

Kampfgruppe Peiper – The Sanatorium

An Introductory Scenario for BF:WW2

Wednesday December 20th 1944

Scenario written by Richard de Ferrars



Historical Overview

The St Edouard Sanatorium dominates the hillside above the small Ardennes village of Stoumont. It was built as a refuge for the elderly, orphans and the infirm. For a few terrible days in December 1944, the 250 residents crammed into the cellars as a ferocious battle ebbed and flowed above their heads. Possession of the Sanatorium meant control of Stoumont - a village that Kampfgruppe Peiper could not afford to lose.

The Ardennes Offensive had begun just before dawn on December 16th 1944. Kampfgruppe Peiper was the most powerful formation in Germany's finest Panzer Division – 1SS Panzer Division (*Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*). Tasked with breaking through to the Meuse and beyond, Peiper had shown ruthlessness, audacity and determination as his column penetrated over 50 miles through American lines in just 3 days. However, Stoumont proved to be the high-water mark. A couple of miles west of the town, his troops encountered one road-block too many. The American 30th Infantry Division had been rushed down from the Aachen sector and was helping to close the net around Peiper. However, to the north, the lackluster performance of the 12th and 277th VG Divisions had required the additional commitment of the 12SS Panzer Division (*Hitlerjugend*) and left Peiper dangerously exposed. Fifteen miles to the east, a strong attack by elements of the 30th Infantry Division threatened Stavelot, underlining just how precarious his situation was. His request to withdraw from the Stoumont area towards the rest of the Division was denied; he was ordered to stand fast and await relief. At this stage, the American forces were concentrated to the north and west of Stoumont. It was clear to all that control of the Sanatorium was the key to the possession of the village. An American probe from the north, by TF Jordan (3rd Armored Division), had already been repulsed. The soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 119th Infantry Regiment belatedly received some armour support and prepared to make their move. The defenders of Stoumont scanned the woods to the north and west for signs of the next attack. The Sanatorium had to be held.

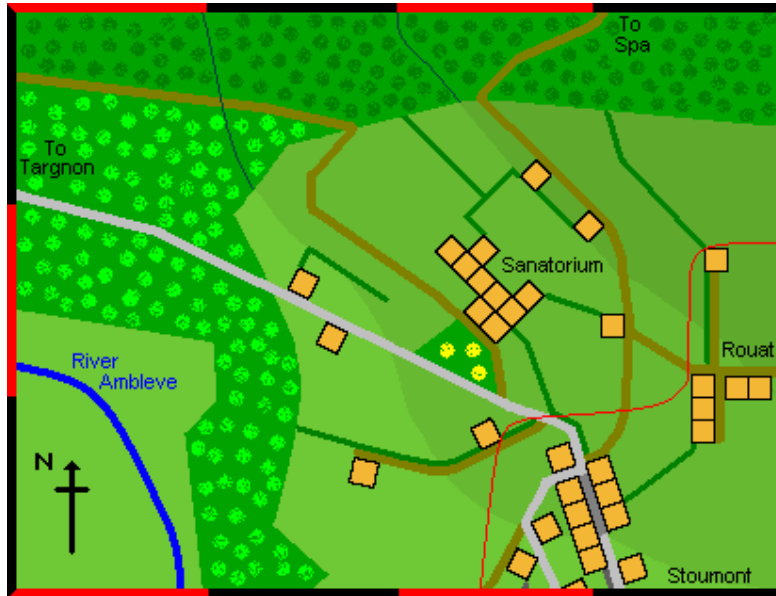
Historical Outcome

The actual events represented in this scenario took place at dusk and into darkness. After the failed move by TF Jordan, the next move by the Americans came from the west. The first assault did manage to seize control of the Sanatorium but a fierce counter-attack soon re-established the German positions. For two more days the battle raged around the Sanatorium. Peiper's men held fast. Miraculously, all of the civilians sheltering in the basement survived the battle. Ultimately, it was the loss of Stavelot that sealed his fate. KG Peiper was cut off; the defenders of Stoumont, Cheneux and La Gleize had to abandon all vehicles & heavy weapons and set out on foot. On Christmas Eve, Peiper led 800 men out of La Gleize into the hills. Amazingly 770 were present at roll call 36 hours later, once the safety of 9SS *Hohenstaufen's* positions at Wanne had been reached.

