

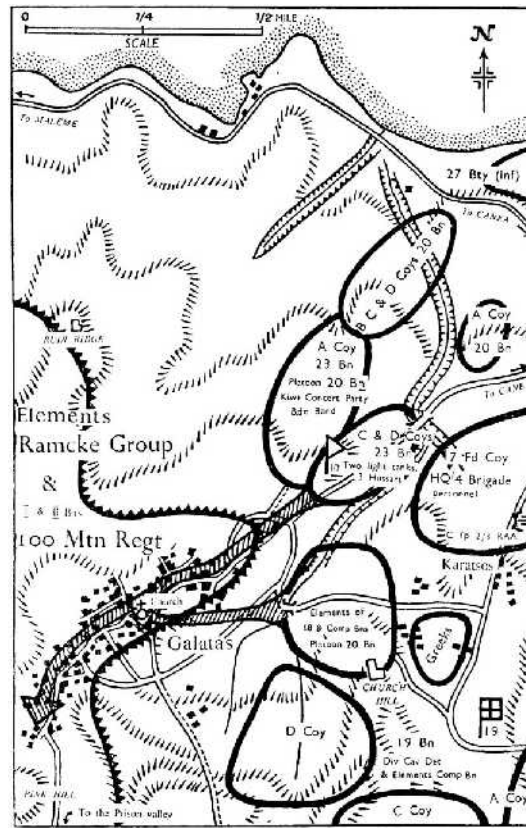
Galatas Counterattack

Galatas, Crete, May 25, 1941

A Battlefield WWII Scenario by Bill Slavin

"It was one of the best and most effective efforts made by any single battalion in the division throughout the war."

General Kippenberger summing up 23rd Battalion's attack on Galatas



COUNTER-ATTACK AT GALATAS, 25 MAY

Scenario

On May 20, 1941 the Germans launched Operation Mercury, the airborne invasion of Crete. Over the following four days they secured the Maleme airfield and steadily pushed the defending forces back as they gained a grip on the island.

Crack German paratroops and mountain infantry, pushing strongly along the Galatas Line, finally forced the New Zealand Composite Battalion (an ad hoc battalion formed from anti tank gunners, engineers and support troops) and 18 Battalion from their positions around the village of Galatas, seizing it shortly before dusk on the 25th and thus threatening the entire Galatas line.

The New Zealand 23rd Battalion, in reserve, was called upon to help and arrived about 7 p.m. With a German breakthrough pending immediate action was called for. A quick run in and out of the village by two Vickers VI light tanks of the 3rd Hussars with guns blazing was all the reconnaissance time allowed. The tanks returned with the information that the place was "stiff with Jerries".

One of the tanks' commanders and a gunner had been wounded and with no replacements, two men attached to HQ Company of the 23rd but with no previous tank experience volunteered to step in. At 8:10, with the sun setting, the order was given to attack. As the tanks moved back up the road towards the village, C and D companies of the 23rd Battalion, with fixed bayonets, fell in along both sides of the road.

Joined by elements of the recently ousted 18th Battalion intent on revenge, the 20th and other units, the New Zealanders swept forward in what has been called "one of the greatest bayonet charges of the Second World War".

Duration

Game ends after 8 turns or no German units are left within any of the BUS's that comprise Galatas (BUS's within German set up area).

Turn Sequence

The New Zealanders move first.

Special Turn Events

Turn 1

The entire game is played using the night rules listed below. No flares may be fired on Turn 1.

For Turn 1 of the game (or when the attacking units are first spotted) all German units are considered disordered and are unable to regroup or maneuver (ignore modified die results of 2 or greater). This is to reflect the element of surprise achieved initially by the New Zealand attack.

Turn 2

Elements of 18, 20 and Composite Battalions and other units may leave their deployment zones.

On the German maneuver phase of Turn 2 (or the turn following the attacking units first being spotted) German units may regroup and hold position but not move (ignore modified die results of 3 or greater).

Turn 3

On the German maneuver phase of Turn 3 (or two turns following the attacking units being first spotted) German units may regroup and maneuver as normal.



C and D Company, supported by Lieut. Farran's Vickers Mk. VI counterattack Galatas at sundown.

