

**Bridgehead over the Rapido**  
**The New Zealand 28th (Maori) Battalion Attack**  
**on the Cassino Railway Station**  
**Cassino, Italy, February 17/18, 1944**  
*A Battlefront WWII Scenario by Bill Slavin*

*We were scared. All through the war we were scared... The Rapido River was in flood and to get to the railway station we had to follow the railway line... it was very dark – our artillery had been landing smoke screens so you couldn't see who you were shooting at...*

*-Maori Officer, 28 Battalion*

### Scenario

By mid-February, 1944 the U.S. 34<sup>th</sup> Division's attempts to force a breakthrough at Cassino had exhausted the division with only marginal gains in the hills west of the town. The front was now handed over to General Freyburg and his New Zealand Corps (8<sup>th</sup> Army, 2<sup>nd</sup> New Zealand Division and the 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Division) newly arrived from the Adriatic front. Freyburg was under pressure to launch a relieving action that would divert German resources from the mounting difficulties being experienced at the Anzio bridgehead to the north.

A few days before the attack the great abbey at Monte Cassino was reduced to rubble in the still highly controversial bombing of Monastery Hill. Over the previous months of fighting the monastery and its commanding position over the entire Liri Valley had become fixed in the Allied mind as being primarily responsible for the Allies inability to break the German's Gustav Line.

The abbey bombing on February 11 was followed by a series of attacks, culminating on the night of the 17<sup>th</sup> when the 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division launched its attacks into the mountains east of the monastery. These attacks were coordinated with an attempt by the 28<sup>th</sup> (Maori) Battalion to force a bridgehead over the Rapido River and seize the Cassino railway station and surrounding objectives south of the town. These paired scenarios cover the initial night attack on the station and the attempt to hold it against German counterattack throughout the 18<sup>th</sup>.

### Part 1: Night attack on Cassino Railway Station February 17/18

#### Duration

15 turns

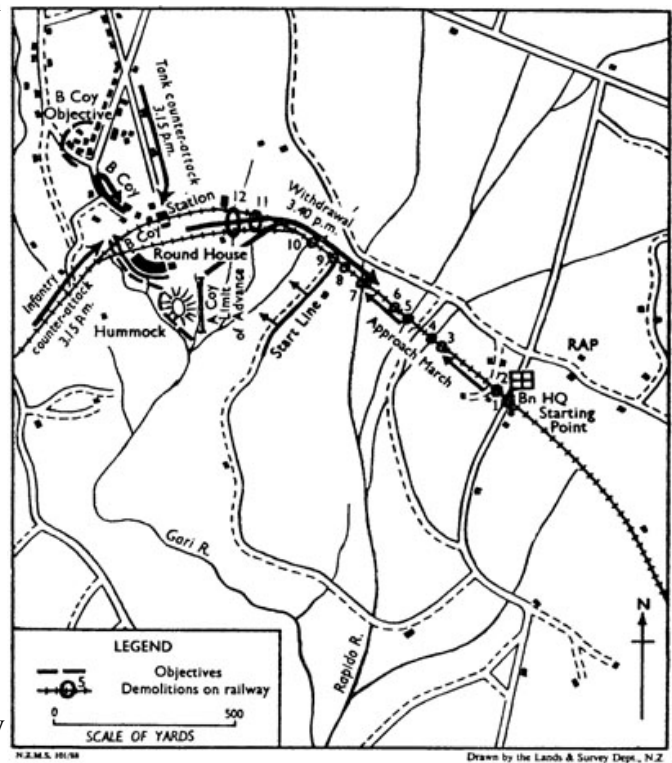
New Zealanders move first.

#### Turn Sequence

*Turn 1* Bombardment, New Zealanders move.

*Turn 10* Limited off board fire support once again becomes available.

*Turn 13* Moon comes out, use Night-Good Visibility rules



ATTACK ON CASSINO RAILWAY STATION, 17-18 FEBRUARY 1944

## **Special and Optional Rules**

### ***Grazing Fire***

The Grazing Fire rules found at <http://www.fireandfury.com/extra/mggrazing.shtml> are in effect, with the addition that the template once placed may not be moved and only cover modifiers (not smoke or “suspected” status) are applied. If the machinegun fires out of the template zone for any reason then it reverts to normal point fire. Note that no target is required for the placing of the template.

### ***Pre-registered fire***

Both sides are allowed a certain number of pre-registered firing points that are determined before the beginning of the game. Not only do these points give bonus to the Call for Fire but they may also be targeted at any time for random shelling missions regardless of whether they are in the observer's line of sight. In addition they may be targeted for concentrations if a valid target is present *anywhere* within the shelling template.

### ***Engineering Rules***

Beyond specific application of the engineering rules in breaching the demolitions (see “Engineering Objectives” below) the engineering rules found at <http://www.fireandfury.com/extra/engineering.shtml> are in effect for the passage and/or removal of barbed wire and minefields.

### ***Engineering Casualties***

If the engineering company receives 50% casualties or more it will immediately withdraw and exit from the friendly side of the board.

### ***Minefields***

All minefields are surface laid but are unknown to the attacker at the beginning of the game. Because it is night time they will only be spotted at 1”. Engineers, by conforming and executing an engineer action (following turn) may identify any dummy fields. Note that minefields may be degraded by artillery fire (see “Preliminary Bombardment”).