Scenario Design

This scenario aims to give the players plenty of practice with the core themes in BF:WW2. The playing area is compact and should be quick to set up; the forces involved are quite small but give each player both armour and infantry manoeuvre elements. It provides the opportunity to put the game mechanics into practice - spotting rules, fire, manoeuvre and close combat. It allows both players experience with both attacking and the defending roles. This reflects the standard German doctrine of using a powerful counter-attack force for an immediate reaction. A combined arms approach should be well-rewarded but uncoordinated and disjointed attacks should get punished!

Map & Terrain



The playing area is 4' x 3'

BUS:

All BUS are stone buildings.
The standard BUS size is 40 x 40mm

Woodland:

Dark green trees – underbrush
Light green trees – cleared
Yellow trees – orchard

Roads:

Primary roads – light grey (paved)
Streets – dark grey (paved)
Secondary roads – brown (unpaved)

Roads through woods (including the exit point) count as a defile (p33)

Fewer leaves are around in December:

- all hedges are treated as low hedges
- the small woodland area south of the Sanatorium is treated as orchard

The red line indicates the initial German deployment area (see below)
The river is impassable – don't deploy in the south-west corner!

The slopes were treacherous and muddy. All open ground outside the woods/ orchard is soft ground:

1. Vehicles moving off-road move at half speed and must check bog down every 1" moved (p51)
2. Troops move at full speed

The westernmost 1 foot of the board does not directly enter play and could, if needed, be removed. It is however useful for the American player for his initial deployment and first move onto the board.

Set-up does not need to be totally accurate but ensure that the edge of woods north & west of the Sanatorium is at least 9" away from the Sanatorium

The Ardennes Offensive “Northern Shoulder” (To help follow the narratives)



American Player Briefing

“Three tanks attempted without success to counter the hostile tank fire from positions along the road just south of the Sanatorium. They were greatly handicapped by the terrain, which sloped steeply uphill from the road to the Sanatorium. Ascent up this slope was impossible due the very muddy conditions of the ground and the tanks were left on the road. Two of Capt. Berry’s tanks were knocked out in quick succession. Thereafter all tanks kept west of a house approximately 150 yards west of the Sanatorium.”

Captain Franklin Ferriss, Historical Officer, 30th Infantry Division

Situation

14:00 Dec 20th 1944, Lt Col Robert Herlong, 1/119th Infantry Regiment, Targnon, 1 mile west of Stoumont

SNAFU – just about sums up this whole friggin’ mess. The last couple of days have been totally crazy. Like the rest of the 30th Infantry Division, your battalion has been fighting hard ever since it landed on Omaha Beach on June 10th; they have definitely earned the reputation as “the workhorse of the western front”. You had spent most of October & November in the bitter battles around Aachen and then in pushing the Germans back to the River Roer. A couple of weeks ago, you had finally been withdrawn into rest areas at Kolsheid to reorganize and integrate replacements. But on December 16th, boy did that balloon go up! Stories from a few miles to the south rapidly escalated; “a local German counterattack” became “a strong German attack”, became “a major German breakthrough”. Without knowing many more details, the next day your men boarded trucks and headed south into the forests of the Ardennes. The mission was simple – find the German armored columns and stop them.

