Breakout!

At the end of July 1944, Operation Cobra allowed the U.S. forces to break out of the bocage and into the German Rear areas. This hypothetical scenario covers a situation after the breakout from the bocage. As the battle is transitioning to a pursuit, the action is still pretty fluid. While reading about the breakout I was struck by how confused the fighting could be, especially on the German side. Until the action sorted itself out, units would find that positions they had been ordered to defend were already held by the enemy, or attackers given orders to move down a road to their jump off positions would find that the supposedly clear road suddenly had enemy troops on it. German service troops could find themselves cut off behind American lines, while American support troops would suddenly find themselves in the midst of a fight in a supposedly secure area. I tried to capture this feeling in this scenario for 6 players, each of whom has independent objectives. There is a lot going on in this scenario. The better part of an American Combat Command is in action against scattered resistance on the road to Paris. Note that it is most enjoyable if only the referee is aware of the objectives of the different players, so not too much information is included in the overview.
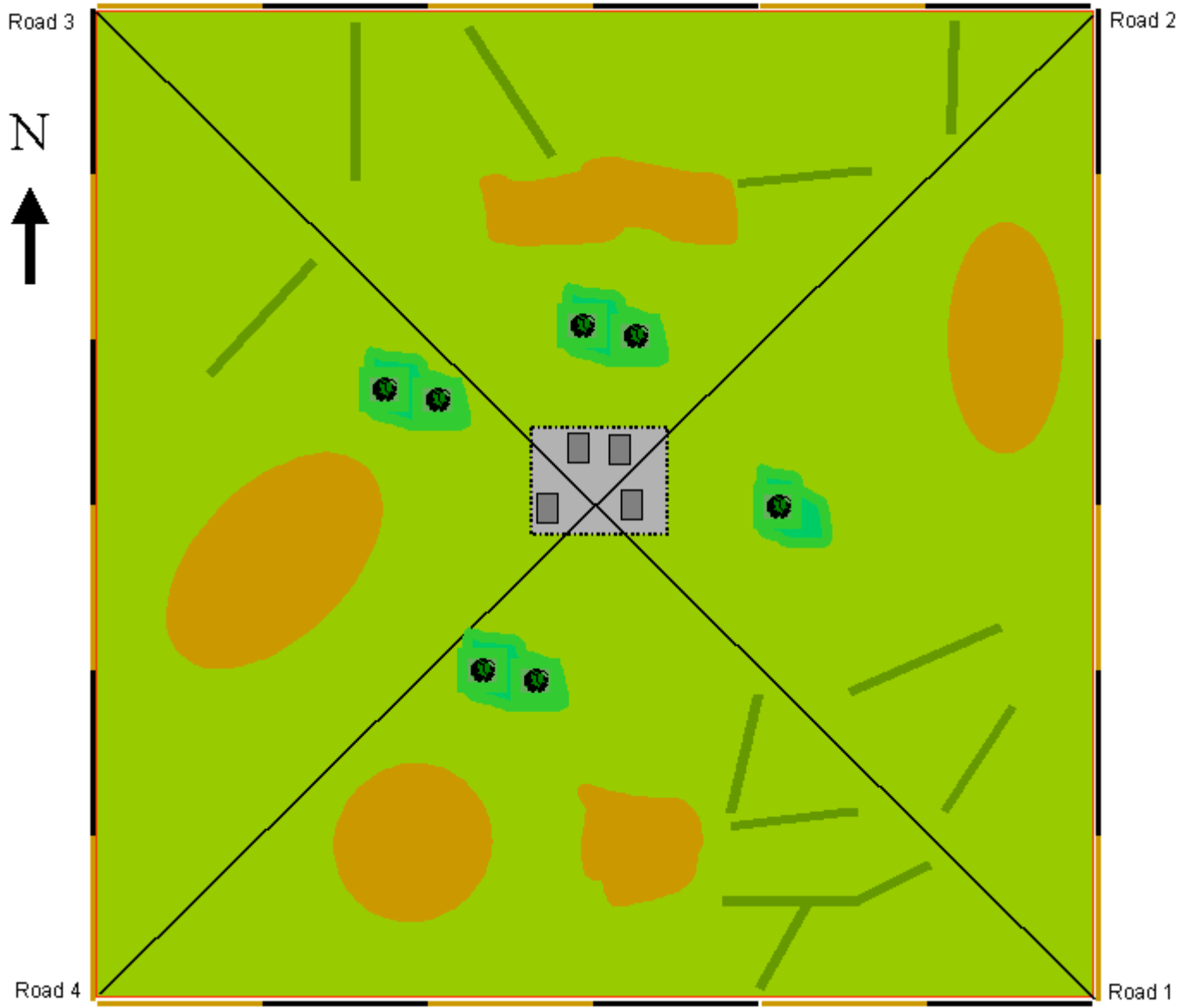
Game Length

