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Department:
Defence
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



75TH Anniversary of the Battle of Sidi Rezegh – an Artillery Perspective

The 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Sidi Rezegh will be commemorated on 23 November 2016. The history of the Transvaal Horse Artillery contains the following summary of the Regiment's experience:

“With regard to the North African theatre, the most memorable action in which the Regiment was involved was the Battle of Sidi Rezegh (Sunday, 23 November 1941). The THA formed a component within 5 South African Infantry Brigade. The Brigade was overwhelmed by the armour of Rommel's *Afrika Korps* after the protective screen of the 8th Army's armour had been shredded during the preceding two days, which had witnessed the abortive British effort to capture the Sidi Rezegh airfield; the escarpment on which it was located was the key to the relief of Tobruk, the central objective of *Operation Crusader*. In the battle of 23 November, the gunners of the THA were reduced to firing their 25 pr guns over open sights in the midst of the blinding dust and smoke. So resolute and effective was their fire that, although overrun by the German panzers, Rommel's losses in armour and men were so heavy that he was forced to eventually halt his offensive several days later. Indeed, the battle was almost decided in favour of the South Africans had not their ammunition been exhausted. Five of the Regiment's 24 guns were saved, and a further seven were later recovered.”

The Transvaal Scottish and the South African Irish were amongst the infantry units involved in this battle.