The day before yesterday, you could sense panic in the air as you passed through the town of Spa, once the HQ of the Army Chief himself, General Hodge. Ironic that the Krauts probably hadn’t realized that some of the biggest fuel and ammo dumps for miles around lay in the forests around that HQ. From Spa, the Division’s three Regiments fanned out to the south, your Regiment heading south-west to some place called Werbomont. Reports had indicated that a strong German armored column, probably from the crack 1SS *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*, was making its way along the north side of the River Ambleve. Twice, engineers units had deflected it north by blowing bridges on the direct route to Werbomont. Yesterday, the fog and clouds actually cleared a bit, allowing the air force to get into the skies. At your briefing, you were told that large numbers of German vehicles had been observed in the area around St Gleize and Cheneux. 82nd Airborne was moving into the gap south of you, CCB from 3rd Armored Division was approaching from the north-west. In this chaotic redeployment, it had become impossible to keep track of who was going where and, in particular, what armor support would be available. Basically you had been told to keep hold of anything that you found along the way! In the gathering darkness of late afternoon, the 3rd Battalion set out towards Stoumont, with instructions to occupy and fortify the village. Shortly afterwards, your 1st Battalion also moved out towards Stoumont with orders to establish a firm blocking position west of the village. The 2nd Battalion was held back as Regimental reserve. You’d been up against 1SS *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* before at St Mortain and defeated them then. You wanted to do more than just stop that armored column – you all wanted your Division to go down in history as the one that defeated them a second time.

Yesterday had stretched the nerves of your men to the limits. You had set up your blocking position at Targnon, a couple of miles west of Stoumont, just past Stoumont Station. Firstly, relief as you heard the sounds of tanks approaching from the east. Sure enough, it was some armor support and you gratefully augmented your meager AT positions with the tanks of Capt. Berry’s C Company, 740th Tank Battalion. Apparently, Berry’s Battalion had been back at depot awaiting arrival of new ordnance when they were ordered onto the road. Hence his slightly unusual command that included Jacksons as well as Shermans. However your relief was short-lived when, at the end of the morning, you were stunned to see soldiers from the 3rd Battalion streaming back along the Stoumont Road towards your road block. Rapidly it became clear that a disaster had befallen the 3rd Battalion in Stoumont. Handicapped by trying to establish their defensive positions in the dark, soon after dawn they had been hit by an unstoppable torrent of Tigers and Panthers. The AT guns had been knocked in rapid succession and a small tank force attached to their command had been overwhelmed. They hoped that some of the Battalion might have withdrawn to the north, but apart from your command, it was clear that there was little else left to stop the Krauts. Soon afterwards, you again heard tanks on the road – this time coming from Stoumont. Panthers came into view from around the bend in the road. In a matter of a few minutes, it was all over. Three KO’d Panthers sat motionless on the narrow road, creating an impassable obstacle. The rest of the German force pulled back towards Stoumont. Now it was time to take to the offense.

After a debriefing with men from the 3rd Battalion, it has become clear that your first objective must be a building called the St Edouard Sanatorium. Apparently this building dominates the road into Stoumont. You had hoped to co-ordinate your attack with Taskforce Jordan (CCB 3rd Armored Division) but their advance from the north was stopped by tank fire as soon as they left the cover of the forest road. They have made it clear that the road from the north must be secured before they can bring their tanks into action. Just to make your day, you’ve now been told the bulk of the available artillery communication equipment & personnel had gone forward the 3rd Battalion. God knows where they are now. This means that your attack now goes in without artillery support. Great! SNAFU!

Mission

You will have to move fast to get control of that Sanatorium. You have two Rifle Companies at pretty well full-strength, so you are going to send them up with Capt. Berry's Shermans. Mind you, those 3rd Battalion men did warn that the going is pretty lousy as soon as you leave the roads. Although lacking artillery, you can offer them the Battalion's heavy weapons in support. The force should be strong enough to secure that Sanatorium and hopefully allow TF Jordan to move forward and link-up. You've been around long enough to know what to expect – once in there, those Krauts will punch back and counter-attack hard.

Deployment

All units are available from the start of the scenario

They may enter on the west board edge or start deployed in the wooded area within 12" of the west board edge

Vehicles may not *start deployed* in woodland

Notes & Special Rules

The duration of the scenario is 12 turns and the American player moves first

The American Infantry ME's are rated veteran.

The American Armor ME is rated experienced

Due to the ground conditions, units may not attempt improved positions during the scenario

On-board Mortars and Indirect Fire

There is no off-board artillery in this scenario but each side has on-board mortars etc (self-observed or called in)

The mortars and may fire 2 smoke missions each (p40) – stoking counts as the second mission.

