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Second Time Lucky

1. Background

After Italy's surrender to the allies in 1943, Winston Churchill ordered the British Middle East Command to seize Italy's Aegean colonies. His aim was to induce Turkey to enter the war on the side of the allies and open a new front against the axis, to try and keep the Soviets out of the post war Balkans. Hitler, realising the danger of Turkey's entry into the war resolved to crush the British expedition as soon as possible.

Early on the morning of the 12th November 1943 German forces launched the invasion of Leros. It was a fiasco. The Italian coastal defences drove off the Western sea landing forces and inflicted heavy losses on the Eastern forces which were restricted to toe holds at Grifo Bay and below Mt Appetici. The German parachute drop was cancelled 3 minutes from the drop zone.

During the morning General Müller regained his nerve as the situation stabilised and those forces which had landed consolidated their beachheads. He resolved to try again.

2. Designers Notes

The terrain on Leros is extremely rugged. Representing this on a typical wargames table would prove difficult for most gamers, unless custom built terrain is used. Especially if alternate German drop zones are to be considered as part of the scenario. A restriction to historical deployment simplifies the situation, with the German second assault being able to be played as two small linked scenarios, using terrain within the means of most gamers. The scenarios are linked with victory conditions arising from the combination of the results of each, and the British player must decide in advance to which map the limited reserves are committed. The decision must be made in advance to represent historical command and control difficulties in organising a rapid response to the invasion.

3. Leros Terrain

The terrain on Leros is extremely rugged. There are several areas where the slope exceeds 30°. Additionally, there are many rocky areas, areas covered by low scrub, terraced and folded terrain that cannot be depicted easily on a wargames table. Even where the ground is relatively clear and flat, there are many low (1 or 2 foot) rock walls along the edges of their fields. The contour interval used is **50 m**! The usual Battlefront contour interval would have required just too many levels for most wargamers to hope to put on a table. The unique terrain of this island requires a number of special terrain effects rules.

3.1 Spotting

- Reduce all spotting dead zones to 1/5 of the usual.
- Treat open terrain as having no concealment, in spite of the many low walls, because of the rugged nature of the terrain. The effects of the walls will be handled in other ways.
- All hills and ridges have a crest, which cannot be seen over unless within 1".

3.2 Leros Campaign Map
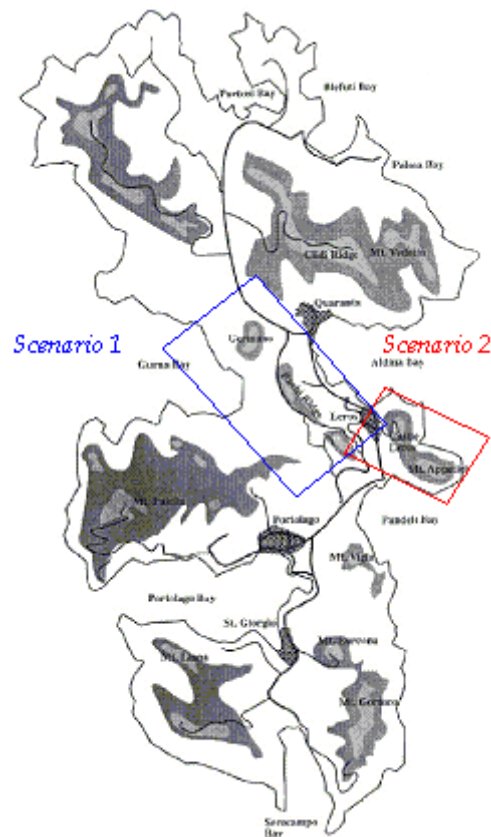
3.3 Cover and Concealment

- All terrain above 100 m elevation is considered **rocky**.
- Troops do not need to roll on the Improved Position table except in dense concealment. They will automatically succeed, although an action is still required to take up the improved position. This models the ease with which troops can find natural improved positions in Leros' rugged terrain. This includes while on a steep slope.
- Treat Leros Castle as providing troops with improved positions in dense concealment and as a concrete pill box for cover. It is capable of holding 3 stands.

