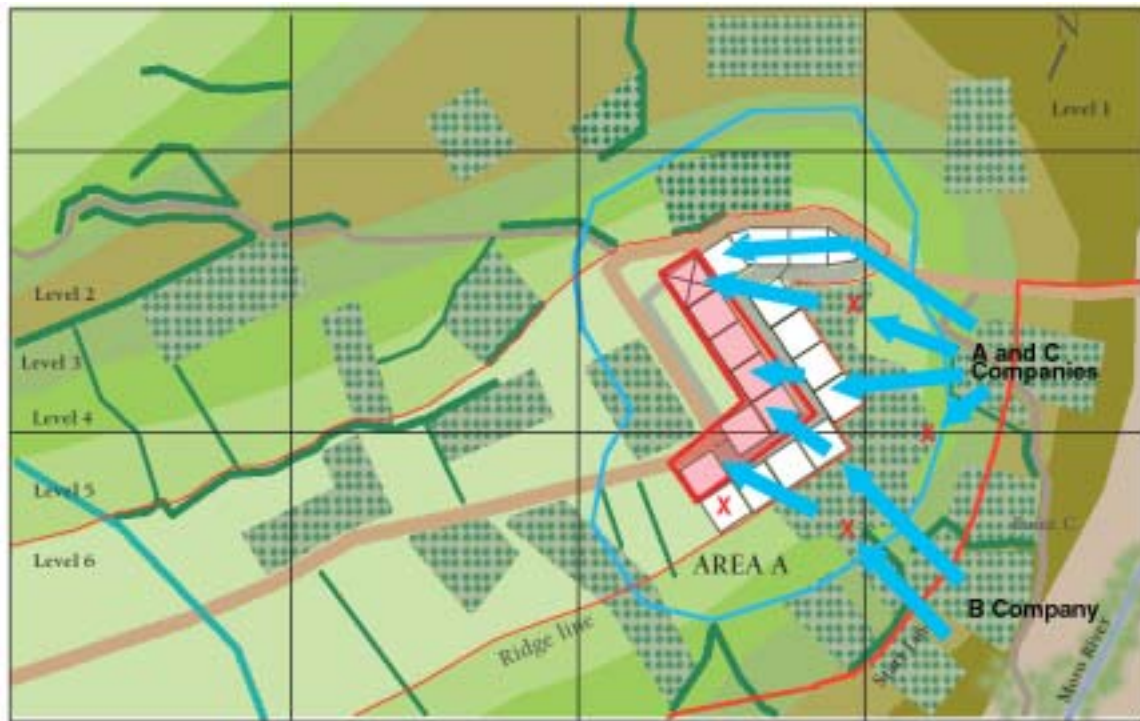


Villa Rogatti December 6, 1943

This after action report is based on the Villa Rogatti scenario found on the Battlefront Scenarios page. It is divided into two phases, the night attack on the village of Villa Rogatti by the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry followed by the second phase, the German counterattack. The counterattack was conducted against the P.P.C.L.I. (eventually reinforced by tanks of the 44th Royal Tank Regiment) by elements of the 200th PzGr Regiment, supported by the 7th Panzer Company of the 26th Panzer Regiment.



Map shows line of initial attack. Red "X's" indicate German watch units, shaded red areas German garrison.

Villa Rogatti After Action Report



*Above: A Co. overwhelms a German HMG post.
Right: B Co. clears the orchards of a stubborn defender.*



Phase 1: Night Attack on Villa Rogatti

Under cover of darkness A and B Companies of the P.P.C.L.I., with C Co. following, cross the Moro River and scale the steep slopes leading up to Villa Rogatti. The village can be seen dimly above in the moonlight perched on a horseshoe-shaped escarpment at the end of a long plateau. As the first soldiers leave the cover of the vineyards and orchards a heavy machine gun opens up. Suppressing the post with over watch fire the Canadians quickly overwhelm the enemy and, alarm now raised, scramble for the top of the hill.

A second HMG opens up on A Co. from the right flank, knocking out the lead section, but the 2" mortars zero in on it, suppressing it long enough for it to be put out of action.

Meanwhile B Co. is held up by defenders dug in in an orchard halfway up the slope. After an unsuccessful attempt to clear it in close assault, the Germans are put to flight, clearing the way for B Co also to move forward. The remainder of the Villa Rogatti garrison, woken by the sound of gunfire and taken by surprise by the night time attack, scramble from their beds. But with the enemy already in amongst the village's buildings, most panic and flee, along with their commander.



German defenders flee the town.



C Co. closes in, following A Co. up the hill and swinging over to clear the east end of the village, as A and B Companies take possession of the river side buildings.

C Co. advances up the road.



