

“Pulling on the Pin”

Operation Grenade, Crossing the River Roer

Overview

Situation, 24th February 1945

As the war grinds to a close the Allies push on, intent on taking the Rhur valley, Nazi Germany's industrial heartland. The Germans have responded by destroying the water flow valves on a series of dams, causing the rivers to rise and flood low lying areas in the hope of slowing down the Allied advance.

With typical thoroughness the British under Montgomery are about to launch Operation Plunder, the assault crossing of the Rhine, covered by meticulously arranged artillery, air and engineering plan. While Monty is putting his last assets in place however, the Americans decide to try a little dash and improvisation. General Bolling's VIIIth Corp risks crossing the Roer on the night of 23rd - 24th February in flimsy assault boats at Linnich. The speed of current proves to be more of a problem than the enemy, and the first wave struggled across to only limited opposition. As the sun rises on the morning of the 24th this changes and the crossing points are hit hard by German artillery, mortars and machine guns. The US assault forces are exposed on the East bank of the river without any heavy weapons and equipment. The next few hours will decide if the assault was a risk worth taking, or a dangerous and expensive gamble.

The Rail-Splitters & The VolksGrenadiers

84th Infantry Division - “The Rail-Splitters”.

The 84th are in many ways typical of the majority of the US Army fighting to liberate Europe. Formed in Texas in 1942, they arrived in continental Europe in early November 1944, well equipped and trained but lacking combat experience. This was quickly rectified and the Division fought a series of actions through the winter of 1944/45. By February 1945 they had become an efficient, organised and confident fighting force.

The first wave of the 84th crossed the river without any major problems. Part of the first wave is the 1st Battalion, 334th Infantry Regiment. While their Divisional Engineers bravely try to bridge the river under heavy fire, the 1/334th decide to take the initiative. Instead of assaulting the German positions to their front, they leave their vehicles and heavy equipment behind on the West bank, they turn left to probe along the riverside, hoping to secure the road and further crossing points. Their route is dangerously narrow, restricted by the river on their left and the flooded land on their right. If this move goes wrong, it could easily become a killing ground.

Inadvertently this left turn carries them across the boundary of the defending 59th Infantry Division and into the area held by the much weakened 330th Grenadier Regiment of the 183rd VolksGrenadier Division. If they can push through here they can unhinge the whole German defensive position at Linnich.

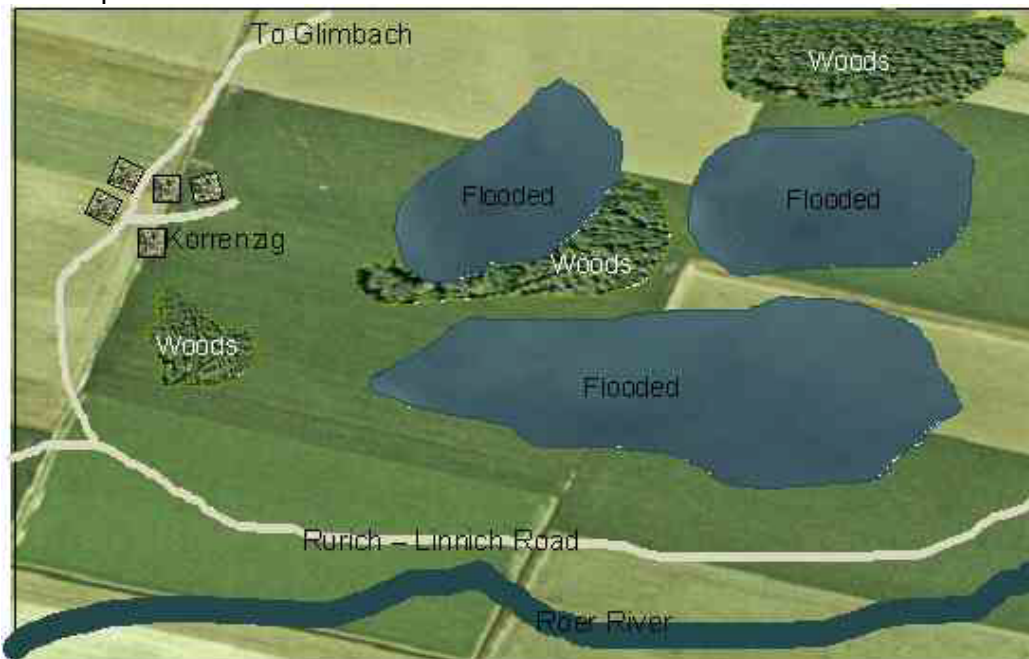
183rd VolksGrenadier Division.