3.4 Movement

- Treat all terrain above 50 m on the *Mt Appetici-Castle Leros* feature and the *Rachi Ridge-Mt Meraviglia* feature as a steep slope. In general, these slopes do not have "*dead ground*".
- Roads and tracks are 1 element wide and negate any terrain movement restrictions.
- Vehicles and towed weapons (including all guns) must remain on a road.
- The cliffs cannot be climbed.

3.5 Combat

- Mortars may only indirect fire from a steep slope if they are dug in or in an improved position. (it takes a little longer to prepare to fire from a steep slope)
- add to the "**+1 DEF:** in built up sector, ..." modifier line for close combat; if up slope by more than one base depth.

3.6 Scenario Maps

Scenario 1:

Scenario 2:

Terrain Key:

Color/Symbol	Description		
☐	0 to 50 m	Cleared Woods	Leros Castle
☐	50 to 100 m	Built-up (stone)	Coastal Gun Positions
☐	100 to 150 m	Stream (deep)	Cliffs
☐	150 to 200 m	Paved Road	Deployment Zones
☐	200 m +	Unpaved Road	Water

Each division on the scenario maps is 12 inches. To speed up play, the BUA's can be treated as areas of hard cover and dense concealment. Otherwise, the number and layout of building sectors in each town is left to the players.

3.7 Guns and direct fire

Gun barrels cannot be depressed as far as they can be elevated. This limits their ability to target stands on lower elevations using direct fire. Therefore, gun type units may not use direct fire at targets:
- at less than 2" range if the target is one contour lower.
- at less than 5" range if the target is more than one contour lower.

4. Air Assault

Placing parachute assault troops on the table is done using the following procedure. This takes place in turn one of the scenario and are the only actions that occur in that turn.

4.1 Aircraft Loading.

The Germans have 18 Ju-52 transport aircraft available to conduct air assaults. Each aircraft can carry **two stands**. Troops from different ME's (not counting attachments) cannot be loaded on the same aircraft.

Assign each stand to an aircraft. Each Manoeuvre Element is assigned its own Drop Zone marker. More than one ME may use the same marker. Once assigned, the Drop Zone marker cannot be changed. Because of the Germans' extensive use of aerial reconnaissance, the Drop Zone marker's locations are chosen after the British player has deployed all on table forces. The German player then chooses the direction of drift on the eight pointed compass rose below. All landings use the same drift direction. The drift direction may be freely chosen by the German player. (not diced for)
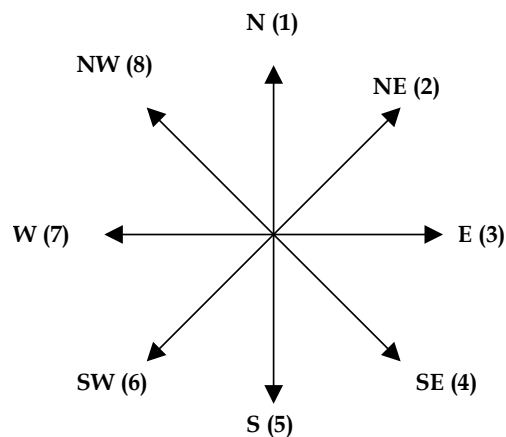
4.2 Landing.

For each Drop Zone marker:

1. Place the Drop Zone Marker on the table at the planned position.
2. Scatter the Drop Zone Marker by rolling one D10 for direction according to the compass rose above. A 9 or 10 means no scatter. Roll another D10 for the distance in inches. If the Drop Zone Marker shifts out to sea, move it to the last land available

along the direction of scatter. Each ME scatters its own drop zone marker independently of that for other ME's.