12 turns, staring with the American player turn. Turns are 10 minutes long starting at 1400 and ending with the 1550 German turn.

Victory Conditions

Each battle group has an objective. They are all different and are listed in the separate orders pages. Each player has command of a 1-2 company battle group and will be judged solely on whether or not he achieved his own objective. Player cooperation is fine, as long as each player keeps working towards his own objective. You can have anywhere from 2-4 players fulfilling their objectives here.

Map and Terrain Notes

Bocage Hedgerow

Cleared Woods

Level 1 Hill

Built-up
Area/Buildings

Unpaved Road

The terrain is meant to cover a 6' by 6' table. The space is needed for 6 players to
maneuver their forces. The terrain is busy, but not the confined hedgerow mess found in
the bocage.

- All roads are secondary (unpaved)
- Woods are cleared woods
- Hedges are bocage
- Buildings in the town are stone.

The key is the limited road network that delineates the objectives and the town in the
center of the map. Road 1 exits off the southeast corner of the map, Road 2 exits off the
northeast, Road 3 exits off the northwest, and Road 4 exits off to the southwest. As this is
a hypothetical battle, the exact size and shape of the terrain features is not important.
However, the general location and type of features are important, as they are designed to
channel the different missions.

Off board Fire Support

- US artillery fire comes from the west edge of the map.
- Fire support comes from an American armored unit, there are 3 guns per battery rather than just two.
- Each battery can fire two rounds of smoke and unlimited HE. Mortars may also fire two rounds of smoke.
- The U.S. battalion is in direct support of all of the elements on the battlefield, but each player has his own FO. As each player has independent objectives, calls-for-fire from the different organizations may conflict. As a scenario rule, each of the American players is *entitled* to the dedicated support of one battery each turn. However, if one or more players is willing to give up his support for a turn, the unused battery can be combined with others to make a larger mission. In real life, the battalion FDC would be evaluating all of the calls for fire and allocating missions according to the situation (see the American artillery tutorial for details on how the U.S. operated). As all three of the batteries come from the same battalion, and no general support is available, you have almost complete flexibility on how to use the 3 batteries, but a player must agree to give up the support of his dedicated battery before it can be combined into a larger mission controlled by someone else. Of course each fire mission will require a separate call-for-fire roll. If the referee wants to limit the cross-attachment of batteries, treat the second and third batteries of a multi-battery mission as General Support. This is not quite accurate, but the intent is to give each player his own dedicated fire support.
- The Germans have no off-board assets in this scenario due to logistical and command breakdown.

Optional Rules

Play balance

Stuff I changed after testing but you could put back to even things up:

- German group 1: Add an LMG and/or an 81mm mortar.
- German group 2: Add an additional tank, either an Panther or a Mk IV. Keep the infantry element small.
- German group 3: No changes should be made to this group. Giving this group more power encourages them to get into combat, which they are trying to avoid.
- American group 1: Add an M4 81mm mortar carrier and/or give one of the Shermans a 76mm gun.
- American group 2: Give one of the Shermans a 76mm gun. This group will suck up whatever firepower additions you can give it, and may already be too powerful. My thoughts are that giving it more just encourages it to wander off track after the German recon elements rather than staying on mission.
- American group 3: Add an additional M5 light tank.