Raised the year earlier and containing a high proportion of Austrian recruits, the 183rd, commanded by General Major Wolfgang Lange is a shadow of its former self. The division was badly battered by the Americans in the battles for Aachen in the previous month. The 330th Grenadier Regiment was particularly hard hit, losing over 50% of rifle strength. Replacements have been few and from distinctly second rate sources such as the Landwher and Fortress Machine Gun units. General Lange has bemoaned both the quality of these replacements, and the constant interference from above.

They are holding the right flank of the 59th Infantry Division position at Linnich – Gevenich as this is the least likely to face attack. As dawn rises, their outposts on the river bank become aware of the enemy, but from an unexpected direction.....

Terrain set up

See map. Total table size is 4x3 foot



The map is oriented so North is to the left, West at the bottom, etc.

The Roer River is impassable. If you do not have a suitable terrain piece simply assume that the river lies immediately off the west (bottom) edge of the table.

The flooded areas are impassable to all troops

Woods are treated as dense wood with no undergrowth.

Roads are assumed to be paved.

Korrenzig is represented by five sections of Built up area.

All other terrain is open

Game length

12 turns maximum

Winning and Losing

In addition to Victory Points (VPs) scored for holding objectives (see player briefings) both players score VPs as specified on page 12 of the main rules for inflicting losses on the enemy. Objectives are considered held if only one player has un-disordered troops within five inches. Contested or unheld objectives do not score VPs.

US Player Briefing

Your objective is to clear the East bank of the Roer and secure the landing area at Linnich. To achieve this you must clear the village of Korrenzig and secure the road to Rurich to allow you to join up with other allied forces crossing the river to the north.

Your force consists of the 1st Battalion of the 334th Infantry Regiment, 84th Infantry Division (The Rail Splitters). The Battalion consists of 3 Rifle Companies plus the HQ and Battalion Weapons Company. Your weapons Company has ditched their machine guns as these are slowing you down, and are fighting as infantry. You have formed these into an ad hoc platoon based on your Battalion HQ.

Your troops have seen action before and are rated as Experienced.