### ***Night Rules***

The “Night Combat Rules” found at [www.fireandfury.com/extra/night.shtml](http://www.fireandfury.com/extra/night.shtml) are in effect for Part 1 of the scenario, the night attack on the station. Moon-rise at 3 p.m. impacted the ability of the engineers to continue their work unobserved, so “Poor Visibility” becomes “Good Visibility” from Turn 13 onward.

### ***Night-Poor Visibility (Turns 1 to 12)***

#### ***Discipline Rating***

All units are rated one level lower than normal.

#### ***Spotting***

Down 3 spotting modifier

No Up 1 modifier for higher elevation

*Fire Combat Modifier* of -1 for all direct fire

#### ***Maneuver***

No rapid advance

No +1 command modifier for troops unless within 1 inch of commander

No +2 enemy proximity modifier for no LOS to spotted or suspected enemy

Modifier of -2 on Bog Down table (doesn't apply to troops in barbed wire).

#### ***Close Combat***

Modifier for "DEF: outflanked" changed to -2

### ***Night-Good Visibility (Turns 13 to 15)***

#### ***Discipline Rating***

All units are rated one level lower than normal.

#### *Spotting*

Down 2 spotting modifier

No Up 1 modifier for higher elevation

*Fire Combat Modifier* of -1 for all direct fire

#### *Maneuver*

No rapid advance

No +1 command modifier for troops unless within 1 inch of commander

No +2 enemy proximity modifier for no LOS to spotted or suspected enemy

Modifier of -1 on Bog Down table (doesn't apply to troops in barbed wire).

#### *Flares*

- Generally, a unit that can fire smoke can fire a flare out to its maximum range.
- A commander (troop stand) may also fire a flare out to 10 inches using a small template.
- Normally, like smoke, a unit may only fire a flare once per game, although many night scenarios may have reason to allocate more.
- Flares are fired in the Indirect Fire segment. The Call for Fire procedure is used if using a spotter.
- Each firing section gets 2 templates of the same size as its indirect fire template.
- The firing player places the centre of the beaten zone over a target just as in normal indirect fire.
- Any unit with an aiming point within the beaten zone is considered to be in Day - Good Visibility for purposes of being a TARGET for spotting and fire combat. In addition there is a modifier of +1 to the spotting table.
- Flares may only be fired at SUSPECTED or SPOTTED units, a prominent terrain feature or pre-registered firing point.
- A flare template remains on the table until the beginning of that player's next Indirect Fire segment.
- A unit with an aiming point inside a placed flare template suffers an ADDITIONAL "DOWN 2" modifier on the spotting table when trying to spot an enemy target (loss of night vision).

#### **Victory Conditions for Part 1**

##### *Marginal New Zealand Victory*

Round House and Railway Station in New Zealand control. No undisordered enemy within 3" of either of the objectives. Demolitions not completely repaired.

##### *Minor New Zealand Victory*

Hummock, Round House, Railway Station in New Zealand control. No undisordered enemy within 3" of any of the objectives. Demolitions not completely repaired.

##### *Major NZ Victory*

Hummock, Round House and Railway Station all in NZ hands (no undisordered enemy within 3" of any of the objectives). All of the demolitions repaired.

##### *Resounding NZ Victory*

Hummock, Round House, Railway Station and Cassino intersection all in NZ hands (no undisordered enemy within 3" of any of the objectives), at least half of A Squadron are beyond demolition 6, and all of the demolitions repaired.

##### *Major German Victory*

All of the four objectives are still in German control. No undisordered enemy within 3" of any of the objectives.

##### *Minor German Victory*

Any other result.

\*Note: Armour or vehicles cannot hold an objective.

## **Continuing to Part 2**

If all the demolitions are not repaired, supporting armour cannot get through on the night of the 17th-18th. In this case, if the New Zealanders have achieved a Marginal or Minor Victory continue to the second part of this scenario, the attempt to hold the station and area against German counter-attack on Feb. 18. If the New Zealanders achieve a Major or Resounding Victory or Germans have won a Major or Minor Victory at the end of Part 1, the battle's over!

## **Briefing for New Zealand Commanding Officer, 28 Battalion**

Your mission is to seize the railway station, round house and adjacent hummock from the enemy, establishing a secure perimeter over the Rapido River. Within this perimeter your engineers will attempt to bridge the final demolitions along the Cassino railway bed that will allow armour and support weapons to reinforce your bridgehead across the Rapido. Because the attack is being initiated over such a narrow front, only two companies will be used in the assault.

Probes have discovered that the enemy facing you across the river have also newly arrived from the Adriatic front, troops from the 90<sup>th</sup> Panzer Grenadier Division. They are well-entrenched with significant barbed wire barriers and minefields. The four objectives identified are to safeguard the accompanying engineers from enemy crossfire and artillery observation so they may carry out their work unmolested.

All depends on the successful repair of the demolitions along the railway bed during the night, the only ground capable of supporting vehicular traffic in this water-logged, blasted hell hole. The Shermans of A Squadron wait to advance along the railbed once it is repaired, to give you the armour support you will require to hold the bridgehead. Your attack will be supported by an intense preliminary bombardment on key points and executed in conjunction with the Indians' renewed attempt to seize the Cassino Monastery. You are to hold until relieved.

## **Deployment**

28 Battalion (A and B Cos.) deploy anywhere behind Start Line A.

Engineers begin at Demolition 5.

A Squadron is left off board and may only enter on railway bed once all the demolitions up to and including Demolition 4 have been repaired.

3" mortars may be placed anywhere within 5" of the east edge of board.