3. For each aircraft assigned to the Drop Zone, do the following:
   a. Roll one D10 and subtract 4. Displace that aircraft along the Direction of Drift that distance in inches (a negative number would displace directly opposite the Direction of Drift).
   b. For each stand, roll one D10. Place that stand 3 inches in the direction indicated (on the compass rose above) from this location. A 9 or 10 means no scatter.
   c. Any troops landing within one base width of a British stand are automatically eliminated. Displace friendly stands by one base width if they overlap. Any troops landing in water are eliminated. For all other troops roll on the Parachute Landing Table below and apply the result.
   d. Repeat steps 1, 2, and 3 for all aircraft using this Drop Zone.

Roll	Nearest British stand ≤ 10"	Nearest British stand > 10"
1 - 4	Killed	Disordered
5	Disordered	Killed
6 - 10	OK	OK

All surviving troops are automatically suppressed This represents the need for paratroops to orient themselves on landing. When rolling on the manoeuvre table, an ME's initial strength is taken to be the number of stands that **survived** landing. However, if any stands were lost in landing it cannot also claim the "no loss" manoeuvre table bonus.

If any command, MG or mortar stand is lost during the drop, the lost stand may replace a surviving rifle stand from the same ME. It is assumed that an effort would be made to ensure that the battalion's vital equipment would be recovered and used if possible.

5. Victory Conditions

Victory is decided by holding the six objectives. To count as held, troops from a side must have been the last to pass through the objective and there must be no un-disordered enemy within 3 inches of the objective. All objectives are initially held by the British.

a. The coastal battery on Mt Appetici   scenario 2
b. The coastal battery on Rachi Ridge   scenario 1
c. The summit of Mt Meraviglia   scenario 1
d. The town of Quaranta   scenario 1
e. Leros Castle   scenario 2
f. The Germano Hill   scenario 1

The level of victory is determined by how many of the objectives remain in British hands at the end of the game.

a. British Massive Victory   The British hold all of the objectives
b. British Major Victory   The British hold five of the objectives
c. British Minor Victory   The British hold four of the objectives
d. German Minor Victory   The British hold three of the objectives
e. German Major Victory   The British hold two of the objectives
f. German Massive Victory   The British hold no more than one of the objectives.

6. Displacement

While in both scenarios the British have friendly table edges, the German forces have none. Displacing German stands should move towards their drop/landing zones.

In scenario 1, all land table edges are friendly for the British. In scenario 2, the Western table edge is the friendly edge for the British.

Any troops forces to retreat into the sea are destroyed.

7. Players Notes

The maps are correctly scaled for the Battlefront 15 mm scale of 40 yards to the inch. The scenarios were playtested using 1" x 1" bases. If played using "oversize" bases it may be better to let the map grid square be 15" in size rather than the 12" given. This will make for a more realistic force density without affecting distances too much.

The German forces made extensive use of aerial reconnaissance on Leros, while the British (at least to start with) held the high ground which provided excellent vantage points. As such, no hidden movement or deployment (or concealed unit markers) should be used in these scenarios.

The modelling of Leros' walled fields as open terrain, but with much easier adoption of improved positions is a design trade-off. It has the overall desired effect of the fields on play, without the need to invent a new terrain type and effects.

If the scenario seems weighted in favour of the British, to alter play balance in favour of the Germans try replacing up to 1/3 of German rifle stands with LMG stands. Alternatively, the British forces were listed as understrength. Try reducing the number of rifle stands in each company ME to 6 or 7.

The scenario length of 15 turns allows plenty of time for players to move and make use of cover while moving. If you desire a more intense game, reduce the scenario length to 12 turns.

Luftwaffe air attacks were controlled from the ground using coloured smoke, placed by troops on the ground. This seems best modelled by allowing any troop stand to call in an air attack.