Scenario Specific Rules

1. Night - good visibility (adapted from BF optional rules www.fireandfury.com/extra/night.shtml)

Discipline Rating

All units are rated one level lower than normal.

Spotting

1. Down 2 spotting modifier
2. No Up 1 modifier for higher elevation

Fire Combat Modifier of -1 for all direct fire

Maneuver

1. No rapid advance and panic for only one action only
2. No +1 command modifier for troops unless within 1 inch of commander
3. No +1 command modifier for vehicles unless within 4 inches and line of sight (LOS) of commander
4. No +2 enemy proximity modifier for no LOS to spotted or suspected enemy
5. Modifier of -1 on Bog Down table

2. Flares (from BF optional rules www.fireandfury.com/extra/night.shtml)

- 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.
- A unit may only fire a flare once per game.
- 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 (one small template for commander).
- The firing player places the center 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 or a prominent terrain feature.
- 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).

3. German retreat

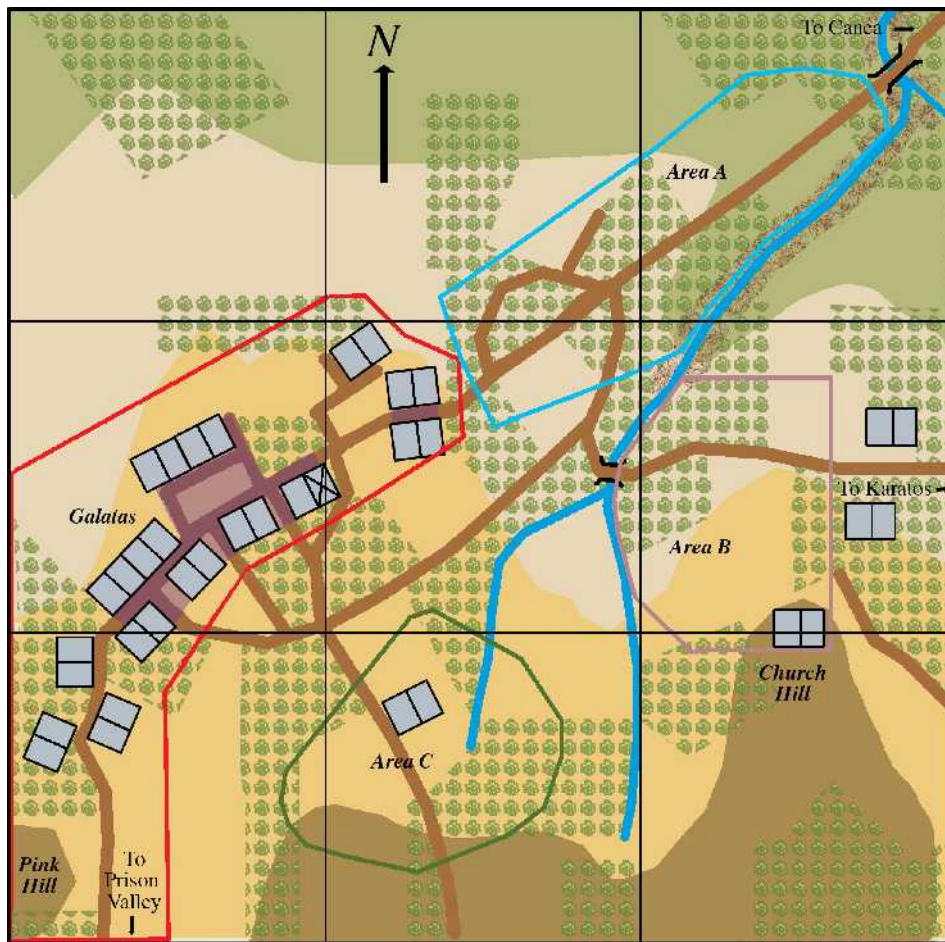
Any German unit that retreats out of the German deployment zone (German line of retreat will always be towards the western side of the board) is considered knocked out and will not reenter the fight.

4. No go areas

Because there were significant troops in the area for both sides (only a fraction of the five German battalions who had attacked in the Galatas area were actually occupying the town), New Zealand units are restricted to operating no more than 3" west of any of the roads leading to Galatas or a Galatas BUS. German units are restricted to operating only within their initial deployment zone.