Maximum entertainment option

This requires a referee, who will be the most entertained :-)
Don't tell the players what the objectives of the other groups are, even the ones on their own side. The Americans will be able to communicate later due to being under a central command, but the German players should be encouraged not to discuss their objectives with anyone. The referee should also play the role of the higher command, demanding status reports and threatening dismissal and firing squads when players get off track and start wandering off from their assigned objective.

Designer's Note

This scenario requires a wide array of different vehicles. When my collection was small, I always hated it that you seemed to need a motorcade to play many scenarios. You may of course feel free to make any substitutions you want, even to the extent of wholesale replacement of different groups with something more in keeping with what is on hand. The real key here is to keep the chaos and specific yet conflicting goals for each group, resulting in a confused battle diverging in many different directions. The lighter recon units are a neat feature that you should try to keep if possible to maintain a variety of missions. No recon units? Try platoon sized groups to keep power in check and force caution. All that being said, this scenario was play tested several times and the makeup of each group was adjusted each time to fine tune it against both the mission and the likely opposition. Tweak at your own risk, but by all means have fun with this different but enjoyable scenario!

General Play Tip

Players will find that this is a very different kind of scenario from the usual fare of "you're here, they're in the town/on the hill, go beat them up.". Enemy units are all over the map, and by virtue of the diabolical machinations of the scenario designer the enemy is always in the way. You need to keep your focus on what will achieve your own objectives. Aiding a fellow player is of course a noble act, but it's not what you are being evaluated on! You are in competition with both your opponents and your friends.

U.S. Map

Road 3

Road 2

U.S. Group 3

N

U.S. Group 1

Road 4

Road 1

U.S. Group 2

Briefing for Officer Commanding U.S. Group 1 Armored/Infantry Team
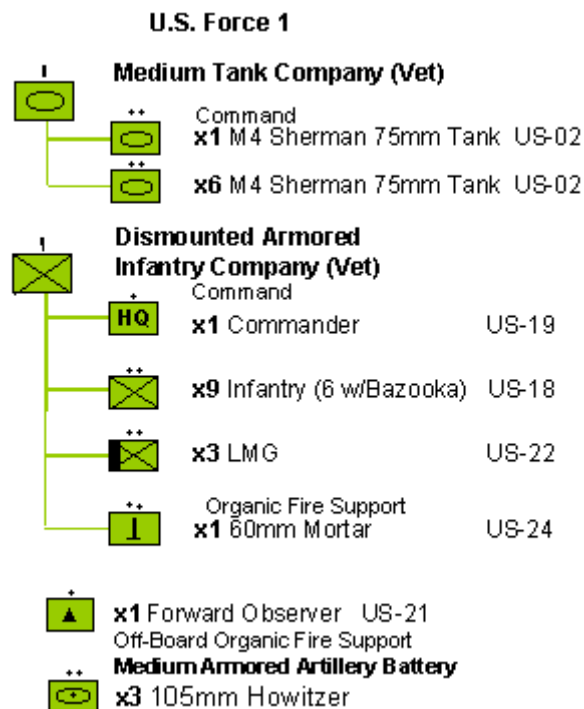
Situation

The Americans have broken out of the Bocage and are attempting to encircle German forces.

Mission

US Group 1 must punch through the thin crust of German defenses along road 1 and then exploit off map to demoralize and destroy German opposition along the division's line of advance.

Execution

Your forces consist of an mixed tank/dismounted infantry force. All US units are Veteran. Your forces are listed below.

U.S. Force 1

Medium Tank Company (Vet)
Command
x1 M4 Sherman 75mm Tank US-02
x6 M4 Sherman 75mm Tank US-02

Dismounted Armored Infantry Company (Vet)
Command
x1 Commander US-19

x9 Infantry (6 w/Bazooka) US-18

x3 LMG US-22

Organic Fire Support
x1 60mm Mortar US-24

x1 Forward Observer US-21
Off-Board Organic Fire Support
Medium Armored Artillery Battery
x3 105mm Howitzer

Starting Positions

- US Group 1 starts in the center of the map within the town perimeter.
- You have one dedicated artillery battery for your support. See the U.S. artillery special rules in the overview.