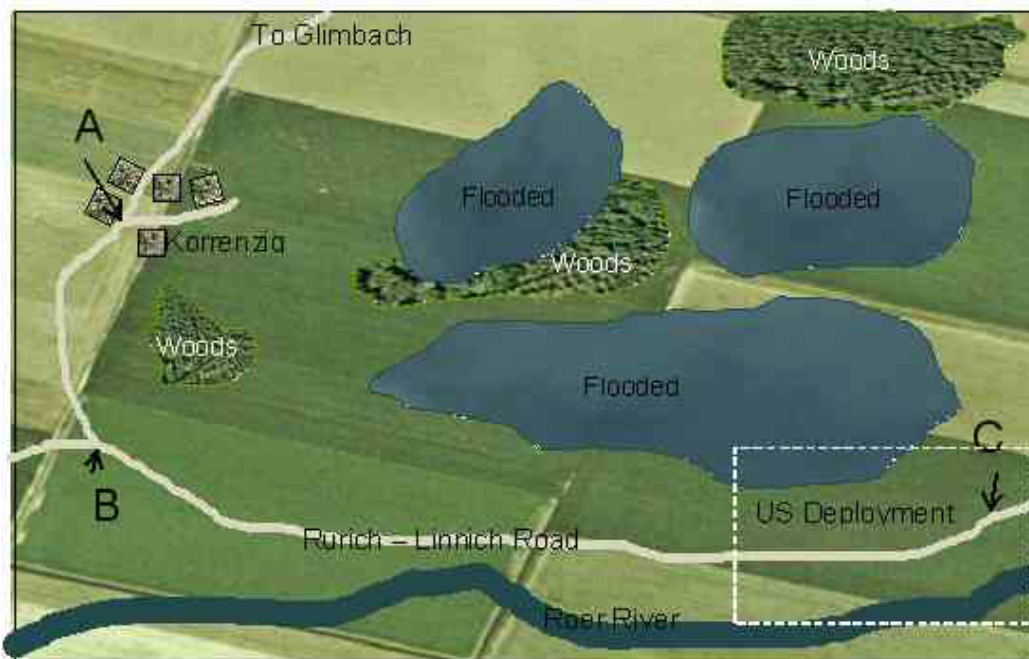
Early this morning you made an assault crossing in collapsible boats under cover of darkness, which was almost unopposed, and are now advancing parallel to the river bank. The Battalion transport and anti tank platoons are still on the West bank, and will not be able to join you until the bridges are in place. Worryingly, it appears that the Germans have woken up and have brought the crossing point under heavy and accurate fire, and the engineers are having trouble bridging the river. Until they succeed, your Battalion are on your own. No Artillery Forward Observers (FOOs) have made the crossing, and air support is not available due to the overcast skies and low cloud.

Your objective is to seize the village of Korrenzig (Objective Able), secure the road to Rurich (Objective Baker), and finally ensure that the flank of the landing is anchored by holding the causeway north of Linnich (Objective Charlie)

Each of these objectives is worth 2 victory points

Deployment

All your forces must start turn 1 deployed in the area indicated on your map.



Casualty Roster

1st Bttn 334th

Infantry

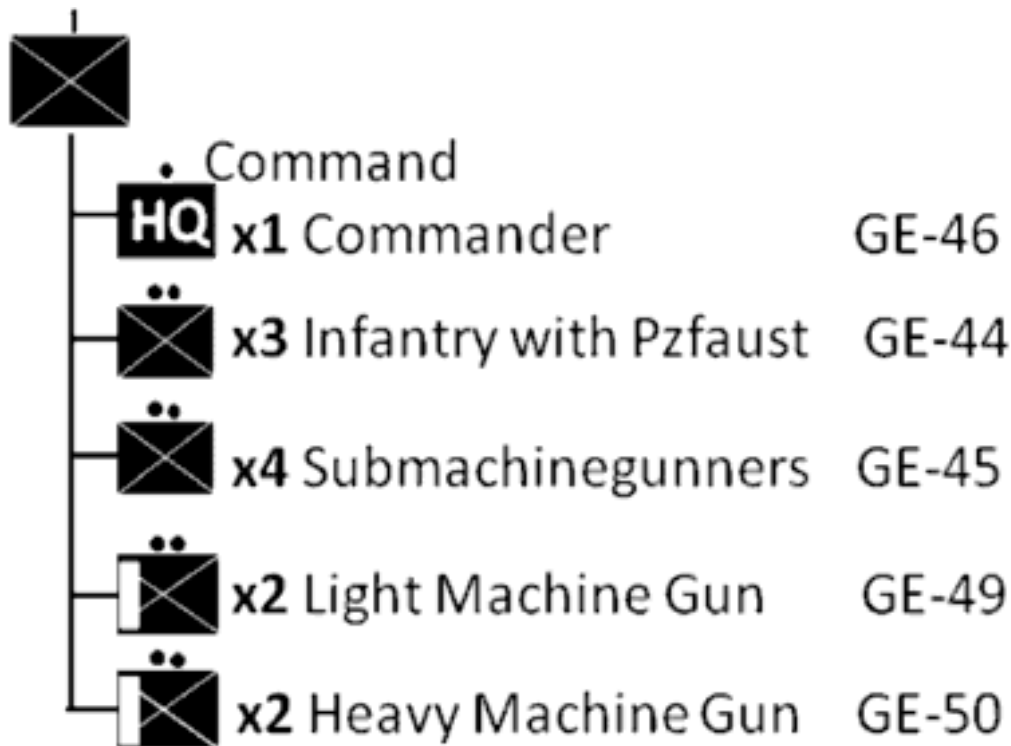
HQ	1	2	3	4	5	6									
Able Company	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12			25%
Baker Company	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12			50%
Charlie Company	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12			75%