8. German Briefing

8.1 Scenario 1: Fallshirmjaegers

This scenario starts at 14:00 and ends at 17:00. It lasts a total of 15 turns. The German player is the first player. Turn 1 does not use the Battlefront turn sequence. Instead, the air assault procedure is used to land the Fallshirmjaegers. They are the only actions allowed that turn.

This scenario depicts the afternoon parachute drop by **I-2-FJ** Battalion on the northern end of Rachi Ridge.

Available Forces
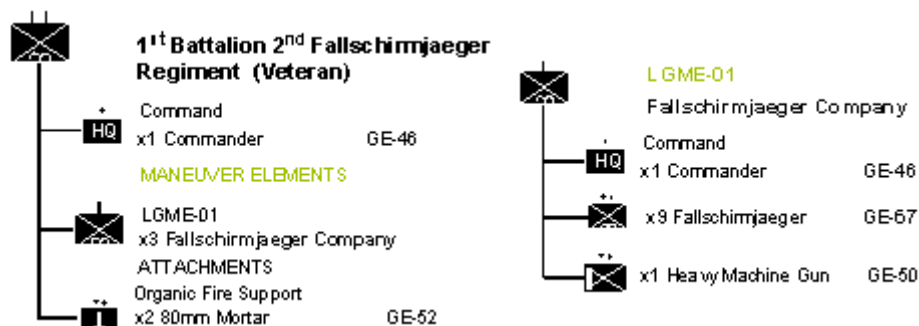
Deployment

The I-2-FJ Battalion is deployed on turn 1 using the air assault rules. The German player may select a Drop Zone location for each ME after the British player has set up all on table troops. The historical drop zone location for all 3 MEs is shown on the map as point **LZ**. Each ME rolls separately to scatter its drop zone marker. The battalion has been ordered to seize and hold Rachi Ridge, Germano and Quaranta.

Air to Ground Sorties

During the Battle of Leros, the Germans possessed complete air superiority and had superb coordination between the Luftwaffe and the ground forces. Reports vary, but on some days, the Luftwaffe flew over 500 sorties. Most analyses cite this factor as being the key to the success of the German invasion.

Roll for the availability of Sorties each turn. Roll one D10.

1,2,3,4	1xJu-87B	strafing sortie	GE-104
5,6,7,8	1xJu-87B	divebombing sortie	GE-104
9,10		no sortie this turn	

Control of each sortie must still be rolled for. Each German troops stand may control an air attack as if it were a FAC. The German player must roll on the call for fire table as if a FAC. Uncontrolled sorties may make a single strafing run using a target stand not in dense concealment with an extra –1 on the fire effect table as a target of opportunity. Luftwaffe aircrews are Veteran.

8.2 Scenario 2: Kustenjaegers

This scenario starts at 14:00 and ends at 17:00. It lasts a total of 15 turns. The German player is the first player.

This scenario depicts the second attempt by the Brandenburg Coastal Raiding company to capture Mt. Appetici.

Available Forces

Brandenburg Coastal Raiding Company (Elite)

HQ	Command x1 Commander	GE-46
	x7 Infantry	GE-44
	x1 Heavy Machine Gun	GE-50

Deployment

The Brandenburg Coastal Raiding company is deployed within 6 inches of point **K** below Mt Appetici. Due to the morning's heavy fighting, it is below strength and does not get the **no loss bonus** on the manoeuvre table.

The company is under orders to seize and hold Mt Appetici.

Air to Ground Sorties

During the Battle of Leros, the Germans possessed complete air superiority and had superb coordination between the Luftwaffe and the ground forces. Reports vary, but on some days, the Luftwaffe flew over 500 sorties. Most analyses cite this factor as being the key to the success of the German invasion.

Roll for the availability of Sorties each turn. Roll one D10.