Objective

US Group1 must exit half or more of its units off the map at Road 1 to meet its objective.

Player Tip

Note for all American players: remember you can use mortars to throw smoke. American Group 1 has a straightforward job. However, with entrenched defenders to the front and heavy armor to the rear, it's easy to get distracted. The goal here is to get off the map through road 1, and if you let yourself get bogged down before you even leave the start line you'll never get there. Testing showed that the Germans can be driven back by a hard attack, so you need to do that fast to gain a bit of breathing room in which to shift to a methodical advance through the hedgerows. A hard hitting attacker does best here.

Briefing for Officer Commanding U.S. Group 2 Armored/Mech Infantry Team
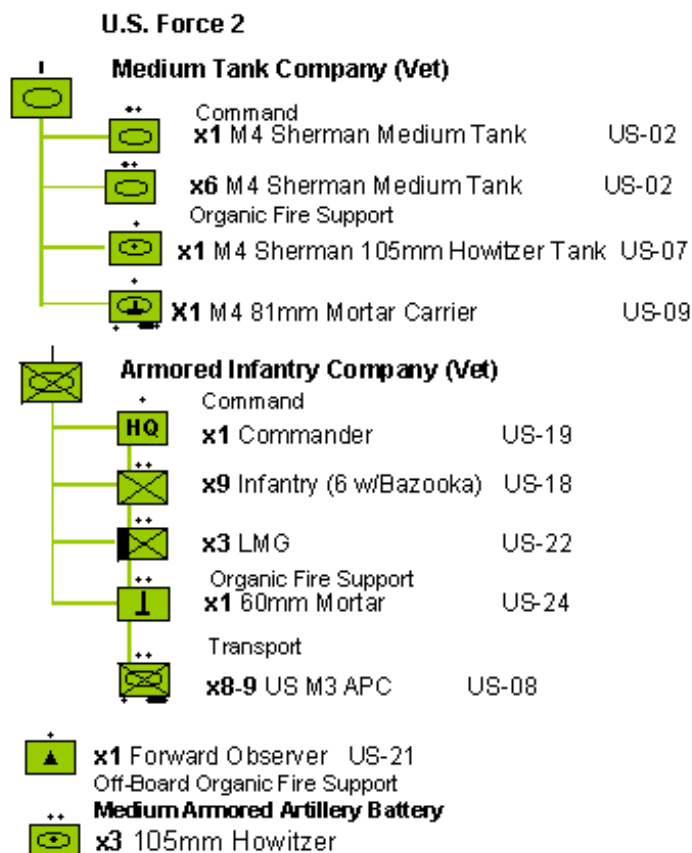
Situation

The Americans have broken out of the Bocage and are attempting to encircle German forces. US Group 2 is going to move off road 2 and then swing south to pocket and destroy the German opposition. In concert with Group 1's actions, this will break open the front in this area for exploitation by the division.

Mission

US Group 2 is to move to the town in the center of the map, then jump off from there and attack and exit the map along Road 2.

Execution

Your forces consist of an mixed tank/mech infantry force. All US units are Veteran. Your forces are listed below.

U.S. Force 2

Medium Tank Company (Vet)

Command		
x1 M4 Sherman Medium Tank	US-02	
x6 M4 Sherman Medium Tank	US-02	
Organic Fire Support		
x1 M4 Sherman 105mm Howitzer Tank	US-07	
X1 M4 81mm Mortar Carrier	US-09	

Armored Infantry Company (Vet)

Command		
x1 Commander	US-19	
x9 Infantry (6 w/Bazooka)	US-18	
x3 LMG	US-22	
Organic Fire Support		
x1 60mm Mortar	US-24	
Transport		
x8-9 US M3 APC	US-08	

x1 Forward Observer US-21
Off-Board Organic Fire Support

Medium Armored Artillery Battery

x3 105mm Howitzer

Starting Positions

- US Group 2 enters on turn 1 on road 4 in the southwest corner of the map.
- The Forward Observer may ride and call fire in one of the Shermans. If he does so, that Sherman can neither move nor use offensive fire on turns that the observer is calling fire. Alternatively, give the FO an unarmed jeep (US-13) as his attached transport.
- You have one dedicated artillery battery for your support. See the U.S. artillery special rules in the overview.