5. Tank Fright

Not scenario specific but important to remember that "tank fright" modifier on close combat is in effect.



Terrain Chart

- Level 4
- Level 3
- Level 2
- Level 1
- Stone BUS (X indicates level two tower)
- Unpaved Road
- Stream (Shallow)
- Orchard
- Embankment (High)

Terrain

General

Like most of the terrain in Crete, the area around Galatas consisted of olive orchards, vineyards and small fields. Areas marked as "orchards" on this map would be a patchwork of interconnecting fields of olive trees and vineyards

Slopes

All terrain for this scenario is treated as gentle slope, but "rocky" for vehicles only (half speed, bog down check).

Roads

All roads are unpaved but allow Full Speed movement regardless of terrain.

Terrain effects are not cumulative.

Galatas BUA

Treat streets and open areas within the main Galatas BUA (purple shaded area) as "Sparse Edge/Deep".

Victory Conditions

Game ends after 8 turns or when all German units are driven from the Galatas BUS's.

Major New Zealand Victory

No undisordered enemy stands within the main Galatas BUA and the 6 scattered BUS's just east of the town (The historical result. Some German units still occupied the 6 BUS's southwest of Galatas.)

Major German Victory

No undisordered enemy troop stands in any of the Galatas BUS's.

Any other result is a draw.

Briefing for New Zealand Commanding Officer Col. Kippenberger, Commander 10th Brigade and acting commander, Galatas Front

With the 18th and Composite Battalions beaten out of their positions in and around Galatas, your entire Galatas front is in danger of breaking. German paratroops and mountain troops have taken the village and are now pushing in behind the three squadrons of divisional cavalry on Pink Hill under Major Russell to the south. You have just thrown a mixed group into the line north of the village (the Kiwi Concert Party and some of HQ and D Companies of the 20th) to help bolster the line there.

After having fought at Maleme, the 23rd Battalion along with other 5 Brigade units has spent yesterday in reserve. Most of today has also been spent in reserve with the understanding that they are to be made available to you if the front at Galatas is threatened. Late in the day their commander, Col. Leckie, receives your request to move to the front, heading off around 7 p.m.

As these troops approach Galatas Col. Leckie is shot in the leg and forced to hand command over to Major Thomason. The first two companies of the 23rd, A and B arrive, and you quickly order them into the line alongside the band personnel. With C and D Companies arrival they are instructed to form up for an attack on Galatas. Major Thomason then arrives. He is advised of the situation and agrees with your orders already in place.

A brief reconnaissance of the two light tanks of the 3rd Hussars has confirmed that Galatas is "stiff with Jerries". As the two companies of the 23rd advance, elements of other units also join the battle. Colonel Gray, personally rallying those of the 18th closest to him is joined by elements of the Composite and 20th Battalion, all thirsty for revenge.

Your intention is to relieve the possibility of a German breakthrough and take the pressure off Russell Group. To re-stabilize the line Galatas needs to be retaken!

