

DO OR DIE

Libya, February 6th 1941

Italian forces under Generals Piana and Bergonzoli attempt to break through the British encirclement at Beda Fomm

Overview

During the Battle of Beda Fomm (5-7 FEB 1941) the 10th Italian Army (Xa Armata Italiana) tried to avoid encirclement and destruction by retreating along the Via Balbia (Balbia Road) to Agedabia. Unfortunately for the Italians, the British created an ad hoc motorized group called CombeForce (named for its commander Lt-Col John Combe) which managed to outmaneuver the Italian Army and establish a blocking position on the Italian line of retreat near Sidi Gibrin.

At Km 52 of Via Balbia there were a series of small hills known as Rus Ben Hagen. The most prominent terrain features of this area were a stretched out but rounded relief renamed by the British "The Pimple", and nearby, a hummock with a white grave, Sidi Ahmed Bu Lteif, called "The Mosque" by the British.

The Pimple provided a good observation point along the Via Balbia. For this reasons the possession of the Rus Ben Hagen was critical for both the Italians and the British.

The first Italian attempt to break through on 5FEB by the 10th Bersaglieri Regiment was a disaster with almost the whole regiment annihilated.

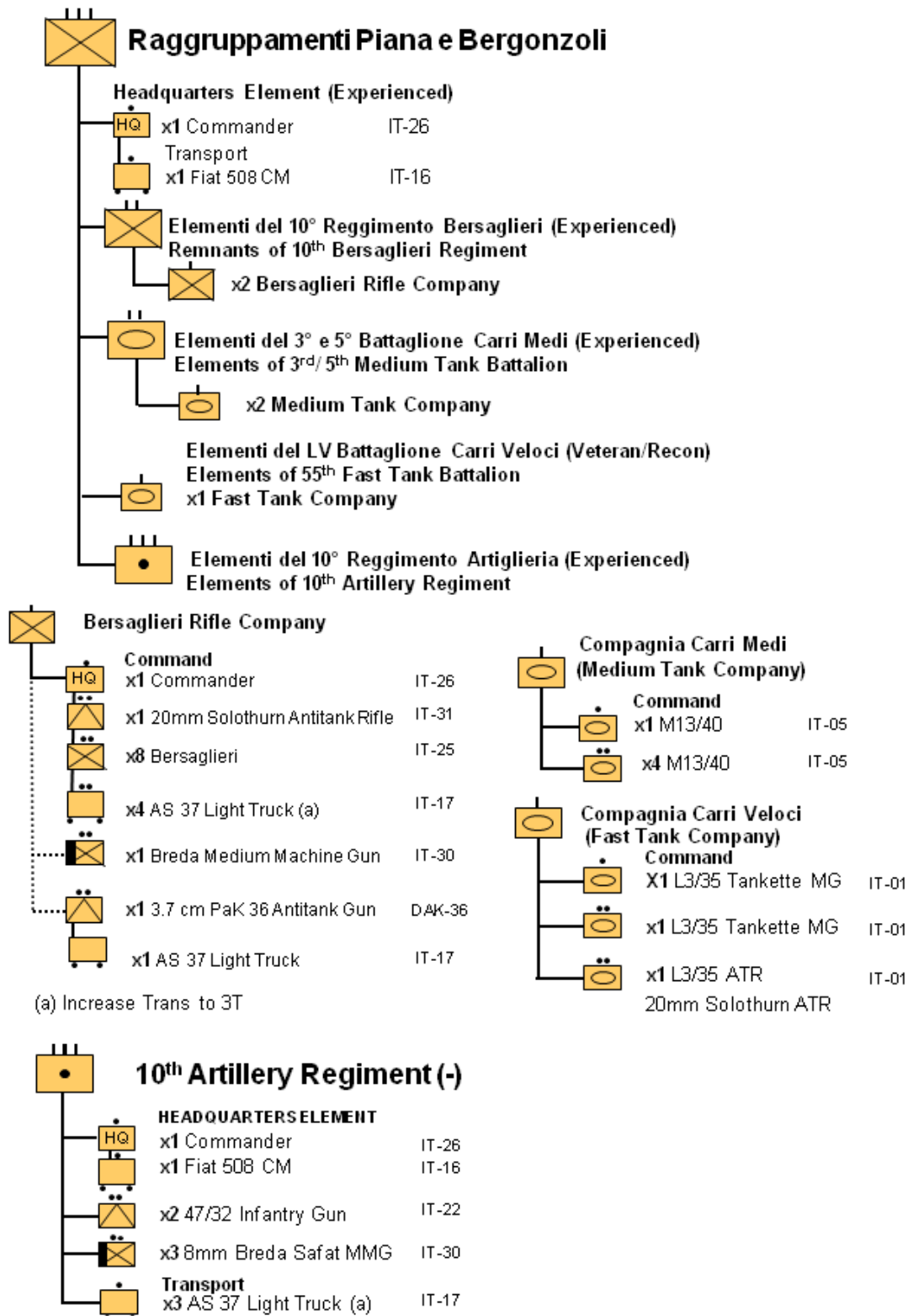
The Italians tried again in the morning of the 6th of February; at 08.45 Generale "Barba Elettrica" Bergonzoli (General Annibale Bergonzoli nicknamed by his men "Electric Beard") collected his and General Piana's forces and renewed the attack.