Objective

US Group 2 must exit half or more of its units off the map at Road 2 to meet its objective.

Player Tip

Note for all American players: remember you can use mortars to throw smoke. American Group 2 will have to keep focused, as distraction carries serious risk. The German defenders will be a major pain to get through if you let them set up in the town. Drive hard and get your infantry into the town, where their 3-1 advantage over the Germans can be brought to bear, then drive the panzers off and move off the road. For some reason players always go for the German recon troops, and this gives the German armor time to get ready, with typically bloody results. Don't get distracted, run in behind Group 1 as fast as you can, and then push on! Use smoke from the fire support to blind the enemy, maneuver on him, engage, and then exploit.

Briefing for Officer Commanding U.S. Group 3 Recon Team
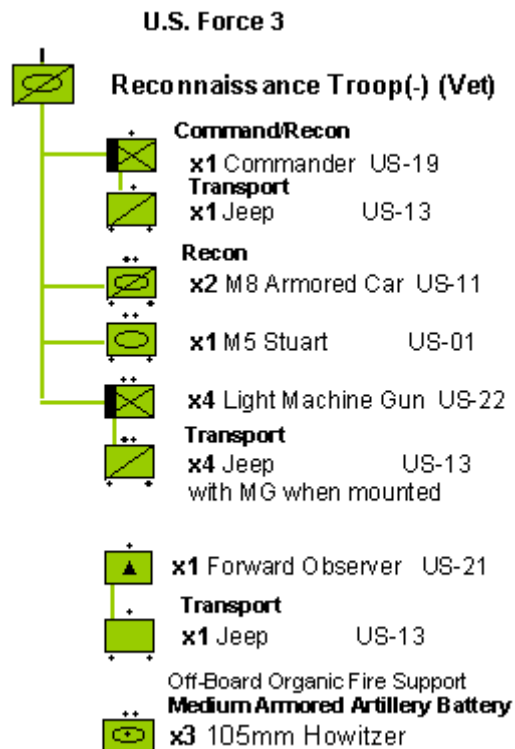
Situation

The Americans have broken out of the Bocage and are attempting to encircle German forces. US Group 3 has found the enemy and probed their defenses, contacted higher HQ with their intelligence (HQ has acted on it by ordering Groups 1 and 2 into action). You are now being recalled for replenishment.

Mission

You are to move your forces back to the U.S. rear areas to prepare for further missions.

Execution

Your forces consist of an recon force. All US units are Veteran. Your forces are listed below.

U.S. Force 3

Reconnaissance Troop(-) (Vet)

Command/Recon
x1 Commander US-19
Transport
x1 Jeep US-13

Recon
x2 M8 Armored Car US-11

x1 M5 Stuart US-01

x4 Light Machine Gun US-22
Transport
x4 Jeep US-13
with MG when mounted

x1 Forward Observer US-21
Transport
x1 Jeep US-13

Off-Board Organic Fire Support
Medium Armored Artillery Battery
x3 105mm Howitzer

Starting Positions

- U.S. group 3 starts within 12" of Road 2's exit from the map in the northeast corner.
- The U.S. FO has the option of riding in one of the armored vehicles instead of his jeep. If he does so, that armored vehicle may neither move nor use offensive fire on turns when the FO is calling fire.
- You have one dedicated artillery battery for your support. See the U.S. artillery special rules in the overview.

Objective

US Group 3 must exit the map via road 3. More than half of their units must exit in order for US Group 3 to meet its objective.

Player Tip

Note for all American players: remember you can use mortars to throw smoke. American Group 3 has a job that requires finesse. As a light recon element, they can't let themselves get targeted by the panzers, and they will have to move carefully around the German recon troops as well. Still, by sneaking around and taking potshots, they can slide through the battle and achieve their objective. Players will beg for additional fire support for this group, but the 37mm cannons on the Greyhounds and Stuarts are sufficient provided tank battles are avoided. Even so, in a couple of test games, this group has accounted for a Kubelwagon, a Puma, two 234/1 20mm armed AC's, a Mk IV, and two halftracks, and didn't suffer a loss. Not bad for light recon!