German Player Briefing

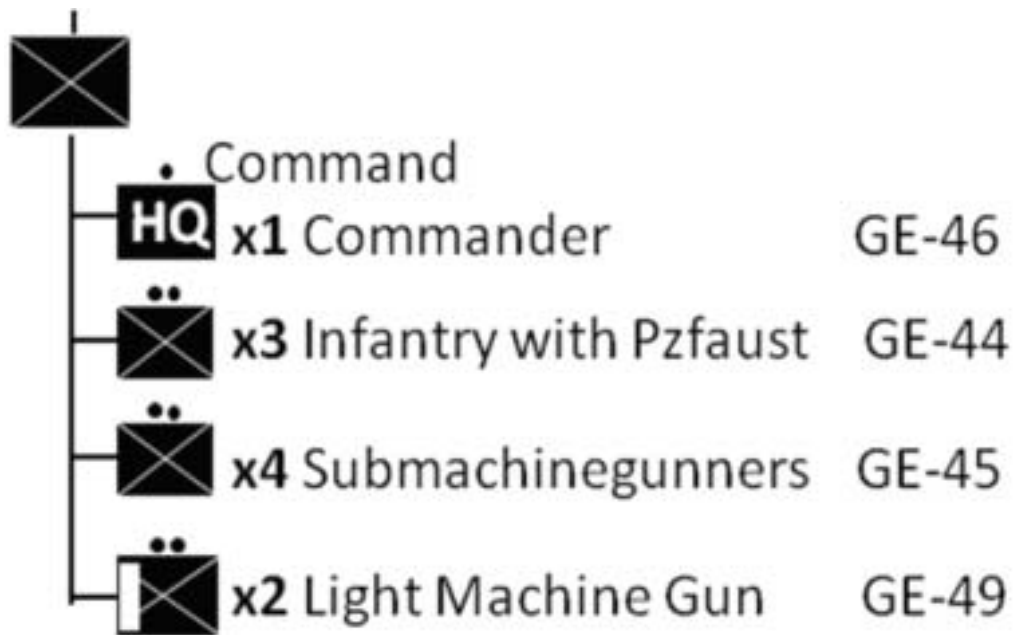
Your objective is to protect the left (north) flank of the 59th Infantry Division holding Linnich.

At your disposal you have the remains of the 330th VolksGrenadier Regiment, now reduced to two weak Companies after the fighting in the Ardennes and Aachen.

Your first Company is dug in facing the river, with the first outpost line along the Linnich – Rurich road (Objective Bruno), and the main line of resistance in front of Korrenzig (Objective Anton). Although you would have preferred to hold the outpost line with minimum strength, High Command has instructed you that the river line must be defended against a possible assault crossing, so your forward positions also include your remaining HMGs. This unit contains a high proportion of untrained troops from Festung Landwer Abteilung (Fortress Reserve Battalion) and is rated as Raw.



Your second Company has been formed as a Reaction Company and is currently based off table in Glimbach, East of Korrenzig. This Company still has some fighting spirit and is rated as Trained.



Your HQ is based in Korrenzig. You also have some mortars formed as an ad hoc battery, along with some light FlaK and a collection of headquarters troops who have been banded together to form a small defence platoon. They are rated as Trained.



The sheer folly of High Command is highlighted by the fact that they ordered the digging of many thousands of yards of entrenchments and emplacements behind the Roer, without considering for one instant that there were insufficient troops to man them. At least this means that the First Company and HQ positions are well dug in.