Two pre-registered firing points should also be selected for 5.5" artillery support when it once more becomes available on Turn 10. These will be the only points where it may be called in.

## **Engineering objectives**

In order for the New Zealand player to achieve a Major Victory in Part 1, the demolitions along the railway bed must be repaired over the course of the scenario. To do this, a company of non-combatant engineers are available along with bulldozers from the Mechanical Equipment Platoon.

The demolitions vary and demand different engineering actions to repair. Engineers may (in fact will have to!) work on several demolitions at once.

## **Demolition 1 (Bridge over Little Rapido)**

Bridging supplies have already been delivered on site prior to the beginning of the attack.

Building the bridge requires one successful "improve position" roll. Note that only one action is allowed per turn and it is the only action allowed.

The span requires the troops to be occupying the gap or conformed. Bulldozer may not help with this work as this branch of the Rapido was impassable to vehicles.

To place a span troops must successfully perform an "improved position" action.

Only one action is allowed per turn regardless of the number of troops involved. Roll on the "improve position" table (note that the engineering bonus does not apply as only engineers may execute this repair) with following modifiers:

+/- engineer discipline rating  
+1 more than one unit working on breaking down banks (+1 maximum)  
Successful roll indicates span completed  
Terrain effect of bridge: Vehicles cross at half speed.

### **Demolition 2** (Gap in railway bed)

Troops manually filling: Must be occupying gap or conformed, one successful engineering action required, troops must successfully perform “improved position” action. Note that engineer bonus *does* apply for this action and multiple attempts may be made at the same time as long as the units are conformed to the demolition and that only one action is allowed per turn and it is the only action allowed.

Bulldozer: Conform, perform engineering action (only action allowed), treat ditch as if manually filled (this happens automatically).

Treat as breach/bog down for vehicles to pass afterwards.

### **Demolition 3** (Bridge over Rapido)

At least three engineering units must be conformed to the demolition to proceed. The bulldozer may also be involved.

Two truckloads of bridging equipment must be carried and dismounted to within 2” of site. At least one truckload must be available before successfully completing the first span, although attempts may be made previous to arrival of supplies to improve chances on “improved position” roll.

Building the bridge requires two successful “improve position” rolls. Note that only one action is allowed per turn and it is the only action allowed.

Each span requires the troops (and bulldozer if involved) to be occupying gap or conformed.

To place a span troops must successfully perform “improved position” action.

Only one action allowed per turn regardless of number of troops involved. Roll on “improve position” table (note that engineering bonus does not apply as only engineers may execute this repair) with following modifiers:

+/- engineer discipline rating  
+1 more than one unit working on breaking down banks (+1 maximum)  
+3 if bulldozer conformed to gap (the Rapido was shallow enough and the bed firm enough that bulldozers could be used to pull the bridging over)  
Successful roll indicates one span completed (two necessary)  
Terrain effect of bridge: Vehicles cross at half speed.

### **Demolition 4** (Damaged culvert - treat as Demolition 2)

### **Demolition 5** (Gaps in both railway beds - treat as Demolition 2 for each – only one needs to be filled)









### **Demolition 6** ( Damaged culverts in both railway beds - treat as Demolition 2 for each gap – only one needs to be filled)

## Set Up – Part I

It will be noted that the map scale does not easily allow the number of BUS's indicated, as this battle was fought in close quarters. Rather than reduce the number of BUS's it is recommended that everything be scaled up by half. If playing 15mm, use the 20mm templates and measurements.



## Terrain

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  Water-logged Area - Treat as "Soft Ground" but impassable to vehicles |  Sparse area concealment, blocks LOS.   |
|  Stream - Wide and Deep - also considered bordered by "low embankment" |  Unpaved Road - Treat roads that traverse water-logged areas as "Soft Ground"   |
|  Stream - Shallow- also considered bordered by "low embankment"        |  Paved Road   |
|  BUS Stone   |  Railway - Treat as "Unpaved Road", all areas that traverse water-logged areas are also considered bordered by "low embankment" |