Germans counterattack back into Villa Rogatti but are once again driven out of town.

The few German defenders left in Villa Rogatti heroically resist the onslaught, making the Canadians pay dearly for every inch of real estate. Their comrades regroup and counterattack back into the village, but the German commander, disordered in that attack, flees down the road. Seeing this the Germans, after being briefly reinvigorated, once again falter. The Canadians, who have been in the process of building up their



forces in the river side of the town in preparation for an all out assault, leap on this advantage and throw what they have at the Germans. The defenders go down like dominoes as the P.P.C.L.I. drive them out of town once more.

Canadians prepare for final push.

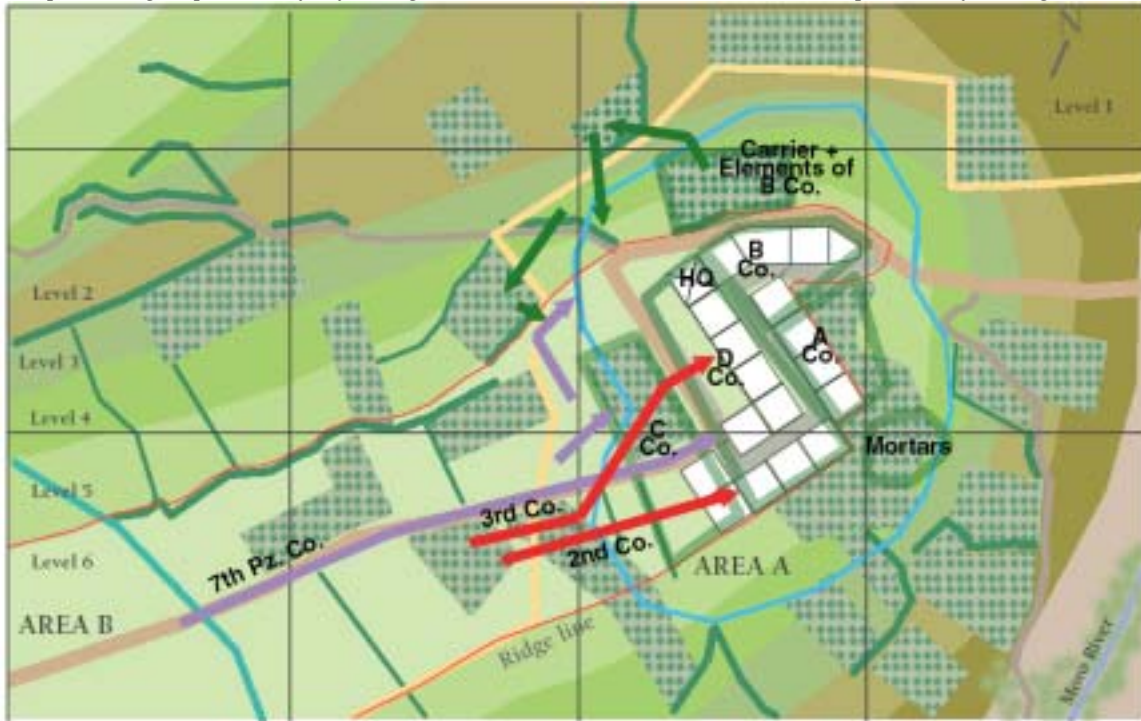


Villa Rogatti is cleared.

Needing to salvage what they can from a bad situation, the German mortar lays down some smoke, with the hope that their remaining forces (still over 50%) can withdraw under its cover and fight another day. But with their commander AWOL, the order to withdraw is not received, and the Germans hunker down where they are on the outskirts. The Canadian B and C Companies leap frog through the battered A Company and, with bayonets fixed, storm out, dispatching one enemy section, putting another to flight, and taking Villa Rogatti in its entirety with relatively light casualties. The remaining defenders withdraw to nearest cover to lick their wounds and harass the new occupants with small arms fire, but in no shape to join the counterattack in Phase 2.

Phase 2: German Counterattack on Villa Rogatti

Map showing disposition of defending units, German advance, and the carrier platoon's flanking



counterattack. The 44th RTR (not shown) entered via the trail on the right that climbs up from the Moro River.

At first light Col. Ware and the remainder of the P.P.C.L.I. battalion arrive at the village, where the colonel promptly sets about organizing his defenses. As armour can only easily navigate the plateau that stretches to the southwest, C Co., still at full strength, settles into improved positions in the orchards and behind hedgerows west of the village.



Canadian defense around Villa Rogatti.

