

Villa Rogatti
December 6, 1943
A Battlefield Scenario by Bill Slavin

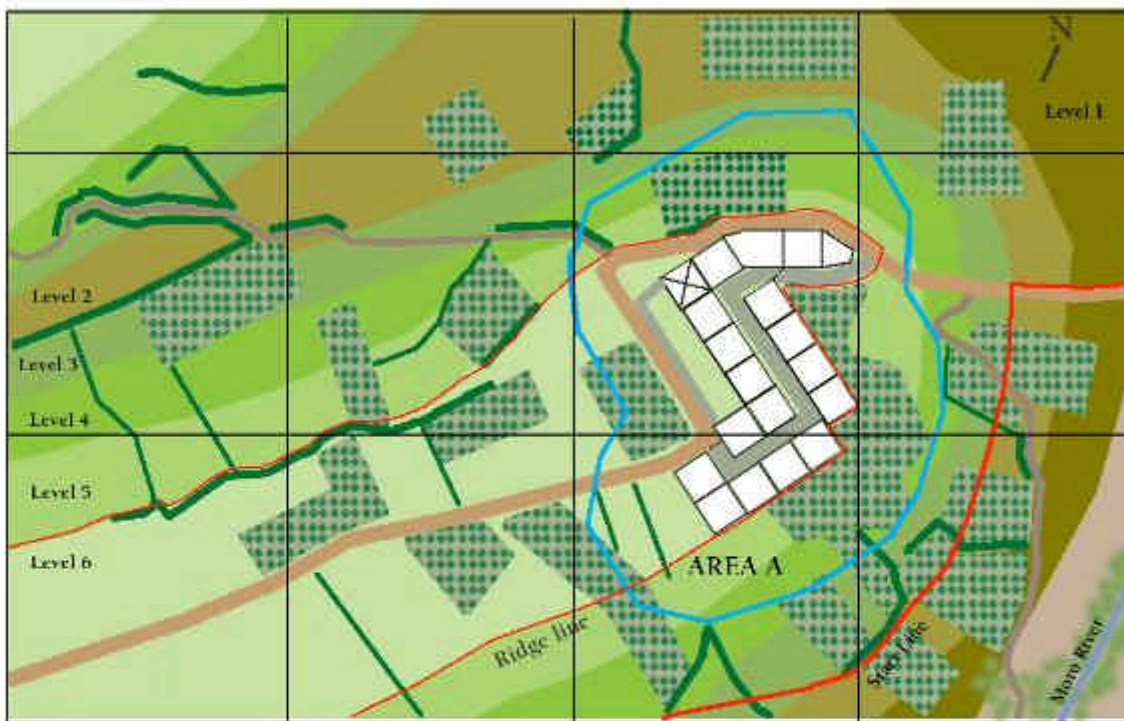
Phase 1 – Night Attack on Villa Rogatti

In the early morning hours of December 6, 1943, Colonel Cameron Bethel Ware was faced with a difficult decision. The expected artillery barrage that would precede the night attack of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry on Villa Rogatti had not materialized. It was now zero hour, and if the attack was to go in this night it had to be launched now. But what if his lead companies should be caught in the barrage?










The object of the attack was Villa Rogatti, perched high on the edge of the ridge facing him across the Moro River. Reconnaissance had revealed it to be heavily fortified with strong counter attack forces positioned not far back from the front lines. But if a bridgehead was to be seized and held, early tank support would be imperative.

An unguarded crossing by a ruined bridge had been found that should allow the tanks of the British 44th Royal Tank Regiment to cross the Moro. But the crossing and track leading up to the village was mired with the mud of the December rains, and no attempt could be made to get armour into the village until first light. Unknown to Ware, division had cancelled the preliminary barrages in hopes of gaining surprise. So with zero hour looming, he had no choice but to send in his troops and pray for the best...

The attack on Villa Rogatti was just one of three attacks that night by the First Canadian Infantry Brigade aimed at forcing bridgeheads over the River Moro. The crossing of the Moro was prelude for the 2nd CIB's attack on Ortona a few weeks later. Only the assault on Villa Rogatti succeeded in any measurable way that night, but the crossing the 44th tankers used was deemed impossible to bridge by Canadian engineers, and the hard fought bridgehead was turned over to the Indian 8th Division in favour of forcing a bridgehead further downstream at San Leonardo. A few days later Indian engineers successfully bridged the Moro at Villa Rogatti and used it in their attacks east of the Canadian 1st Division. They named the bridge "Impossible Bridge".