Finally, your orders are to ensure that communications with the 59th Infantry Division remain open by holding the road to Linnich at Objective Caesar. Unfortunately you do not have the troop strength to achieve this.

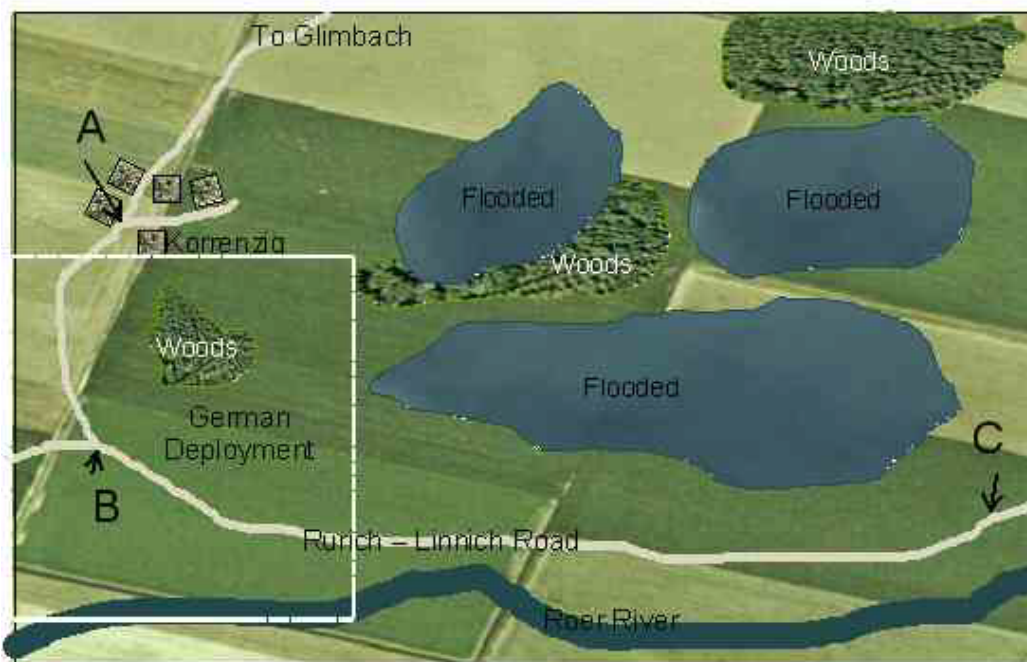
Each of these objectives is worth 2 Victory Points

Deployment

Your first company is deployed in entrenched \ dug in positions in the area marked on the map by the white line. At least 5 elements, including both HMGs should start dug in within 5 inches of the Roer and facing the river.

Your Battalion HQ and attachments start dug in with any facing within 5 inches of Korrenzig.

Your Reaction Company becomes available 2 turns after the US troops are spotted and enters along the Glimbach road in single file having assumed to have dismounted from their bicycles as they near the combat zone.



You have no artillery, air or armoured support.

Each of your objectives is worth 2 Victory Points.

Designer's notes

The scenario is written as an entry into the Battlefront WW2 Introductory Scenario Competition. The aim is to provide a simple but interesting scenario that can be played by anyone who owns the initial Battlefront rules and card set, and that can be completed in an evening with the minimum of outlay on troops or special terrain, and with no "special" rules. **IF** you own the supplements you may wish to replace the standard US infantry card US18 with the amended version US18.1, although this is purely optional.

Historical Outcome

On the day, the 334th surprised the defenders of Korrenzig and overran them with little difficulty, unhinging the German position at Linnich. The German counter attack was delayed until later that afternoon, probably to allow the Assault Gun Company to be included, but by then it was too late. The US troops were successfully across the river in strength and were waiting. When it was finally launched the counter attack was quickly beaten back by crushing massed artillery fire and air support.

This Scenario

This scenario assumes the VolksGrenadiers put up something more of a fight than they did historically, and that they organise a limited counter attack quickly. The strength of German forces, and indeed their identity, has been assumed based on the limited records that survived.