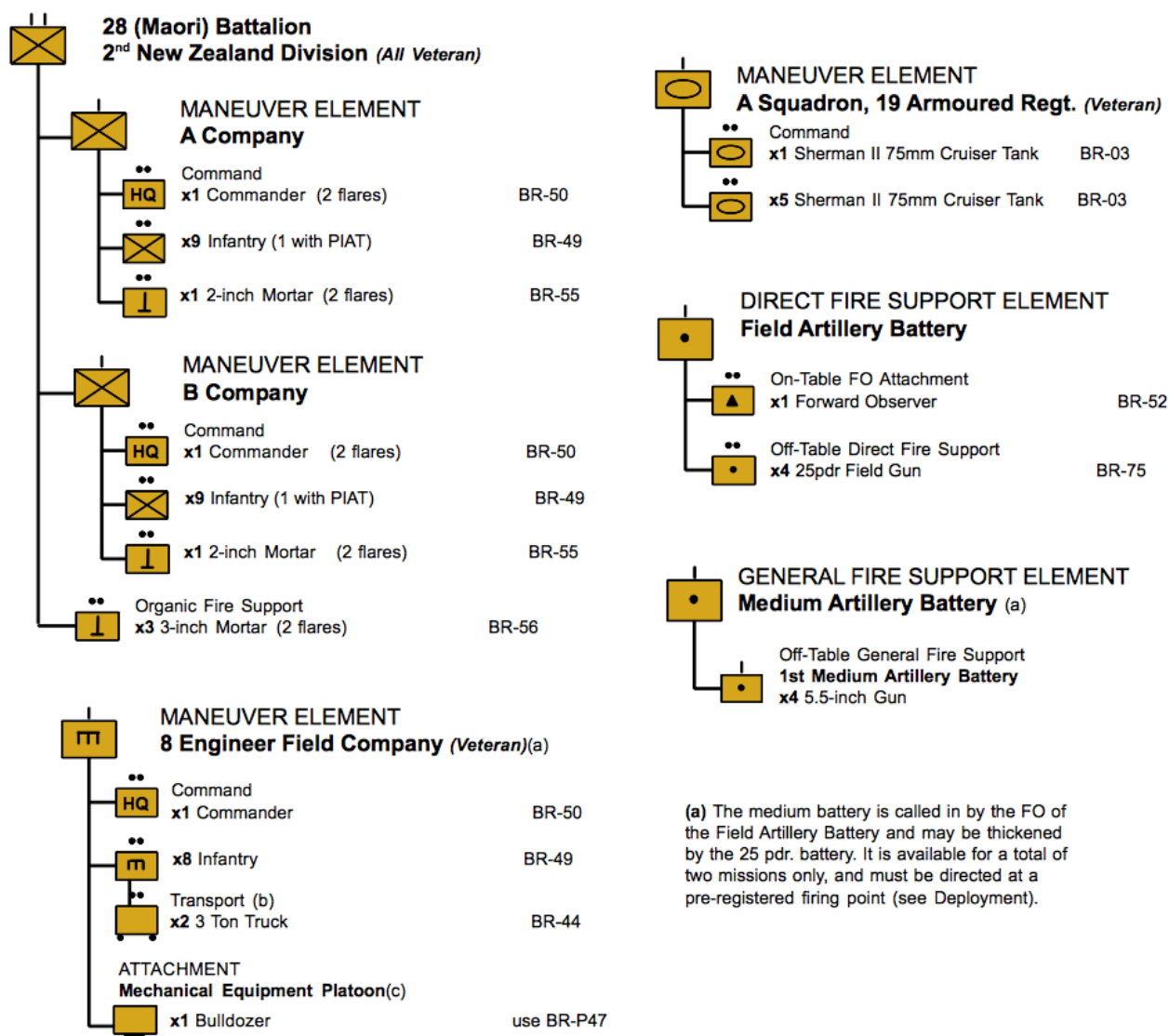
## Notes

Armour may not exit from embankment on to roads where they intersect railway. These are underpasses (and underwater!)

Troops may enter demolitions before being filled – treat as "Ditch - wide and deep".

There are no BUA's in this scenario.

## Allied Order of Battle



(a) These were non-combatant engineers, and should only be allowed to engage in direct fire or close combat if close assaulted by the enemy. In these instances treat as trained troops. If losses reach 50% they are forced to withdraw. In the actual battle there were two engineer companies, 6 and 8 Field Companies, but the number has been reduced to one to suit the scenario.

(b) Transport may be left offboard and brought on as needed when bridging supplies required.

(c) If bulldozer is knocked out a second is available on the next turn, entering along the railway bed from NZ side of board.

## **Preliminary Bombardment**

### **x4 Field Artillery Regiments (4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> NZ Artillery, 11<sup>th</sup> RA)**

(x3 Batteries per regiment)

#### *Field Artillery Battery*

x4 25 pdr. guns -1 vV & 0 vTGsV (2 template concentrations @ 0/+1)

### **x2 Medium Regiments (66<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> RA)A**

(x2 Batteries per regiment)

#### *Medium Artillery Battery*

x4 5.5" guns +1 vV & +2 vTGsV (2 template concentrations @ +2/+3)

### **X1 Heavy Battery (185<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battery – US) Turn 1 only**

x3 155mm Guns +1 vV & +2 v TgsV (1 template concentration @ +2/+3)

(a) From Turn 10 one battery of 25 pdrs. is available in Direct Support. From Turn 10 one of the medium regiments (5.5-inch) is also available in General Support but only for two pre-registered missions maximum.

## **Preliminary Bombardment**

- The preparatory shelling may be plotted after German hidden unit and dummy markers are placed on the table.
- The preparatory shelling fires for the first turn only and is treated as a barrage.
- The first turn's barrage comprises one heavy battery, two medium regiments (66<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> RA) and four field regiments (4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> Field Regiments, New Zealand Artillery + 11<sup>th</sup> RA)
- The artillery may be concentrated and may thicken each other's fire up to a maximum of +3 vV & +4 vTGsV.
- The 5.5"s may not be split into fire missions smaller than battery-sized (i.e. Four templates or two templates concentrated).
- Artillery may reduce minfields to "scattered" (+1 for passage). Roll for separately against "dug in troops" (-1).
- Artillery may create gaps in barbed wire. Roll for separately against "troops in log pillbox" (-2).
- From the Allied Turn 4 to Turn 9, all artillery is engaged in counter battery and harassing missions and not available for direct support.
- From the Allied Turn 10 one Field Battery will be available in Direct Support.
- From the Allied Turn 10 one Medium 5.5-inch Battery is also available in General Support, but only for a total of two pre-registered missions.
- No smoke is available in the initial barrage, but the attached Field Battery may fire smoke on Turn 10 and after. The battery has up to three rounds of smoke available (note that a single troop may, for example, therefore fire six rounds of smoke if the other troop fires none).