Terrain Chart

-  BUS -Single story, stone. BUS with "X" has second story (1 level above) but may only house one unit
-  Orchards and Vineyards (See terrain notes below)
-  Unpaved road
-  Street
-  Track (See terrain notes below)
-  Tall hedgerow
-  Low hedgerow
-  Low stone wall
-  Woods with Underbrush

Terrain Notes

Levels and slopes - Villa Rogatti is situated at the end of a spur of high ground that drops off rapidly towards the river. Although 6 levels are indicated, for simplicity's sake slopes should be considered always up or down. In other words, any unit situated more than 1 inch "up slope" is considered to be on a higher level than any unit "down slope". This allows units to fire over one another, even if on the same level, providing they are not parallel and there is the 1" clearance of intervening units, as per the rules (p. 31).

High hedgerows, orchards and vineyards (see below) do not block LOS if target or spotter is on a different level and both are more than 1 inch from the intervening obstacle.

Mud - December rains have turned the slopes to mud. As such, all levels except 6 should be treated as "muddy" and "steep" (half speed, bog down for tanks). Furthermore, any bog down on these slopes may be permanent (see Special Rules, Phase 2). So tanks go there at their peril!

Ridge line - Ridgeline (red line) blocks LOS unless spotting or target units are within 1 inch of ridge.

Orchards and Vineyards - In this scenario, treat orchards and vineyards as "woods with underbrush" for movement and spotting, with the possibility of permanent bog down if on a slope (see above). The only exception is that they are not a level 1 obstacle, but rather block LOS as noted above (Levels and Slopes).

Track - Use half cross country speed for tracks (see "mud"). However, there is no possibility of a permanent bog down if vehicle is on a track.

Villa Rogatti - All of the BUS's and streets make up the single BUA of Villa Rogatti.

Phase 1 Turn Sequence (8 turns)

Turn 1

Canadians (A and B Companies only) move first. Until Canadian units are spotted by German defenders, no defending unit may change positions. Additionally, all German units other than those designated as watch units will be considered disordered and unable to move (other than moves dictated by a failed maneuver check) for the first three turns after any first contact with the enemy (firing or close combat). During this time they must still roll maneuver checks, ignoring any results higher than a modified 0 or less and unable to remove the “disorder” designation. On the fourth turn after any first contact the “disorder” designation may be removed on a successful maneuver roll.

Turn 4

C Company may move beyond start area. (This company may move and fire earlier, but cannot cross start line.)

Special Rules

Night Rules

This phase is fought in darkness, and the following “Night” rules apply:

Discipline rating

All units are rated one level lower than normal

Spotting

Down 3 spotting modifier

No Up 1 modifier for higher elevation

Direct fire

Fire Combat Modifier of -1 for all direct fire

Maneuver

No rapid advance

No +1 command modifier for troops unless within 1 inch of commander

No +2 enemy proximity modifier for no LOS to spotted or suspected enemy

Close Combat

Modifier for "DEF: outflanked" changed to -2

Grazing Fire

Grazing Fire can be used by German HMG's that have been set on watch only. Use Playtest MG grazing rules with the following exceptions:

The Grazing Fire template must be centered on a spotted or suspected enemy unit.

Once the Grazing Fire template has been set down, it may not be moved. The HMG may always, however, opt for Point Fire, but if doing so, cannot revert to Grazing Fire.

Treat all targets within template as spotted (no “suspected” downward modifier), but retain cover modifiers.

Note that the -1 for direct fire due to night conditions is on top of the -1 Grazing Fire modifier.

Set up

Initial Canadian forces (Companies A, B and C) set up anywhere behind Start Line.