1,2,3	1xJu-87B	strafing sortie	GE-104
4,5,6	1xJu-87B	divebombing sortie	GE-104
7,8,9,10		no sortie this turn	

Control of each sortie must still be rolled for. Each German troops stand may control an air attack as if it were a FAC. The German player must roll on the call for fire table as if a FAC. Uncontrolled sorties may make a single strafing run using a target stand not in dense concealment with an extra –1 on the fire effect table as a target of opportunity. Luftwaffe aircrews are Veteran.

9. British Briefing

Available Forces

The commander has the following forces from 234th Independent Brigade available to cover both scenarios. The commander will need to decide how to partition his reserves between the scenarios. Once forces are committed to a given scenario they cannot be transferred to the other. To fully reflect the difficulties the defender faces in co-ordinating a response to invasion, all ME's must also be "**released**" before they can be fully used.

Most ME's will start "**unassigned**". This represents their initial unready state and surprise due to the landings. The time taken to release such units represents the time required in preparing to respond to the landings. **Unassigned** troops have restrictions placed on their activities to show this. They may not leave their deployment zone until released. They may not use offensive fire until released. They may use defensive fire and close combat normally. Note that anti-aircraft fire is considered defensive fire.

LBBG-01
Infantry Brigade   (Experienced)
HEADQUARTERS ELEMENT
Command
x1 Commander   BR-50
Transport
x1 Morris MWD 15cwt Truck   BR-43
BATTLE GROUPS
2nd Battalion Royal Irish Fusilliers   LBBG-02
2nd Battalion Royal West Kents   LBBG-02
(B company only)
1st Battalion The Kings Own   LBBG-02
(D company + HQ units only)
x2 Machine Gun Platoon   LBME-03
x1 Towed Antitank Troop   LBME-04
x1 Towed Antiaircraft Troop LBME-05
x1 SBS Platoon (Elite) LBME-06
x1 LRDG Platoon (Elite) LBME-06
BRIGADE FIRE SUPPORT ELEMENTS
x1 Field Artillery Battery (Trained) LBFS-01

LBBG-02
Infantry Battalion
HEADQUARTERS ELEMENT
Command
x1 Commander   BR-50
MANEUVER ELEMENTS
LBME-01
x4 Infantry Company
LBME-02
x1 Carrier Platoon
ATTACHMENTS
x2 AA Machine Gun   BR-P13
Organic Fire Support
x3 3" Mortar   BR-56

To release an ME, a 10 must be rolled on a D10 in the Manoeuvre Phase of any turn except the first. Each ME may attempt to be released once per turn. Add 1 to this roll for each of the following situations:

- the ME has the Brigade Commander attached.
- the ME has Prepared Defence orders (see later)
- the ME has been engaged with offensive fire (except air attack) or close combat
- for each stand killed in the ME (including attachments)

LB ME-01
Infantry Company

Command
| x1 Commander | BR-50 |

| x9 Infantry | BR-49 |

Organic Fire Support
| x1 2" Mortar | BR-55 |

LBME-02
Carrier Platoon (b)

Command/Recon
| x1 Commander | BR-50 |

Recon
| x4 Infantry (a) | BR-49 |

(a) May replace one or more Infantry with:
Bren Light Machine Gun	BR-53
or 2" Mortar (1 per platoon)	BR-55
or Boyes ATR	BR-76

The choice once made is permanent!
(b) Transport was critically short on Leros and the carrier platoon had no organic transport

LBME-03
Machine Gun Platoon (ab)

Command
| x1 Commander | BR-50 |

| x2 Vickers Machine Gun | BR-54 |
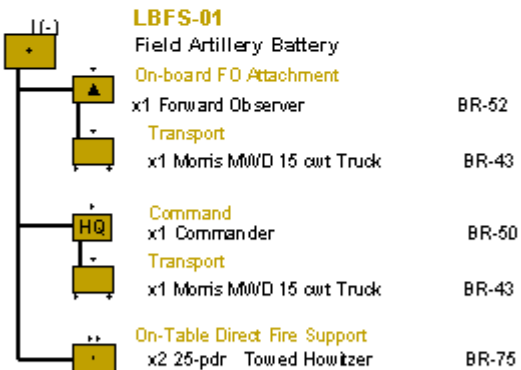
(a) The machine guns in the machine gun platoon may also operate as separate unit attachments to a maneuver element or headquarters element.
(b) Transport was critically short on Leros and the carrier platoon had no organic transport