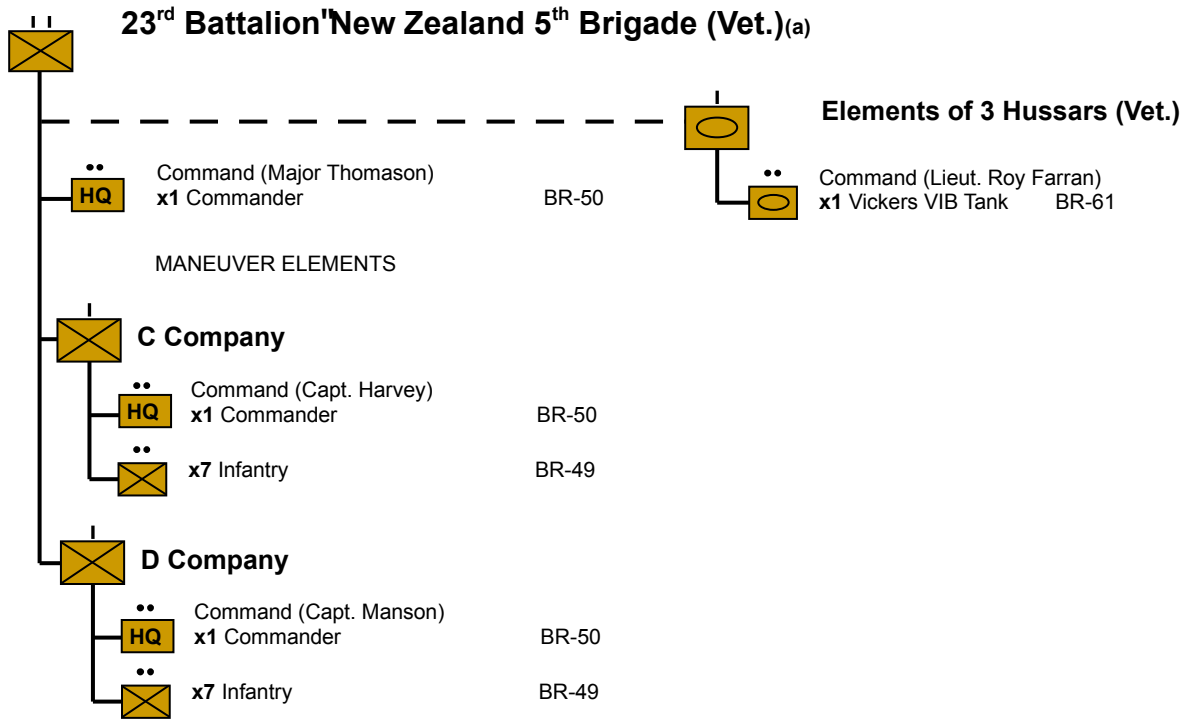
Deployment

23rd Battalion C and D companies, along with the Vickers Mk. VI of the 3rd Hussars may deploy anywhere within Area A (blue line). It is important to note that troop units may be no closer than 2" to enemy stands if in area cover, 4" if in the open and visible. The Vickers must be at least 10" from the enemy deployment area.

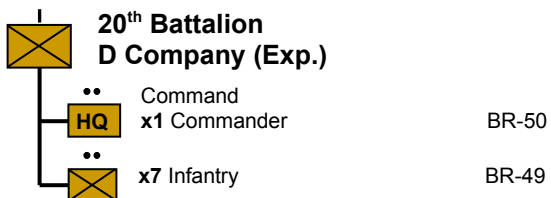
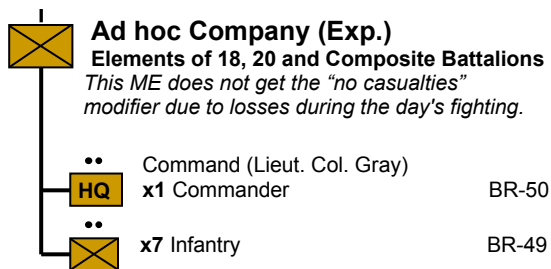
Elements of 18, 20 and Composite Battalions may deploy anywhere within Area B (purple line).

D Co., 20 Battalion may be deployed dug in in Area C (These units will not move or fire. Historically they were present in this area and simply serve as a deterrent to the German player. However, to add tension to the game see scenario balancing options for suggestions as to how these units may be employed.)

Allied Forces



(a) Although a veteran rating is probably a bit generous, its there in order to reflect the high level of moral exhibited by the 23rd in this encounter.



Briefing for German Commanding Officer

Elements of your three battalions attacking Galatas and the surrounding area have just entered the village, hard on the heels of the retreating Tommies. It has been a hard day's fighting and the enemy seems to be on the brink of collapse. But after five days of heavy and continuous fighting your own men, too, are at the limits of their endurance.

