult societies and cults in the region; plus advice on running adventures in this setting and numerous plot hooks.

The *Achtung! Cthulhu: Guide to North Africa* is split into two main sections: one designed for both the Keeper and investigators (Chapters 1-5), and one primarily designed for the Keeper that gives more information on the various Mythos-related threats likely to be encountered in this theatre of the war (Chapters 6-12).

Cth

If you are playing *Call of Cthulhu*, look for this symbol, which highlights the rules relevant to your game.

Sav

If, on the other hand, you are playing *Savage Worlds*, you need to look for this symbol instead.

CHRONOLOGY OF A DESERT WAR

The major European powers in North Africa (France, Italy, and Britain) start the war with different aims: Italy, under the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, sees the chance for imperial expansion at the expense of a weakened British Empire & Commonwealth; the British seek to maintain control over the vital transport link that is the Suez Canal; and France (later Vichy France) just wants to keep its

overseas possessions intact. The arrival of German forces, hurriedly sent in to bolster Italy's failing campaign, brings new life to the desert war, exposing the shortcomings of existing equipment and tactics which are only fully countered when American supplies, and then American troops, enter the fray.

The North African campaign represents a tumultuous fight, at the end of which the tides of war finally begin to turn against the Third Reich. The timeline provided here is intended to compliment those found in both the *Investigator's* and *Keeper's Guides for Achtung! Cthulhu*. It concentrates on events in North Africa during the earlier years of the war (as the desert campaign is over by mid-1943), as well as introducing important events that lead up to the conflict. Some entries have been left deliberately vague so as to provide inspiration for the Keeper, thus enabling them to fit into your own individual campaigns.

1869

The Suez Canal officially opens, providing a transport link between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.

1873

WINTER

German explorer Friedrich Gerhard Rohlfs discovers a rich fossil site in the Libyan Desert, which he names "Ammonite Hill". Several of the more "unusual" specimens are given to the expedition's sponsor, the Khedive Ismail Pasha, and move with him to Naples, and then Rome, when he is forced from power in 1879; their current whereabouts are unknown.