Self-observed fire does not require a roll on the call-for-fire table (p38)

The American player has one option that allows a concentration (the two 81mm mortars in the HQ ME)

The American player has no options that allow thickening

If a call-for-fire is made by a unit within the same ME as the firer, then this is treated as **Organic Fire Support**

If a call-for-fire is made by a unit in another ME within the same organisation, then this is **Direct Fire Support**

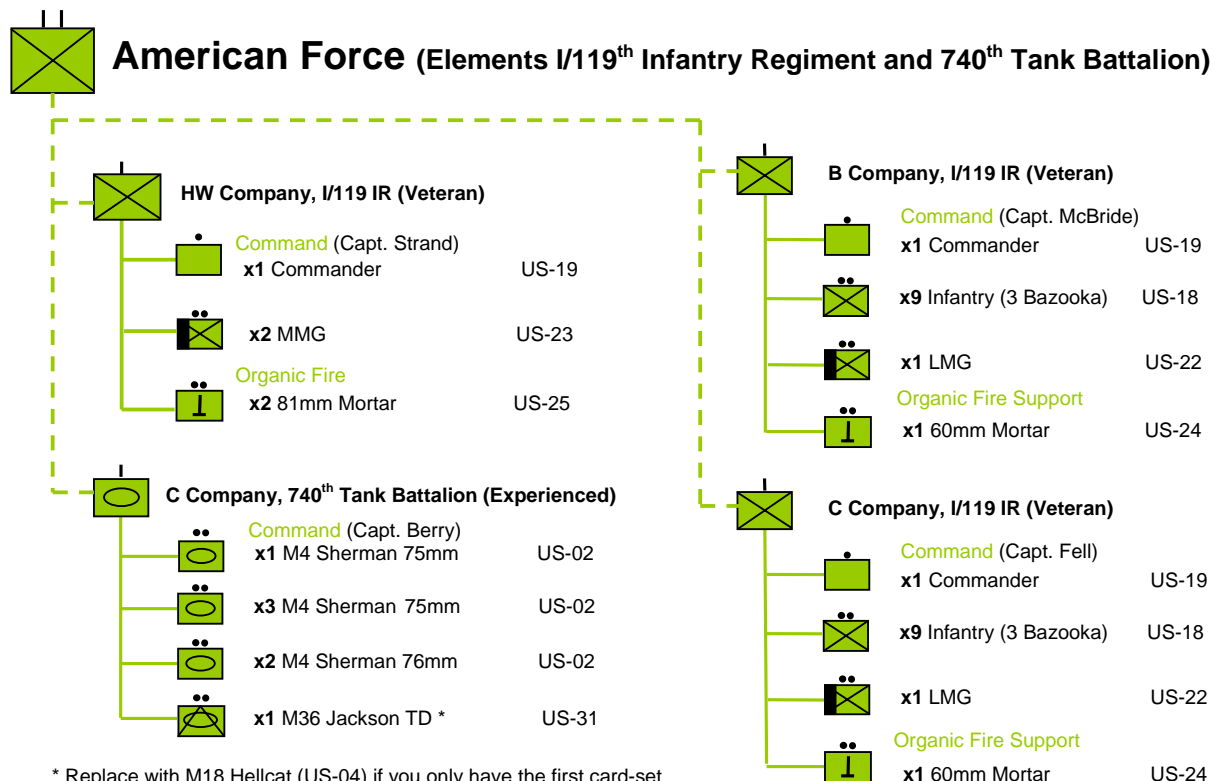
What does this mean?

- ✓ The Infantry Companies may call in their own 60mm mortar as **Organic FS** (or the mortar can self-observe)
- ✓ The Infantry Companies may call in the HQ 81mm mortars as **Direct FS** (or the mortar can self-observe)
- ✓ The Infantry HQ may call in the HQ 81mm mortars as **Organic FS** (or the mortars can self-observe)
- × The Armour is not part of the 119th Infantry Regiment and may not call in any of the mortars

Organisation of ME's

The 50-cal MMG's may be attached to either infantry company *at the start* of the scenario.