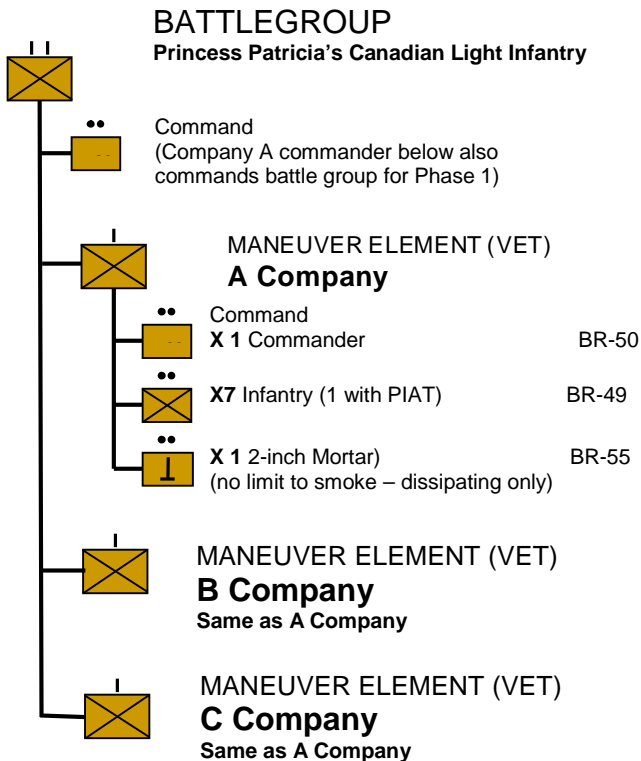
Initial German forces (1st Company) set up within area A (no more than 4" from the nearest BUS.). Up to four watch units may be placed in improved positions within Villa Rogatti or dug in outside of the town (but still within area A). The remainder, (asleep) are to be placed within BUS's in Villa Rogatti, and will react as noted above, but are not considered in "Improved positions".

Note: Heavy machine guns if put on watch may set up for Grazing Fire, but once template is placed on board it cannot be moved. See "Special Rules" above.

Designer's Note:

Although not entirely necessary, it is recommended that the German forces use hidden placement (either map references or a digital camera to record their initial troop placement), especially for the four watch units, as any knowledge of these may unduly influence the attacker's avenue of attack. If this is not possible, employ dummy markers as per Page 9 in the Battlefront rules book.

Canadian Order of Battle (Phase 1)



German Order of Battle (Phase 1)



Inter Phase Movement.

By the end of Phase 1 if less than 15 of the Built Up Sectors in Villa Rogatti are cleared of defenders, the game is over and the Germans have won. If not, there is now a lull in the battle and all units are returned to good order (although casualties occurring in Phase 1 do count for determining maneuver rolls in Phase 2).

During this lull the remainder of the P.P.C.L.I. Battalion and supporting units are placed on the board within Area A in improved positions (no MG grazing fire for Vickers platoon). German units within Area A's boundaries are withdrawn to the nearest cover behind yellow line and placed in improved positions. If the original defending German ME has suffered less than or equal to 50% casualties in Phase 1, they may participate actively in the counterattack of Phase 2. If casualties are more than 50%, they are limited to a supportive role only (may not advance, but can still fire and move behind the start line.)

Note that in Phase 2, these beginning positions are known by the Canadians, precluding them from ambush fire and making them valid targets.

Phase 2 – German Counterattack, December 6

Taking the German garrison by surprise, the Canadian attack companies have successfully seized Villa Rogatti. But in the surrounding vineyards and orchards the enemy is still well dug in, and sporadic firing continues throughout the night.

At first light Colonel Ware arrives with his Headquarters Company and D Company, and quickly set about organizing the defences. With dawn enemy mortar fire and shelling join the small arms in an ever-increasing crescendo. And then, out of the mist loom German Panzers, accompanied by Panzergrenadiers dodging forward towards the outskirts of the village.

In the valley below he can hear the roar of engines and clashing of gears as the tanks of the 44th grind their way up along the muddy track from the valley below. But will the British armour arrive in time?

Phase 2 Turn Sequence (10 turns)

Turn 1

German counterattack forces are placed on board anywhere in Area B.

Canadian/British forces move first. Shermans are placed on track at Point C, with the lead Sherman 10 inches advanced along the track and the others in line behind. (Track is considered a defile, and if following tanks wish to maneuver around a bogged tank rather than beach, they risk permanent bogging down (see Special Rules below).

Special Rules

Poor Visibility Rules

This phase is fought in the morning mist, and the following “Poor Visibility” rules apply:

Spotting

Down 1 spotting modifier

Maneuver

No +2 enemy proximity modifier for no LOS to spotted or suspected enemy

Grazing Fire

No Grazing Fire is allowed for this phase.

Permanent Bog Down

If a tank becomes bogged down and on a subsequent maneuver action fails to unbog, it becomes permanently bogged down and is considered out of action. Note that if the tank has the option to displace on the second roll it avoids permanently bogging down.