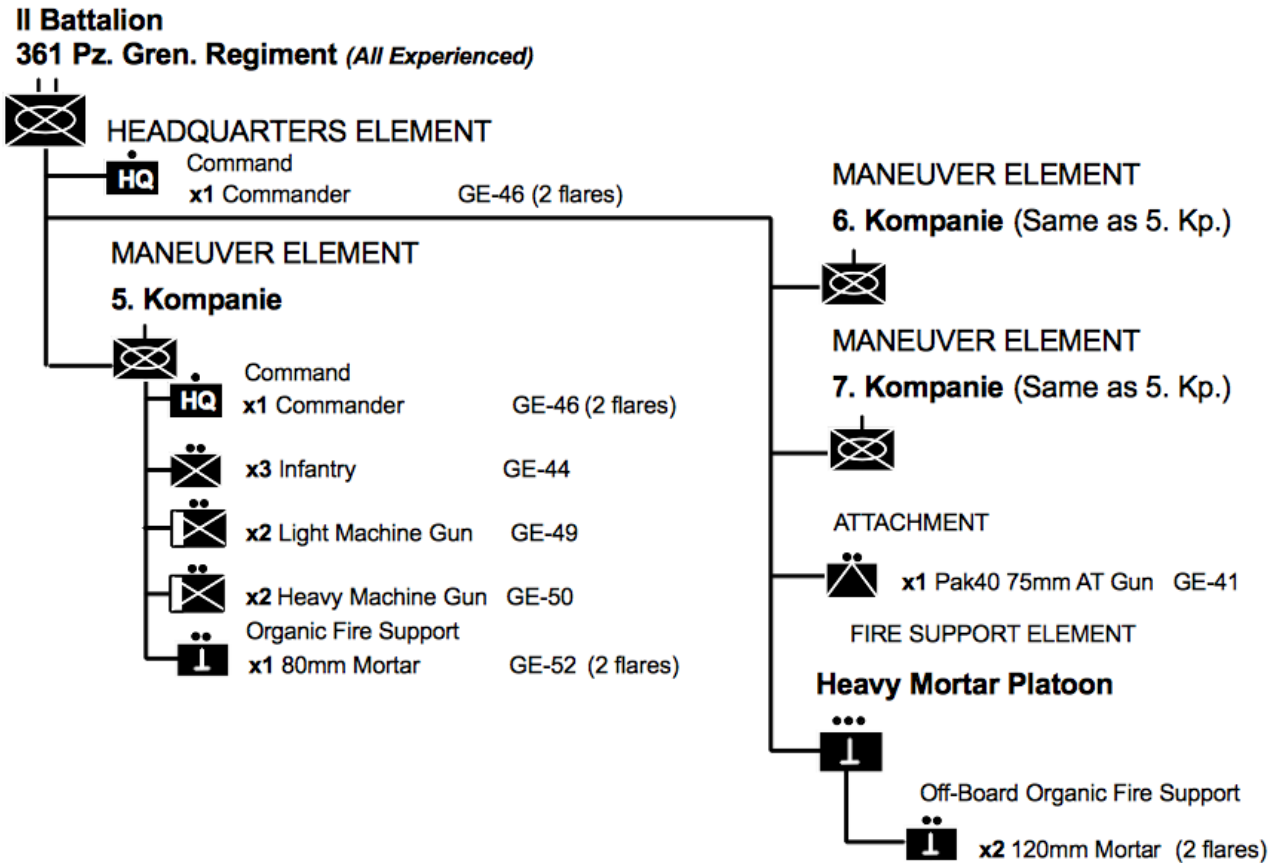
## **Briefing for German Commanding Officer, II Battalion, 361 Panzer Grenadier Regiment**

A brief hiatus from the front lines allowed your shattered division to rebuild after the gruelling battles with the Canadians at the Moro River south of Ortona in December, but incessant enemy shelling since your arrival on the Cassino front has taken a severe toll. Your now depleted battalion has taken over the fortifications and trenches in this portion of the Gustav Line to the west of the town of Cassino, joining the two battalions of 211 Regiment (71<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division) who hold the town proper. Your position here is crucial. The railway station and its surrounding buildings must fend off all enemy attack. Any successful bridgehead over the Rapido River and a subsequent breach of the Gustav Line could well pave the way for an armoured breakout by the enemy into the Liri Valley and on northwards to Rome.

### **Deployment**

- German units deploy as hidden markers anywhere west of Line A. 3 units each of 5 and 6 Kompanies must be deployed somewhere within any or all of the four objectives. 7 Kompanie must deploy west of the Gari River and may not cross the river in Part 1 under any circumstances although they may engage in direct and indirect fire.
- 10 dummy markers may also be deployed.
- All German units may begin dug in (including dug in to BUS's).
- No dug in units, pillboxes or fortified BUS's may be placed in the waterlogged areas.
- 25" of barbed wire (sections can be no less than 1.25" long) can be placed anywhere west of NZ start line (Line B). Their location is known by the enemy and placed on the table at the outset. At least 5" must be placed in Kp. 7's sector west of the Gari.
- Eight 1"X2" mixed minfields can be placed anywhere west of NZ start line (Line B). An additional five dummy minfields may also be placed. Engineers automatically discover dummy fields by the expenditure of one engineering action. Minfields may be placed in water-logged areas but function as "scattered" (+1 for passage). At least three real minfields must be placed in Kp. 7's sector west of the Gari. All minfields are considered surface laid but will only be discovered when an enemy unit is within 1".
- 6 concrete pillboxes can be placed, but at least two have to be west of the Gari R.. In lieu of pillboxes BUS's may be fortified (treat as concrete pillbox).
- Dug in troops west of Gari R. may have positions joined by trench lines.
- Germans may choose five pre-registered firing points for artillery anywhere within their deployment area.
- Germans may not move from their initial positions until first indication of Maori attack (an enemy unit is spotted or suspected).