German defensive tactics

The usual German practice when defending with infantry would be to form a three layered defence. The initial position would be held lightly, usually by small squad sized elements that would perform a fighting withdrawal. In BFWW2 German LMG squads are ideal for this. Their role was to cause attackers to pause, and to trigger allied artillery against the now vacated positions. The main line of defence would be formed several hundred meters behind the first line, and then a stop line would be the final defended position. Standard practice would be to register their own forward defence line as target for mortars that could be called in as soon as the troops holding it fell back. The Germans firmly believed that the key to a successful defence was to counter attack as soon as possible, before the allies could secure any recently captured position. To help achieve this it was standard practice to hold a part of their force as a Reaction or Alert unit, held behind the main line of resistance that could intervene at any threatened point to restore the line. Ideally this unit should have been an armoured infantry unit, or at least motorised. Sadly, by late 1944 and early 1945 these units were more often than not simply issued with bicycles.

VolksGrenadiers and Assault Rifles

There are several historical sources that suggest that VolksGrenadier units were issued a higher proportion of automatic weapons, including StG44

Assault Rifles. It is however very difficult to pin down exactly which units received these weapons and in what numbers. The VolksGrenadier organisation used in Battlefront WW2 represents this by including Sub machinegun squads in the orbats. We assume that some StG44s have been issued, but that these are insufficient to warrant an increase in firepower except during the assault.

Uniforms & figure availability in 15mm

Photos of US troops involved in the battle show them well wrapped up in their standard cold weather uniforms, very few are wearing the greatcoats they wore during the Bulge fighting a month or so before

There are no specific figure range that cover this particular period, so almost any US infantry figures would do, except those wearing beach landing assault rigs. Battlefront make some nice US infantry in their Flames of War Range, although you may have to buy several different platoons to ensure you get all the weapons options needed for the scenario. Skytrex \ Old Glory also make suitable figures, but again their packaging may mean you have a lot of spare or unused figures. Peterpig make some very nice US infantry, and have the added advantage that they are available in 8 figure packs which will allow you to build the forces needed with minimum waste.

Germans troops still seem to have been wearing their greatcoats, probably because their standard uniform was much less flexible or suitable for cold weather than their US opponents.

Again all the major manufacturers produce suitable figures, and again PeterPig would be my personal choice because of the flexibility of their packaging and the fact that they have recently released a new range of great coated Germans that would be ideal.

Basing conventions

Because BFWW2 uses a system of "aim points" around bases, the actual size of bases is not too important. We have found that it is more convenient to base all our infantry on 30mm square bases, rather than those recommended in the main rules. This has the advantage of allowing three figures to a base rather than the suggested two, which makes it easier to represent specialist troop types, and visually makes differentiating between different troop types easier. Our usual basing convention is 2 figures for Company Command, LMG, Forward observers and support weapons, and 3 for infantry squads or Battalion HQs. We base our Higher HQs on 40mm squares and usually include a small vignette of 3 or 4 figures with radios and other equipment. Both Peter Pig (in their WW1 range) and Battlefront \ Flames of War (as part of their Artillery HQ sets) make suitable castings for higher HQs.

Player Aids

Two great ideas stolen from Richard de Ferrars & Paddy Green are base stickers and unit casualty rosters. It is sometimes easy in the heat of battle to

lose track of which stand came from which unit. The rules suggest small labels for each base, but Richard & Paddy have gone one step further and included basic unit data on the labels. A set of base labels for this scenario are provided as a separate xl file.

These may need resizing to fit your bases. Paddy & Richard also use casualty rosters. When a stand is lost from a unit you simply cross off a box on the relevant roster, this allows you to check easily the current loss status of each Manoeuvre Element under your command. Rosters for the forces involved are included in each player briefing.

Thanks to the play-testers, in no particular order, Dave Lakey, Phil Shield, Mike Gardner and Paul Davison, and to Andy Parkes for proof reading.