He was well aware that he had no choice; it was a "Do or Die" situation; the taking of Rus Ben Hagen means the salvation of most of the 10th Italian Army, while failure to do so will mean their capture.

DO OR DIE

Italian Briefing

Forces



Italian Setup and Victory Conditions

Setup

- The Italians move first and enter the table from North side (right side of the map). They may use rapid advance on their first move. All Italian units enter on the first turn, but must plot their entry in before the game begins as outlined below.
- Before the British deploy, the Italian player must preplan the entry points and order of entry for the Bersaglieri and Artillery ME that enter on the road. Also, entry points for the 3 Armored ME must be specified, although units that are part of an armored ME may enter anywhere within an armored command radius of its entry point.
- The Bersaglieri and Artillery MEs must enter on Turn 1 on the Balbia road according to the order specified in the pregame plan. From the second turn onward turn they are free to move without restriction.
- Increase the transport capacity of the trucks to 3 infantry stands (instead of normal 2)
- Scenario length: 15 turns

Italian Objective

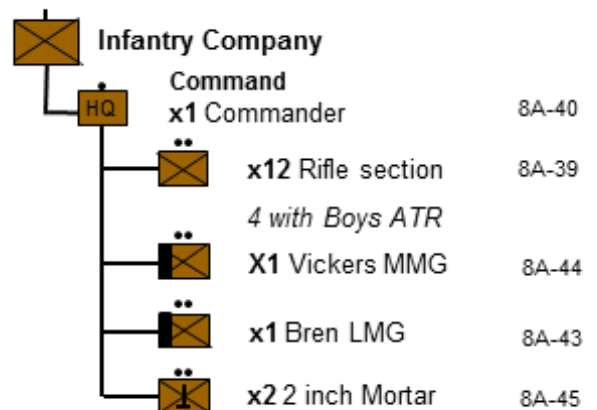
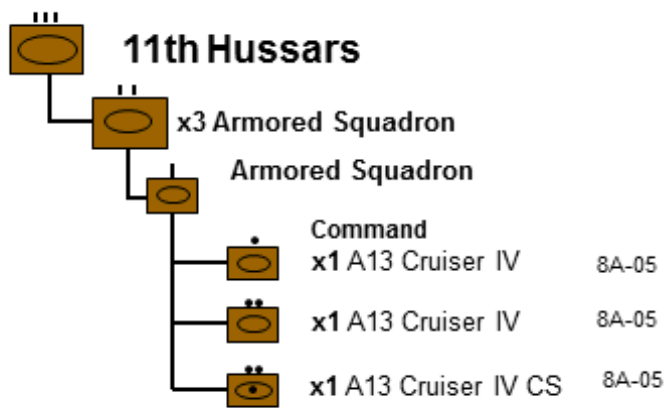
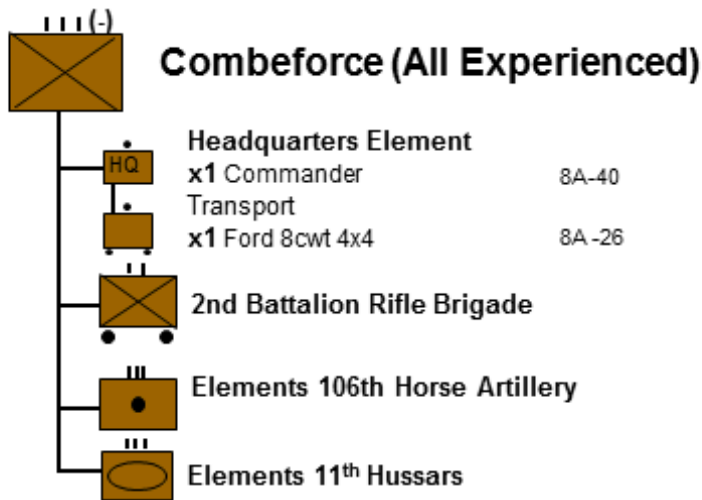
Control both the Pimple and the whole hill north of the Balbia road. Casualties are not a factor in determining victory.

Control of a hill is determined by either occupying or being the last to occupy a hill with no enemy units in good order on that hill. Enemy units which are suppressed or disordered do not contest control. The British are considered to control both the hills at the beginning of the game. If neither side controls both hills at the end of the game, the game is considered a draw. Historically, it would be a marginal British victory because the Italians could not use the Via Balbia to continue their retreat, but for game purposes it is a draw.