German Map

German Group 2

Road 3

Road 2

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German Group 3

German Group 1

Road 4

Road 1

Briefing for Officer Commanding German Group 1 Infantry Kampfgruppe
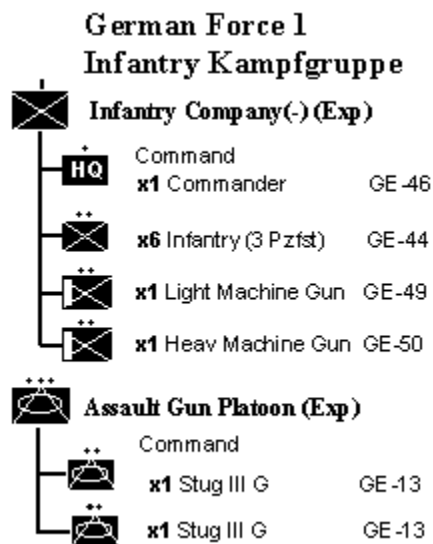
Situation

The Americans have broken out of the Bocage and are threatening to encircle German forces. Your force is the last line of defense for the infantry division remnants in this area.

Mission

You must hold up the U.S. advance to allow time for the rest of the division to regroup and form a new line. You are to prevent US forces from exiting the map from road 1.

Execution

Your forces consist of an infantry company with some assault guns in support. All German Force 1 units are experienced. Your forces are listed below.

Starting Positions

- You set up first anywhere within 24" of Road 1's exit off the map in the southeast corner.
- German units start improved-positions/hull-down.
- All units are initially unspotted and you may deploy hidden or using markers with 4 dummy counters in addition to your real forces.

Objective

German Group 1 achieves its objective if less than half of US Group 1 manages to exit on Road 1.

Player Tip

German Group 1 has the clearest of any of the objectives: defend the road.
This is accomplished by using the scattered hedgerows to best advantage. Defend forward, take some shots at the attackers and force them to deploy, then fall back to the next hedgerow line. Don't stay and duke it out unless you have to, though, as the Americans have a lot of firepower and can hurt you quickly if they get a couple of turns to array their units.

Briefing for Officer Commanding German Group 2 SS Kampfgruppe

Situation
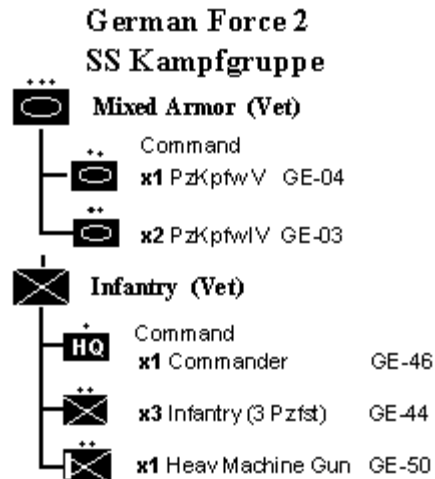
The Americans have broken out of the Bocage and are threatening to encircle German forces. You must stop them from exploiting their breakthrough.

Mission

Group 2 units enter as shown in the area North of the town, move to the town in the center of the map and prevent any American units from moving past the town or taking the town. You received orders earlier, before the Americans took the town, and while your orders may appear to have been overcome by events, they must still be carried out. (Yes, US Group 1 starts off in the town! You must now take the town and then defend it.)

Execution

Your forces consist of an mixed tank-infantry force. All German Force 2 units are Veteran. Your forces are listed below.

Starting Positions

- You enter the map on turn 1 in the area shown.
- German infantry may ride the tanks.

Objective

German group 2 achieves its objective if US Group 2 manages to exit less than half of its units on Road 2.

