

# MEDICAL ASPECTS OF HARSH ENVIRONMENTS

## Volume 1

### Section I: Hot Environments

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Rudolph Von Ripper

*Filling Craters Near Pantellaria*

1943

Pantellaria (also spelled Pantelleria) is a tiny, rocky island in the Mediterranean Sea between Tunisia and Sicily, the occupation of which was considered essential for the planned invasion of Italy in the summer of 1943. Accordingly, the Allied air forces and the Royal Navy were called in to soften up the Italian defenders, a process they performed with great gusto:

In one of the greatest examples of overkill of the war the air forces in three weeks dropped 6,400 tons of bombs ... on Pantelleria.<sup>1(p215)</sup>

After the island had been captured and so that air facilities could be established in time for the invasion of Sicily, the vast multitude of craters left on Pantellaria by the bombs and shells had to be quickly filled by hard, manual labor in Sahara-like heat. Surviving records, however, do not indicate whether heat casualties were a significant problem.

Quotation: (1) D'Este C. *Bitter Victory: The Battle for Sicily, 1943*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial; 1991: 215. Painting: gouache on paper. Reproduced courtesy of Army Art Collection, US Army Center of Military History, Washington, DC.