IDF Fire

Germans

The rooftops of Villa Rogatti are considered visible and not blocked by the surrounding vineyards and orchards. As such they are valid targets for random indirect fire. In addition, two map points may be selected as pre-registered targets and are valid for concentrations as well as other shelling missions. These points must be selected prior to the Canadian player setting up.

Canadians

It will be noted that the FOO has been combined with the HQ command stand in this scenario. This is because the FOO's radio was damaged in the advance to Villa Rogatti, and only one set, the battalion commander's, was available. This unit can operate as an FOO, (may call in own battery as "Organic", spotting bonus, etc.) but if it is knocked out all possibility of off board fire support is lost.

If BUS marked with "X" is used as an OP, consider it one level above surrounding terrain for spotting purposes (see Terrain Notes).

End game

ME's that loose 50% +1, regardless of morale check can no longer advance (although they may displace).

ME's that loose 75% of their units, regardless of morale check must fall back one move and may no longer advance (although they may displace).

If all of the *attacker's* ME's (other than HQ and IDF ME's) are reduced to less than 50% the game is over at the beginning of that player's next phase.

Victory Conditions

Major German Victory

All of Villa Rogatti cleared of undisordered Canadian units by game's end.

Minor German Victory

Possession of a majority of Villa Rogatti's BUS's by game's end. (Possession is determined by either having a unit in the sector or being the last unit to have occupied a sector.)

Major Canadian/British Victory

All of Villa Rogatti cleared of undisordered German units by game's end.

OR

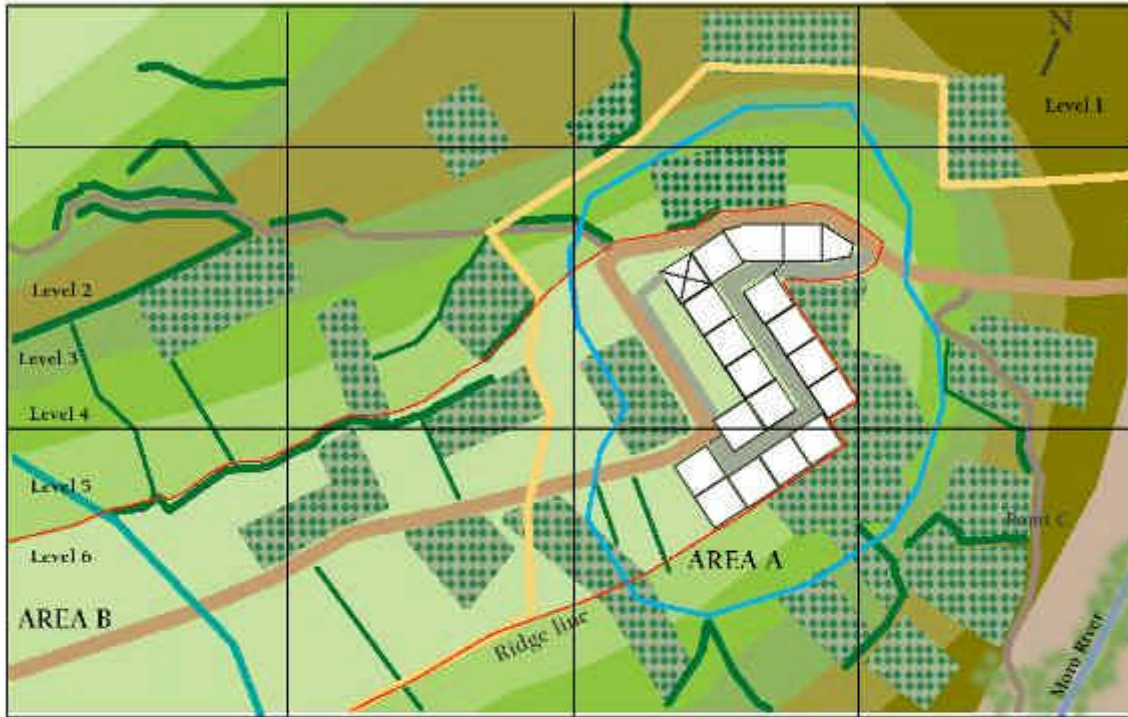
All of German player's ME's are reduced to less than 50%, in which case he calls off the attack.

Minor Canadian/British Victory










Possession of a majority of Villa Rogatti's BUS's by game's end. (Possession is determined by either having a unit in the sector or being the last unit to have occupied a sector.)