LBME-04
Antitank Troop (a)

Command
| x1 Commander | BR-50 |

Transport
| x1 Morris MWD 15 cwt Truck | BR-43 |

| x2 2-pdr Antitank Gun | BR-74 |

| x2 Morris MWD 15 cwt Truck | BR-43 |

(a) The towed antitank troop may also operate as separate unit attachments to a maneuver element or headquarters element.

LBME-05
Antiaircraft Troop (a)

Command
| x1 Commander | BR-50 |

Transport
| x1 Morris MWD 15 cwt Truck | BR-43 |

| x2 40mm Bofors Antiaircraft Gun | BR-48 |

| x2 Morris MWD 15 cwt Truck | BR-43 |

(a) The guns in the towed antiaircraft troop may also operate as separate unit attachments to a maneuver element or headquarters element.

LBME-06
Commando Troop

Command
| x1 Commando | BR-58 |

| x2 Commando | BR-58 |

LBFS-01
Field Artillery Battery

On-board FO Attachment
| x1 Forward Observer | BR-52 |

Transport
| x1 Morris MWD 15 cwt Truck | BR-43 |

Command
| x1 Commander | BR-50 |

Transport
| x1 Morris MWD 15 cwt Truck | BR-43 |

On-Table Direct Fire Support
| x2 25-pdr Towed Howitzer | BR-75 |

9.1 Scenario 1: Fallshirmjaegers

This scenario starts at 14:00 and ends at 17:00. It lasts a total of 15 turns, including the special turn 1: the air assault turn. The German player is the first player. The British player sets up first.

Artillery and air Support

The field artillery battery has no smoke missions and only 6 HE missions available.

The artillery battery may be attached to any ME in Direct Fire support, or left unattached and provide General Fire support using only the battery FOO. The artillery is only rated as **Trained** due to the guns in use being previously captured 25 pdr field pieces that have had German fire control equipment fitted before being found on Samos.

There are no British air to ground sorties available.

Deployment

British forces committed to this scenario are:

2nd Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers
- A Company,   in deployment zone A-I   **Unassigned**
- B Company,   in deployment zone B-I   **Unassigned**
- D Company,   in deployment zone D-I   **Unassigned**
- HQ Units,   in deployment zone HQ-I   **Unassigned**

- 9th Royal Field Artillery (off table fire support firing from the southern table edge, FOO on table)   **Unassigned**

Other units may be allocated to this scenario from the Brigade reserve (section 10.3). They may deploy in any of the above deployment areas. The AT and AA gun ME's may be broken into attachments, as can the platoons of the MG company. Attachments use the "released/unassigned" status of their host ME.

The British deployments were designed to counter a sea landing. Hence the MEs deployed in areas **A-I** and **D-I** must have at least 2 platoons deployed within 3" of the coast. At least 1 platoon must remain within 3" of the coast until the ME is released.

9.2 Scenario 2: Kustenjaegers

This scenario starts at 14:00 and ends at 17:00. It lasts a total of 15 turns. The German player is the first player. The British player sets up first.

Artillery and air Support

There is no artillery support available.

There are no British air to ground sorties available.

Deployment

British forces committed to this scenario are:

2nd Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers
- C Company,   in deployment zone C-I (minus 1 rifle stand)   **Released**

C Company of the Royal Irish Fusiliers may not claim the "**no loss**" bonus on the manoeuvre chart.

Other units may be allocated to this scenario from the Brigade reserve (section 10.3). They may deploy in any of the above deployment areas. The AT and AA gun ME's may be broken into attachments, as can the platoons of the MG company.