Manoeuvre elements may not contain a mix of infantry and armour.



German Player Briefing

"We saw the American tanks approaching. Almost any enemy movement was visible to the naked eye. With its massive construction, the Sanatorium looked like a fortress. However the walls were being eaten away by shells from enemy tanks. The panzer men did not want to give up. They continued to fight bitterly. It was clear to each man: the Sanatorium had become a defensive bulwark. If given up, the Americans would have it easier in their approach to Stoumont. The Americans assaulted the Sanatorium's ground floor. The panzer men withdrew to the upper floors. Bitter fighting, man against man, occurred. Our comrades threw hand grenades down the stairs to the lower floors."

Unterscharführer Karl Wortmann, 9th Company Panzer-Pioneer Battalion 1

Situation

14:00 Dec 20th 1944, Obersturmbannführer Joachim Pieper, Chateau Froide Cour, 2km east of Stoumont

But for those damned Engineers. From ashes and ruin, you had watched this superb Division regenerate into an awesome threat. Furthermore you had been given the honour of taking command of its most powerful Kampfgruppe. You had listened in disbelief to the accounts of the British defeat a few weeks ago in their attempts to break through to Arnhem. With a fraction of the force that they had at their disposal, now you were going to give them a demonstration on how it should have been done. The orders had been simple – race to the River Meuse and let nothing stop you.

Frustration on the opening day gave way to exhilaration as your Kampfgruppe was finally unleashed at dawn on December 17th. Those idiotic Fallschirmjäger commanders ahead of you were seeing ghosts behind every tree. Ignoring them, your column set out and, unsurprisingly, needed to do little else apart from brushing aside stragglers. Suitably berated, when you passed through Lanzerath, the commander even allowed you to attach most of a battalion of his Fallschirmjägers to your command! You allowed nothing to slow your momentum and by the end of that day, you had reached Stavelot, nearly 40km behind the front line.

But for those damned Engineers. The following day was a day of escalating frustration. Your patrols probed the roads leading west from Stavelot. Repeatedly, American engineers succeeded in destroying bridges, often right in the face of your advance parties. Despite this, you did succeed in moving another 15km towards the Meuse. But overall, you had felt frustration as you set up your command post outside the village of La Gleize. More worryingly, the two companies of Panzer IV's in your column had become reduced to 5 tanks as fuel tanks were drained to keep the remainder on the road.

But for those damned Engineers. Yesterday, for the first time, you doubted whether the plan could work. It had started very well indeed. The Ami's had tried to block your path just up the road at the village of Stoumont. As dawn broke, your men struck, and struck hard. Barely 2 hours later, the village was yours (with 200 prisoners) for the loss of 1 Panther and a few good men. They pursued the retreating Americans along the road heading west past the imposing Sanatorium but 3km to the west they ran into another road-block. This time, with a steep drop on one side and a hillside on the other, there was no room for manoeuvre. And the Americans had armour. In the gathering darkness, three Panthers were knocked out in quick succession and you ordered a return to Stoumont. To make matters worse, during the afternoon you had expected a sizeable re-supply convoy from the Division. Scarcely anything arrived and they had brought the news that the Division's hold on Stavelot was close to breaking point. Faced with being totally cut off, you had radioed through to your Divisional Commander, Oberführer Wilhelm Mohnke. He refused your request to move back towards Stavelot and ordered you to hold fast and await relief.