## German Order of Battle



## Part 2: Afternoon German counter-attack on Cassino Railway Station on February 18 at 3:15 p.m.

The second part of this scenario covers the afternoon German counterattack on the station, supported by (reportedly) captured Allied armour. An earlier counterattack in the morning was broken up by a well-placed artillery concentration, but the Germans have marshalled the last of their local reserves in a final attempt to push the Maoris back over the Rapido and seal off the bridgehead.

### Duration

10 turns

If the German player at any time has no troop units left on board or the New Zealand player has no units west of Line A, then the game is immediately over.

### Turn Sequence

Germans move first, entering from board's edge (see Deployment).

### Special and Optional Rules

#### *Grazing Fire*

The Grazing Fire rules found at <http://www.fireandfury.com/extra/mggrazing.shtml> are in effect, with the addition that the template once placed may not be moved and only cover modifiers (not smoke or “suspected” status) are applied. If the machinegun fires out of the template zone for any reason then it reverts to normal point fire. Note that no target is required for the placing of the template.

### ***Smoke Screen***

All available Allied guns were employed in laying down a continuous smoke screen throughout the day on February 18 in order to screen the Maoris from observation by enemy artillery and mortars. At times the wind would blow the smoke away, but the screen would be quickly re-established.

To reflect this, consider the entire area blanketed by smoke, but at the first of each Allied turn roll a die.

1-7 Full smoke

8-9 Dissipating smoke

10 No smoke

### **No “No Line of Sight” bonus**

Because of the smoke and the uncertainty it generated the +2 “No Line of Sight to the enemy” bonus does not apply to maneuver checks. This is the case even if the smoke temporarily clears.

### **Victory Conditions for Part 2**

#### *New Zealand Victory*

Round House and Railway Station in New Zealand control. No undisordered enemy within 3” of either of the objectives.

#### *German Victory*

No undisordered New Zealand units west of Line A.

Any other result is a draw.

### **Briefing for New Zealand Commanding Officer, 28 Battalion**

After a night's bitter fighting the engineers have failed to repair all the demolitions along the railway bed leading into the Cassino station. As a result supporting armour and guns have been unable to get through to support your hard-won bridgehead. Your request for directions has been a response to “stay put”, with the hope that the bridgehead can be held until this evening when, under cover of darkness, the engineers may resume their repairs to the demolitions.

This morning's aborted attack by the enemy has given you breathing room and the continual smoke screen being laid down over your position has protected you from the worst of the enemy shelling. But your position is tenuous and the wind spurious. The arrival of the reinforcing platoon from C Company was welcome but small relief.

Now, through the smoke, enemy troops can be glimpsed moving in for another counterattack while, ominously, the clanking of tank tracks can be heard coming from the outskirts of Cassino.

### **Deployment**

28 Battalion (remainder of A and B Cos. from Part I plus the reinforcing platoon from C Company) begin Part 2 in Area C (roundhouse and station). A unit may also occupy any position within 2” of where they ended the previous scenario if they were in good order at the time, providing there are no undisordered Germans within 3”. Otherwise withdraw to a position at least 3” from the enemy. All begin in improved positions unless occupying enemy fortifications.

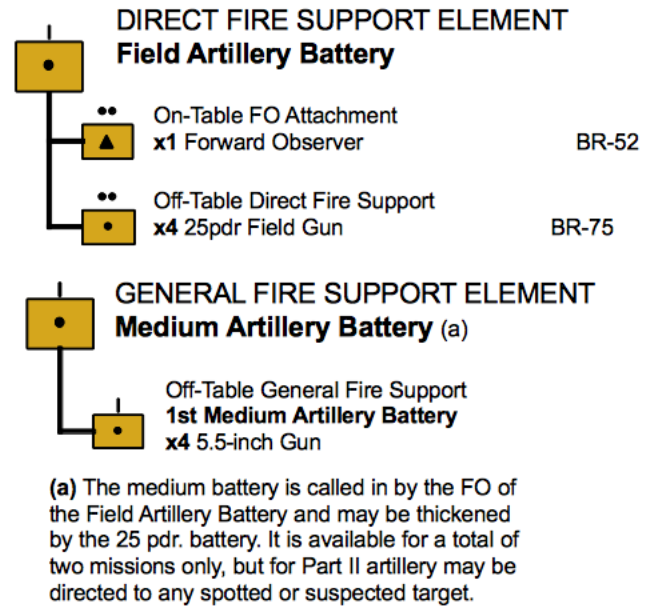
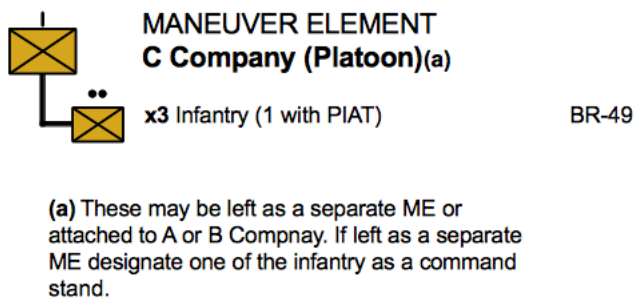
The platoon from C Company may position anywhere within Area C and may be attached to either company if desired. They also begin in improved positions.