In this scenario only, troops initially deployed on Mt Appetici may not use ambush fire.

9.3 Reserve Forces

The following reserve forces are available, and must be committed to either scenario 1 or scenario 2 before the start of the game. The AT and AA gun ME's may be broken into attachments, as can the platoons of the MG company. All reserve forces that are not attached to other ME's must be deployed as **unassigned** MEs. Unless otherwise specified, released troops may leave their deployment zone the turn after being released.

1st Battalion The Kings Own
- D Company,   appears on road A or B as appropriate 2 turns after being released.
- HQ Units,   appears on road A or B as appropriate 2 turns after being released.

2nd Battalion The Royal West Kents
- B Company   in deployment zone B-K

Other Troops
- SBS Platoon   in deployment zone B-K   **Released**
- LRDG Platoon   in deployment zone B-K   **Released**
- AA troop RA   in any deployment zone or attached to any ME.
- AT troop RA   in any deployment zone or attached to any ME.
- MG Btn units   in any deployment zone or attached to any ME.

Special forces units are trained for independent action and react quicker than other troops. Hence, the LRDG and SBS are always considered **released**.

9.4 British Orders

Before the game starts, the British player may declare any of his MEs to have "**Prepared Defence**" orders. This status has advantages, and disadvantages.

ME's on "**Prepared Defence**" orders may be Dug In. The command element may function as a command post and artillery calls for fire support count as pre-registered. The ME receives a +1 dice roll bonus when rolling to be "**released**".

However, such troops <u>may never leave their deployment zone</u>, even after being "**released**".

10. Historical Outcome

That afternoon, the Ju-52's approached at 400 ft and were engulfed in a barrage from the British flak. The Fallshirmjaeger lost about 150 men killed or wounded in the drop onto rocky ground, but quickly regrouped and attacked Rachi Ridge. Ceaseless attacks by Luftwaffe ground attack aircraft had a telling effect on the defenders as the battle progressed. However, British troops in the immediate neighbourhood of the landing were few and disorganised. The Germans quickly seized the ground between Gurna and Alinda bays in spite of suffering up to 40 % casualties from the drop and the fighting around Mt Germano and Quaranta.

Overall German success was mixed. After a long day Mt Appetici was finally carried. The threat from this lodgement exerted significant influence over British thinking for the remainder of the campaign. More than once forces collected to deal with the main body of the Germans had to be diverted against Mt Appetici. Being so close to the main British supply and operations centres it just couldn't be ignored. But it was to be several days before Leros Castle fell.

The Fallshirmjaegers lost nearly 40% of their number during or soon after landing. Except for the difficulties the British had in organising a coordinated counter attack, largely due to the unexpected use of paratroops, it is likely that this landing would have been overwhelmed. As it was they only managed to secure Germano and Rachi Ridge after some heavy close fighting. At the end of the first day their success was far from assured and they were facing heavy counter attacks. But their success was sufficient for the Germans to proceed with the remainder of their plan.

Historical Outcome: German Marginal Victory (Mt Appetici, Germano, Rachi Ridge)

11. References

Author: Nigel Perry   (perryn@alphalink.com.au)

Playtesters: Nigel Perry, Paul Ruzicka and Stephen Bowman.

These Battlefront scenarios are based in large part on the information presented in:

1. *The Aegean Mission: Allied Operations in the Dodecanese, 1943*. Jeffery Holland, Greenwood Press, 1988.
2. *The Mediterranean and Middle East, Vol.5*, Part of the *History of the Second World War. United Kingdom military series*, I. S. O. Playfair, pp. 531- 559. HMSO, 1954

They were inspired by "The Gamers" TCS series game covering the Leros campaign, available from MultiMan Publishing[1].

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[1] http://www.multimanpublishing.com/theGamers/archive/index.html