Your Kampfgruppe is now concentrated around La Gleize. You are maintaining forces in both Stoumont and Cheneux in the hope that supplies will come through to you, allowing you to resume your advance. Stoumont might not have any damned bridges, but it does have the junction of the roads to the west and to the north. You know that the Americans have forces on both these roads. By holding Stoumont, you keep them apart and also give yourself options when the advance resumes. Sitting on the hillside above the village, overlooking both these roads is the St Edouard Sanatorium. You have left Sturmbannführer Werner Poetscke in charge in Stoumont. Although the commander of the 1st Battalion of Panzer Regiment 1, he has a reputation for getting out of his tank to berate his men and lead by example! When you discussed defense of the village yesterday afternoon, you both agreed on the importance of holding the Sanatorium. Obersturmführer Sievers' Panzer-Pioneers have been with the point of the KG since you set out, so it is fitting that they should garrison the Sanatorium. The village itself is held by Fallschirmjägers and Panzergrenadiers supported by the remaining Panzer IV's. Poetscke understands that, if the KG is to survive, as well as holding the Sanatorium, petrol and ammunition must be conserved.

Mission

Your mission is simple - keep control of the Sanatorium. You are conscious of the mounting pressure on your Kampfgruppe and the necessity to conserve your forces. You have made it clear to Obersturmführer Sievers, in command at the Sanatorium, that he must hold it at all costs. If he is attacked by overwhelming force, then Poetscke will try to stabilize the situation. But your vehicles are critically short of fuel. No artillery support is available – they are short of ammunition and you are conserving this in case La Gleize itself comes under attack.

Deployment

Any German units which are *not in a BUS* may start in basic improved position (slit trenches) or hull-down
 Due to the ground conditions, units may not attempt further improved positions during the scenario
 No reorganization or re-attachments are allowed by the German player

Sanatorium Defenders

The Panzer-Pioneer Comp. garrisons the Sanatorium. They deploy anywhere that is **at least 5"** from the woods
 They had not had sufficient time to fortify the Sanatorium and may not claim *improved hard cover in BUS*.

Other German Forces

• Movement

All other German forces must set up behind the red line and they may not move *beyond the red line* until turn 7
 Only one Panzer IV sets up on board, the other Panzer IV enters turn 7 on the Rouat road (east board edge)

• Firing

The on-board Panzer IV and the units of Panzer-grenadier Company 12 may fire without restriction
Before turn 7, the units of Panzer-grenadier Company 9 may only fire on units that come **within 5"** of their positions (no restrictions after turn 7)

Notes & Clarifications of the Rules

The duration of the scenario is 12 turns and the American player moves first

All German ME's are rated veteran

On-board Mortars and Indirect Fire

There is no off-board artillery in this scenario but each side has on-board mortars etc (self-observed or called in)
 The mortars and Light IG may fire 2 smoke missions each (p40) – stoking counts as the second mission.

Self-observed fire does not require a roll on the call-for-fire table (p38)