The FOO, if still present from Part 1, may be attached to either Company A or B. If the FOO didn't survive, replace it with a new FOO. Note that losses from Part 1 are still in effect for Part 2 for maneuver checks.

Commanders are considered in “command posts” for this part of the scenario.

## Allied Order of Battle

### Reinforcements for Part II *(All Veteran)*

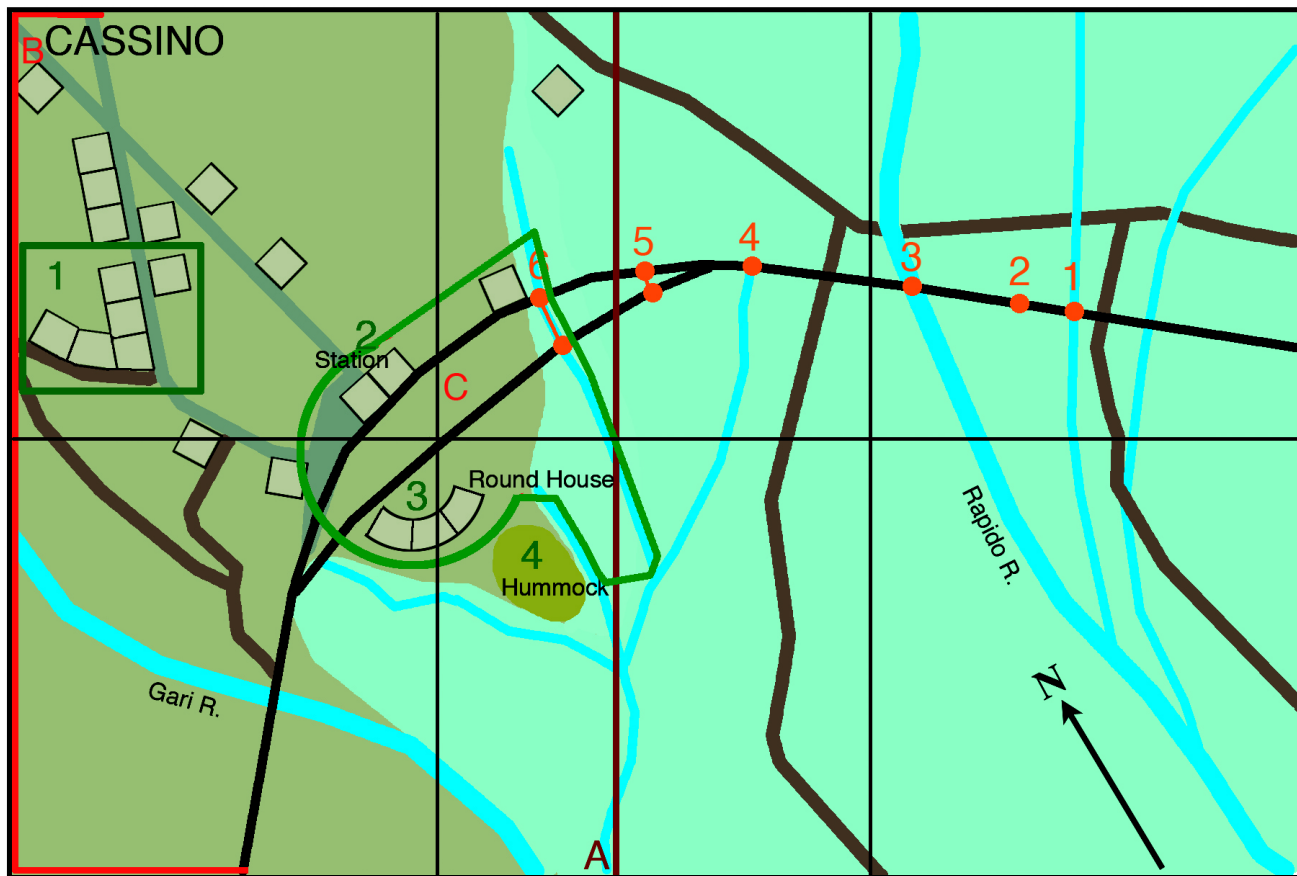


### Fire Support









The New Zealanders have at their disposal any of the battalion mortars from Part 1 that are still available. They begin in the same positions they occupied in Part 1.

In addition the field battery and medium artillery battery that became available on Turn 10 are also available for Part 2. The medium battery is in general support and restricted to two missions, but may be concentrated and thickened by the field battery.

## Set Up – Part II



## Terrain

- |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
|  | Water-logged Area - Treat as "Soft Ground" but impassable to vehicles |  | Sparse area concealment, blocks LOS.   |
|  | Stream - Wide and Deep - also considered bordered by "low embankment" |  | Unpaved Road - Treat roads that traverse water-logged areas as "Soft Ground"   |
|  | Stream - Shallow- also considered bordered by "low embankment"        |  | Paved Road   |
|  | BUS Stone   |  | Railway - Treat as "Unpaved Road", all areas that traverse water-logged areas are also considered bordered by "low embankment" |

## Notes

Armour may not exit from embankment on to roads where they intersect railway. These are underpasses (and underwater!)

Troops may enter demolitions before being filled – treat as “Ditch - wide and deep”.

There are no BUA's in this scenario.