DO OR DIE

British Briefing

Forces



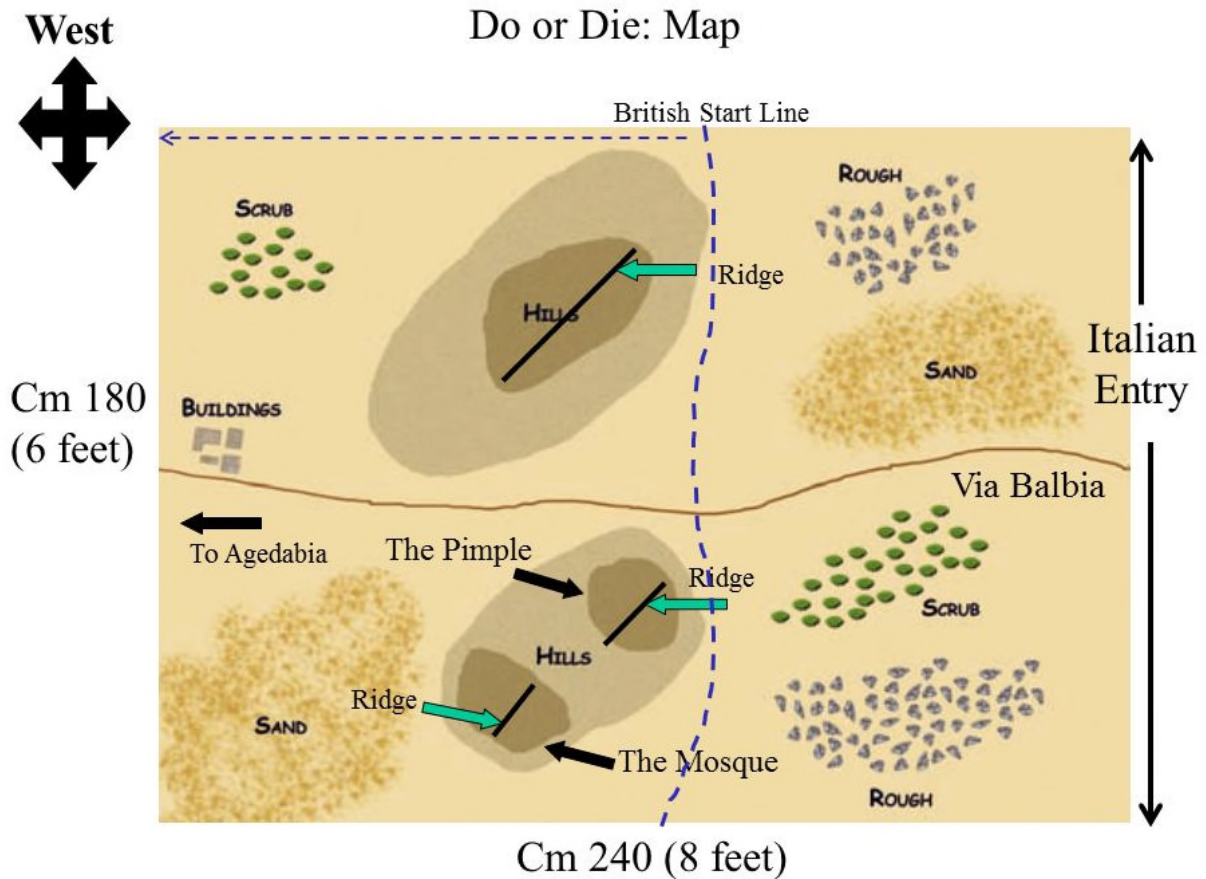
British Setup and Victory Conditions

Setup

- British troops deploy first on the 2 hills and/or South of the hills.
- 1 Infantry Company may start the game in Improved Positions if positioned on the Pimple/Mosque hill.
- The 106th Horse Artillery AT Battery can start the game already Hull Down and emplaced.
- Scenario length: 15 turns

Objective: Control both hills (the one with The Pimple and Mosque and the one West of the Via Balbia) at the end of the scenario. Casualties are not a factor in determining victory.

Control of a hill is determined by either occupying or being the last to occupy a hill with no enemy units in good order on that hill. Enemy units which are suppressed or disordered do not contest control. The British are considered to control both the hills at the beginning of the game. If neither side controls both hills at the end of the game, the game is considered a draw. Historically, it would be a marginal British victory because the Italians could not use the Via Balbia to continue their retreat, but for game purposes it is a draw.



- Soft Sand: as Terrain Chart
- Scrub: as Bush
- Rough: as Terrain Chart
- Via Balbia is paved.
- Village: 3 stone buildings. Each building may contain 1 infantry stand.
- Advanced Rules:
 - [Sneak manouvre Action](#)
 - [MG Grazing Fire](#)
 - [Knocked Out Vehicle Table](#)
- Map size: cm 240 x 180 (8 feet x 6 feet)

Historical outcome

On 6FEB the Italians launched several attacks to conquer both hills but only a few vehicles succeeded in breaking through.

On the morning of the 7th, General Bergonzoli gathered his last forces:

- His HQ
- a thin motorcycles platoon
- two 20mm sections
- 7 Tankettes, remnants of the LX Battaglione
- 30 M13 medium Tanks

At 08.00 he ordered the assault. The M 13, careless of the losses, went for the 2nd Battalion of the Rifle Brigade; 5 tanks smashed through the British line and almost overran the HQ . A single valiant but very lucky 2pdr AT gun stopped all the tanks.

The battle was over. At 09.00 General O'Connor transmitted in clear to General Wavell: "Fox killed in the open".

The battle of Beda Fomm annihilated the remnants of the 10th Italian Army, only 7.000 Italian soldiers and 1.300 Lybians reached Tripolitania.

Bibliography

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