Set Up

Canadians set up first as per Inter Phase instructions. 7th Panzer Co. sets up anywhere in Area B. Remainder of German forces may set up anywhere north of the yellow line.



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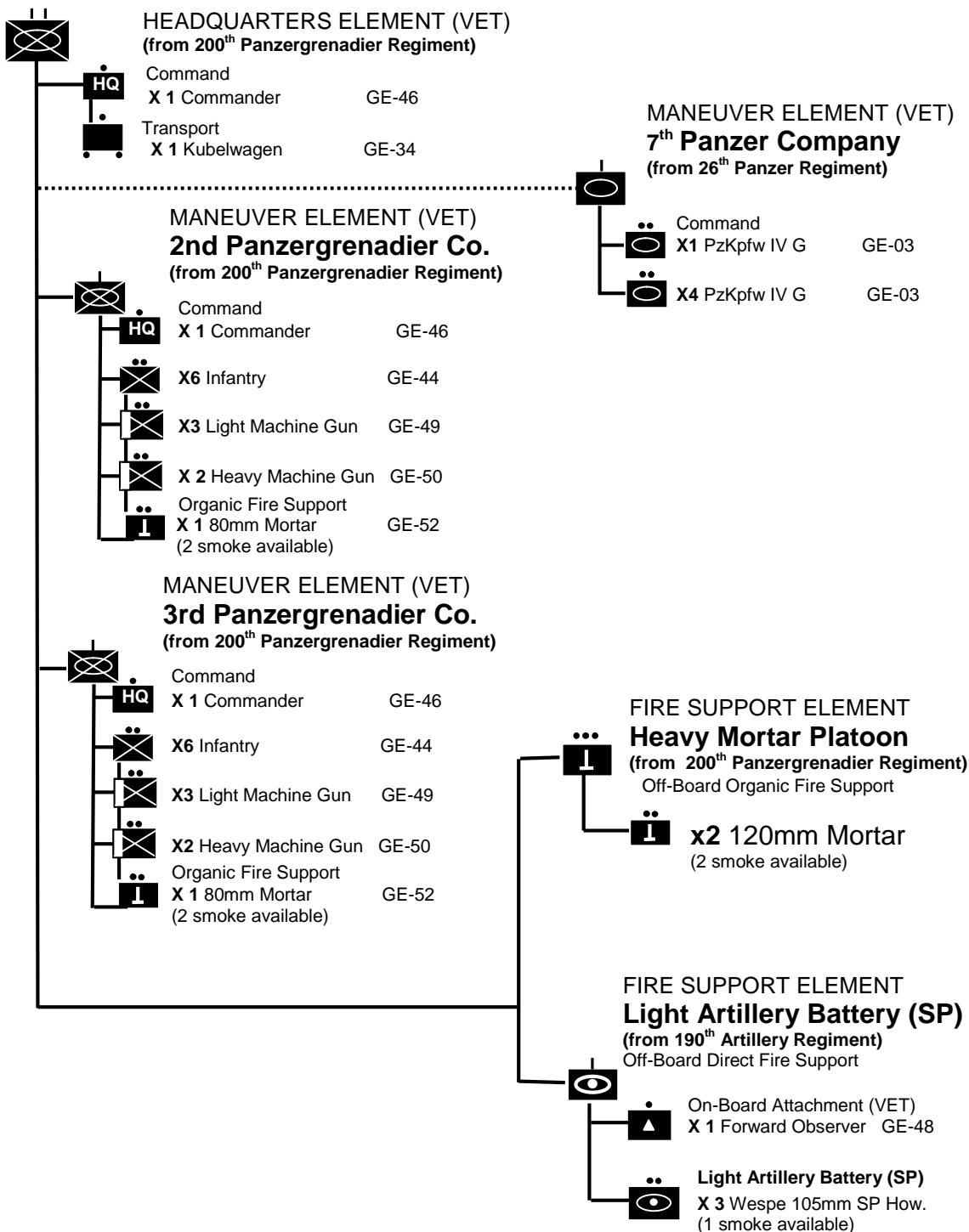
German Order of Battle (Phase 2)

Note 1: These are in addition to any surviving units from Phase 1, who may be employed as noted in “Inter Phase Movement” above.

Note 2: German mortars, if emplaced within 2” of one another, may be grouped as a battery attachment to the HQ Element.

Note 3: Off-board Fire Support originates from north side of table.