## Briefing for German Commanding Officer, II Battalion, 361 Panzer Grenadier Regiment

The enemy has managed to hold on to their fragile bridgehead until dawn. Now ringed by German forces, their position is tenuous, but dangerous. Despite your paratroops' success in repelling the attacks on Monte Cassino during the night, this salient here represents a serious threat to maintaining the Gustav Line. They must not be allowed to retain their bridgehead beyond the end of the day or without doubt the final demolitions along the railway will be repaired and enemy armour will pour into Cassino from the south.

Unfortunately your last reserves have been almost spent. An attempt at first light this morning was scattered by their damned artillery and a continuous smoke screen has covered the Maoris from effective observation from the massif which might have allowed your own guns to be brought to bear. But smoke can be a double-edged sword and 7 Kompanie is now making cautious headway into the environs of the train station under its cover. A second arm of the attack, employing tanks captured earlier from the Americans, is converging on the bridgehead from the town. With luck the last of the defenders will be thrown back across the Rapido by nightfall.

### German Deployment

All German units in good order (other than 7 Kp.) are left on board where they were at game end and may begin in improved positions (or fortified positions if those are already occupied). Move any within Area C away from the New Zealand deployment area 3" towards your friendly edge of the board.

These units may engage the enemy in direct fire but may not move from their positions (other than to change facing) unless required to do so by a maneuver check or forced out by Close Combat. If forced to move, they may not move from their new position except under the same conditions. All losses from Part I will count towards their maneuver rolls. In other words, they will not be actively involved in the renewed attack.

The assaulting German troop reinforcements may enter anywhere along the board edge marked in red on Turn 1. The German armour enters from the Cassino outskirts at Point B on Turn 1.

### German Order of Battle

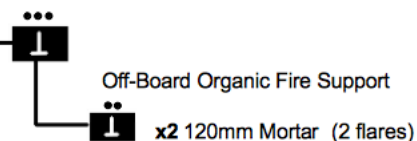
#### MANEUVER ELEMENT

##### 7. Kompanie



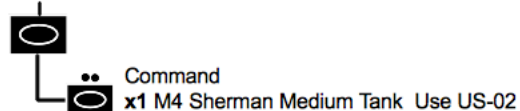
#### FIRE SUPPORT ELEMENT

##### Heavy Mortar Platoon



#### MANEUVER ELEMENT

##### Panzer Platoon (Reduced) (a) (Veteran)



(a) New Zealand accounts identified the tanks in this attack as captured Shermans.

## Historical Outcome

On the night of the 17<sup>th</sup> A and B Companies of the 28<sup>th</sup> (Maori) Battalion advanced through the water-logged fields bordering the Rapido as a multitude of guns tore into the Cassino railway station and its environs. B Company rapidly seized the station and roundhouse and advanced towards the intersection on the edge of the town before being turned back by machinegun fire and their own shells falling short and inflicting casualties. A Company had less luck, being brought up short at the foot of the hummocks south of the roundhouse by a raging stream coupled with minefields and barbed wire. Ways were looked for around these barriers but A Company was held at bay by machineguns emplaced on the hummocks and were unable to take their objective by dawn.

Meanwhile the engineers worked feverishly through the night attempting to breach no fewer than eight demolitions that the Germans had wrought on the railbed. Despite delays, six were repaired and the seventh reconnoitred before a rising moon brought intensified German artillery and machinegun fire, making it impossible to proceed any further.

Dawn's light on the 18<sup>th</sup> found the Maoris with a slim hold on the railway station and roundhouse and with orders to hold on throughout the day so that the armour, promised the night before, could make its way up in support once the final demolitions were repaired under cover of the following night. An early morning enemy attack was disrupted by artillery concentrations, but a second one, initiated at 3:15 p.m. succeeded. The infantry, attacking along the railway line, were too close by the time they were spotted through the smoke to be engaged by artillery fire. Meanwhile an armoured attack coming from Cassino, reported to be Shermans, was halted temporarily by artillery concentrations, but eventually forced its way into the station yards. With their positions overrun, the Maoris were sent reeling back across the Rapido. Of the two companies, 20 were killed, 80 wounded and 24 missing or taken prisoner. The battle left the Germans with 19 dead, 102 wounded and 18 taken prisoner.

## Designer's Notes

There are undoubtedly many inaccuracies and best guesses in the design of this scenario, most notably the troops actually employed by the Germans. New Zealand accounts identify the defenders of the railway station and roundhouse as III Battalion, 361 Pz. Grenadier Regiment, but many sources say that the third battalions in this and other units in the 90th Pz. Grenadier Division, although existing on paper, were never actually formed. So I have opted to identify them as the II Battalion.

Although there was a second line of fortifications beyond the Gari I have no evidence that these positions were occupied by the 361<sup>st</sup> other than a general mention that two battalions of 211 Regiment (71<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division) held the town proper. Still other sources don't have the 90<sup>th</sup> Pz. Grenadier Division at Cassino at all at this time, so the units of the 361<sup>st</sup> may have been the only ones present! The front was very fluid as the Germans masterfully moved units from Cassino to the Anzio bridgehead and back as needed over those crucial days in February, but it makes it difficult to determine their location at any given time.

It should also be noted that in reality two full companies (less a platoon ) of field engineers were involved in the repair work, the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Field Companies. But in the interests of compressing an entire night's fighting into a few hours I bathtubbed the demolitions on the railbed down to six and reduced the number of engineers on the board accordingly.

At the end, it is all how it plays and to my mind the tension and drama of the Maoris' attack along with the valiant but in the end futile attempt by the engineers to enable armour to get up to support them is passably well reflected here.

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