Player Tip

German Group 2 has perhaps the most interesting task of all. Taking the town and holding it isn't very complex in principle. The problem is that there are enemy units leaving the town, attacking the town, and running by the town, all while the other German units are active around the edges of the field. With some powerful armor units but only a platoon of infantry, this group has to react fast and reach out with their 75mm guns to keep the enemy at bay. This group is for a player who can react quickly under heavy, continuous action, and in testing it looks like the most entertaining group on the map.

Briefing for Officer Commanding German Group 3 Recon/Support Units

Situation

The Americans have broken out of the Bocage and are threatening to encircle German forces. Vital Logistics and staff units have been cut off and are attempting to make their way back to German lines.
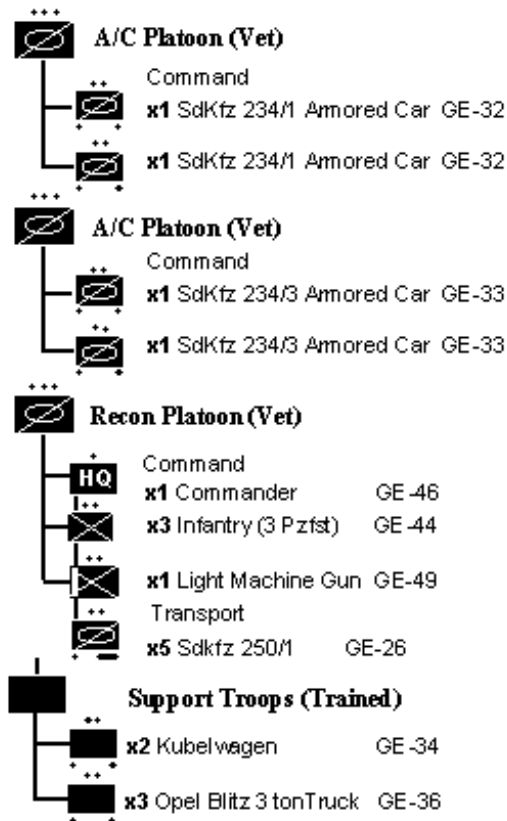
Mission

Your recon troops have been ordered to escort the escaping support troops in an effort to reach German lines. It is vital that these service troops reach German lines to ensure continued support of critical functions like planning, maintenance, and communications. The recon company has been ordered to see them through, regardless of casualties to themselves.

Execution

Your forces consist of a recon company escorting a small force of support troops. The recon troops are Veteran and Recon. The Support troops are treated as a separate maneuver element. They have no intrinsic commander, but the commander of the recon platoon can give them commander benefits for maneuver checks. Adverse maneuver checks to the support troops do not affect the recon troops and vice versa.

German Force 3
Recon/Support

A/C Platoon (Vet)
- Command
  - **x1** SdKfz 234/1 Armored Car GE-32
  - **x1** SdKfz 234/1 Armored Car GE-32

A/C Platoon (Vet)
- Command
  - **x1** SdKfz 234/3 Armored Car GE-33
  - **x1** SdKfz 234/3 Armored Car GE-33

Recon Platoon (Vet)
- Command
  - **x1** Commander   GE-46
  - **x3** Infantry (3 Pzfst)   GE-44
  - **x1** Light Machine Gun GE-49
- Transport
  - **x5** Sdkfz 250/1   GE-26

Support Troops (Trained)
  - **x2** Kubelwagen   GE-34
  - **x3** Opel Blitz 3 tonTruck   GE-36

Starting Positions

- Group 3 units set up in the perimeter shown to the west of the town. (Yes, that's in the American "rear".)

Objective

German Group 3 is to exit the map anywhere on the east edge. If 3 out of 5 of the support units escape off the map, German group 3 achieves its objective, otherwise it fails.

Player Tip

German Group 3 has an interesting job. They must get a gaggle of vulnerable soft troops through a combat zone unharmed. Don't be afraid to burn the recon units to protect the trucks, but on the other hand act like a recon unit and bounce when you hit enemy forces rather than engage. The Pumas can take on a Sherman and drive it off, but it's better to shoot and scoot, as the Shermans can clobber the Armored Cars. Sweat the details on screening the trucks, and you can work through the battlefield.