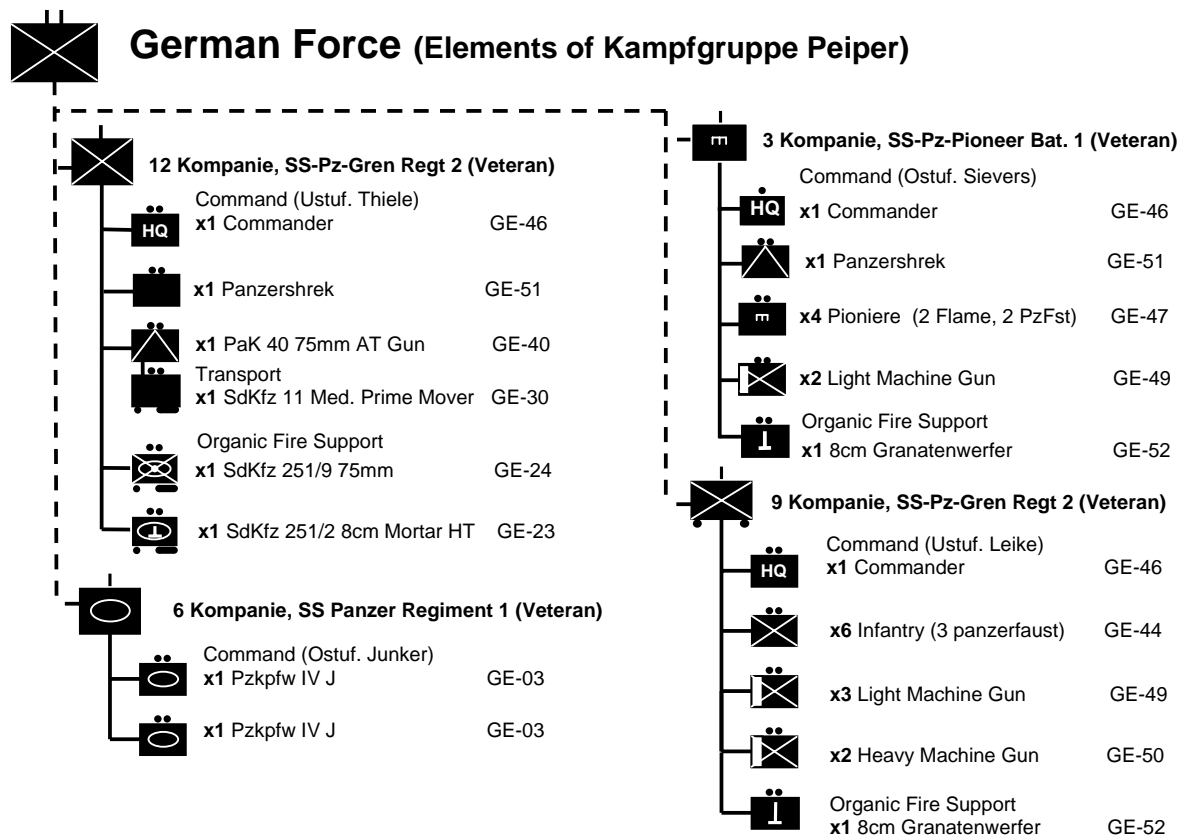
The German player does not have any options that allow thickening or concentrations

If a call-for-fire is made by a unit within the same ME as the firer, then this is treated as **Organic Fire Support**

If a call-for-fire is made by a unit in another ME within the same organisation, then this is **Direct Fire Support**

What does this mean?

- ✓ The Panzer-Pioneers may call in their own 8cm mortar as **Organic FS** (or the mortar can self-observe)
- ✓ The Panzergrenadier 9 Komp. may call in their 8cm mortar as **Organic FS** (or the mortar can self-observe)
- ✓ The Panzergrenadier 9 Komp. may call in the 12 Komp. 251/2 or 251/9 as **Direct FS**
- ✓ The Panzergrenadier 12 Komp may call in the 251/2 or 251/9 as **Organic FS** (or they can self-observe)
- × The Panzer-Pioneers are not part of SS-Panzergrenadier Rgt. 2 & may not call in the other mortars or 251/9
- × The Panzer IVs are from neither the Panzer-Pioneer Batt. nor Panzergrenadier Regt 2 and may not call-for-fire



Victory Conditions

	American Player	German Player
Major Victory	No German units occupies a Sanatorium BUS	No American units occupies a Sanatorium BUS
Minor Victory	More Sanatorium BUS occupied by American units than by German units	More Sanatorium BUS occupied by German units than by American units
Draw	Equal number of BUS occupied by both Americans and Germans	

Bibliography & Sources

Kampfgruppe Peiper

Duel in the Mist

The Devil's Adjutant

The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge

www.oldhickory30th.com

David Cooke & Wayne Evans

Stefan De Meyer et al

Michael Reynolds

Hugh Cole

Whole text: www.history.army.mil/books/wwii/7-8/7-8_Cont.htm#toc

Excellent site on 30th Infantry Division. Gems include:

- Reports p5 - Daily journal (= war diary) for 1/19
- Reports p7 - **Original film** of Peiper's assault on Stoumont Dec 19th
- Reports p9 - Account by Capt Strand

Game in Progress



The Panzer-Pioneers hold their fire as the American forces approach the Sanatorium. The first Sherman tank to leave the road pays a heavy price.



Later in the day, the Americans have control of the Sanatorium. But fresh Panzer-grenadiers are approaching, with armour support. Will they be able to hold onto their prize?