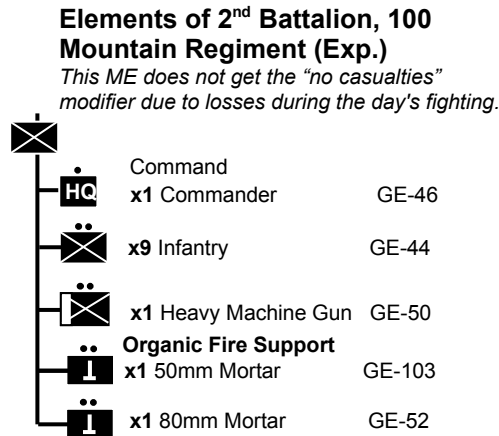
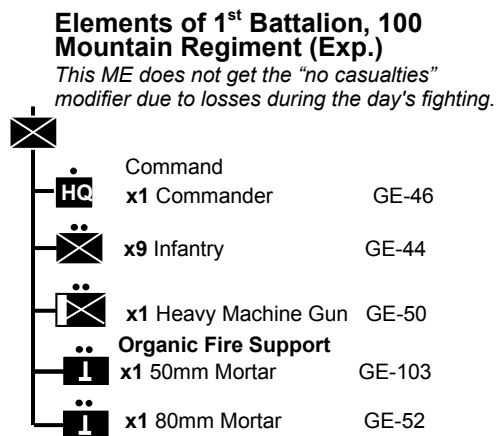
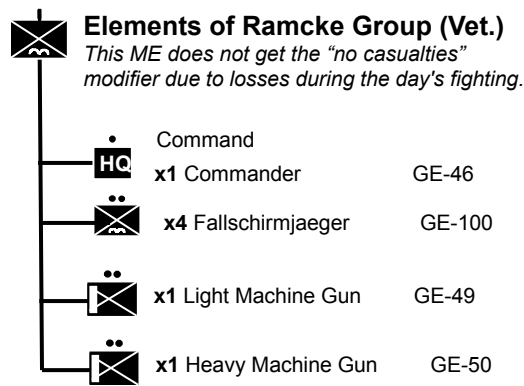
Two light enemy tanks have dashed in and out of the town with guns blazing, but other than that all resistance has for the moment abated. But before you have had a chance to consolidate your gains and possibly push on through Galatas, with darkness comes the sound of gunfire and the clank of enemy armour from the outskirts of the village. Suddenly the Tommies are amongst you!

Is this the beginning of the long expected Allied counter offensive? You must recover from your initial surprise at this unexpected attack and rally your men to hold the ground so hard won.

Deployment

All German troops begin in the area indicated by the red line.

German Forces



Scenario Balancing Options

1. A second pair of Vickers VI were stationed on the outskirts of Karatos. If things are going badly for the New Zealanders their commander may opt to throw in a second Vickers VI, which will enter via the Karatos Road. If this happens, the NZ player may only achieve a partial victory at best.
2. D company, 20th Battalion, although historically not involved in the attack, may be released from their positions at the NZ commander's discretion. If he does, the NZ player can achieve no better than a draw.

Historical Outcome

The Germans, despite superior numbers, were taken by surprise by the suddenness and ferocity of the attack and were swept from the village. New Zealand casualties were serious – 90 lost including 23rd's C Company losing all of their officers and most of their senior NCO's. German losses were estimated at 200 killed and many more wounded, numbers doubtlessly high.

German accounts seem to indicate that they believed the attack to be the start of a larger full-fledged counter offensive, which may account for the Germans' reluctance to try to retake the village despite having the reserves to do so. In the end, it proved unnecessary.

The position was judged too precarious to hold and the village was abandoned by the New Zealanders during the night, much to the indignation and anger of the troops who had fought so valiantly to take it. The attack did, however, check the German advance and allow the Divisional Cavalry an opportunity to disengage and withdraw, the two objectives for which the attack was intended, according to General Freyburg.

And as one of the few successes in the defense of Crete (the island was abandoned by the Allies nine days later) it still ranks as perhaps the most brilliant episode in the history of New Zealand's 23rd Battalion.

Designer's Notes

It is not known for certain what German troops had entered Galatas by the time of the New Zealand counterattack. Historical evidence suggests there were soldiers from both battalions of the 100 Mountain Regiment as well as paratroops of the Ramcke Group. I opted for representation from all three elements but the composition is largely determined by what worked for game balance.

Also, lacking historical aerial photography of the Galatas area I have based the map on sketches from the New Zealand accounts of the battle, but the placement of orchards is totally arbitrary (although representative of the terrain of Crete in that area).

Bibliography

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