This will be the first line of defense, hopefully stalling the advance long enough to bring the mortars and artillery into play against any enemy concentrations. D Co., also at full strength occupies the houses and gardens of the village immediately behind C Company's defenses. B Co. sets up on the north side of the village, with elements positioned in the orchards to the north along with the carrier platoon, who's PIATS will hopefully be able to stave off any attacks until the Shermans can slog their way to the top. A Co., badly battered from the night attack, is put into reserve while the 3" mortars are dug in on the slopes leading down to the river.



Shermans grind their way up the muddy path leading from the Moro River.

Other PIATs are positioned in the orchards and houses guarding the southwest entrance into the village. Ware knows that until the British tankers of the 44th Royal Tank Regiment manage to grind their way up the muddy mule path leading from the river the battalion will be on its own in fending off the inevitable armour-supported attack.

As the Canadians position their last units, and scrape together some hasty defenses, out of the morning mist loom the German panzers, accompanied by Panzergrenadiers dodging forward through the surrounding orchards and vineyards.



Germans advance from the southwest.

The Germans' avenue of attack, as Ware had expected, comes from the southwest. The two supporting PzGr. companies advance on a one company front south of the road while the tanks negotiate up the road between the orchards before fanning out in front of the village. German heavy machine guns take up positions in an orchard north of the road, covering the infantry advance from this position, while the remnants of Villa Rogatti's garrison engage the enemy from positions outside of town.

Following heavy shelling of the positions immediately in front of the village, the Germans lead aggressively with their tanks, hoping to rout the dazed defenders from the orchard before they can recover. But a PIAT opens up from deep within the cover,

suppressing the lead tank. The other defenders fall back from sight of the accompanying tanks, and maneuver to take the suppressed tank in the flank, knocking it out in close combat.



First Pz. IV falls to CC.

German mortar and artillery rain down on the southwest corner of the village and the German infantry go in for the attack. The defense at the hedgerow is quickly overwhelmed but small arms fire from the town drive the attackers to ground, (although they manage to force a foothold at the town's). A Pz. IV moves up in close support, and is dispatched by a PIAT hidden near the street entrance. The German hmg's open up from the flank, but, having revealed their positions, two of the three sections are knocked out by uncannily accurate mortar fire.



2nd Co. goes in for the attack.

More tanks move up, as the first back off from the orchard, opting for the open ground northwest of the village, where they will have a clear view of any reinforcing armour topping the crest to the east. The C Co. platoon in the orchard

is stonked by mortar fire and stormed by the PzGr. 3rd Co., with the remnants driven out, while those of D Co. dug in behind the stone wall, now facing tanks to the north, decide discretion is the better part of valour and fall back into the town.



Germans clear the orchard and gain a foothold in Villa Rogatti as the Canadian carrier platoon maneuvers to the north of German armour.

Meanwhile, on the north flank, elements of the carrier platoon and B Co. move to clear the orchards to the north of harassing machinegun fire. This quickly done, they then cautiously advance beyond the ridgeline, in an attempt to outflank the German armour lurking to the north. While the carrier platoon's PIAT draws the attention of the tanks with its unsuccessful fire, the small force close assaults a tank that has gone hull down too close to the orchards and knocks it out.



A second German tank is knocked out in close combat.

The British tankers finally manage to make it to the top of the ridge, and engage the German armour on the left flank. The tanks unsuccessfully duel it out, neither side scoring a killing hit.

German infantry, supported now by close range tank fire, battle their way into the houses on the edge of town. A seesaw house-to-house fight wages for a while, but German mortars and artillery continue to fail to find their mark, and after a last

unsuccessful push from the orchard, German casualties are considered too high and the defenders too deeply entrenched to be dislodged. More British tanks make it to the top and enter Villa Rogatti from the east.



*Above left: Shermans crest ridge.
Right: Bitter house-to-house fighting.*



With three of their five tanks knocked out and unable to force another into the town to support the infantry attack, the German battalion commander sends up the green flare, calling off the attack. The Germans disengage and pull back, leaving the P.P.C.L.I. the new undisputed masters of Villa Rogatti



Germans withdraw.

Analysis

Phase 1 is designed for the Germans to lose, but how bad is always the question. If they had managed to inflict more casualties on the Canadians and salvaged enough of their infantry from the fight to join in the attack in Phase 2, it may have been a different story. But a series of bad morale rolls for the Germans made sure that neither of these things would happen, and lead to a definite first phase victory for the Canadians.

The adage not to lead with armour in areas of dense concealment was once more borne out in Phase 2, as the Germans quickly lost two of their tanks by advancing unsupported by infantry. Failure to guard their north flank allowed the Canadian carrier platoon to out maneuver them and lead to the loss of a third panzer. But most telling was the simple failure of the German artillery to arrive in any meaningful way, leaving the defenders well-entrenched in Villa Rogatti and the nut uncracked.