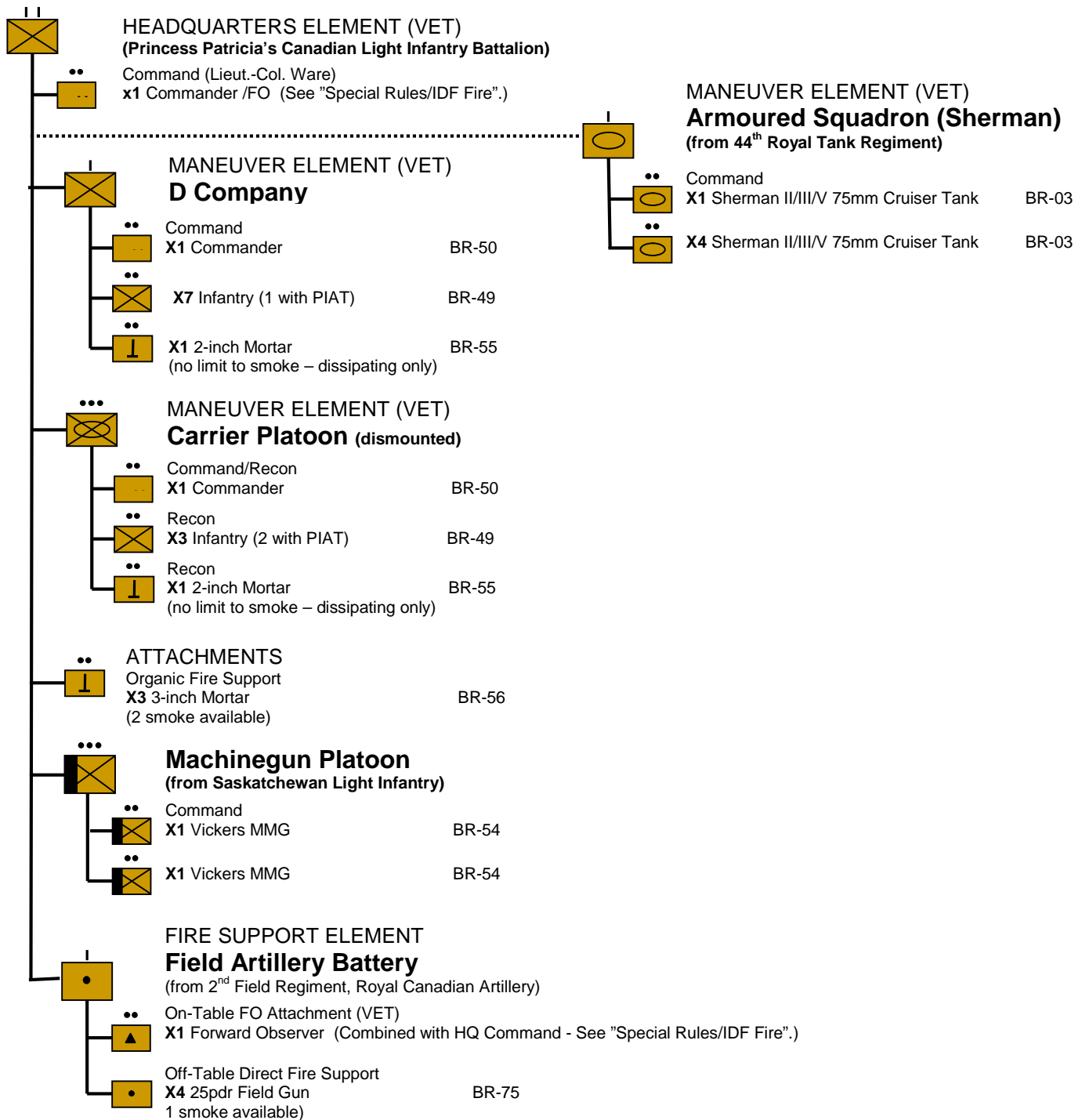
BATTLE GROUP



Canadian Order of Battle (Phase 2)

Note: These are in addition to those surviving units from Phase 1, who may be employed as noted in "Inter Phase Movement" above and now fall under battalion command.

BATTLE GROUP



Note: Off-Table Fire Support originates from south side of board.

Historical Note

The German counterattack on the morning of December 6 was one of a number that were launched against the P.P.C.L.I. throughout the day. The attack represented in this scenario is really an amalgam of the earlier attack and a later one that occurred early in the afternoon.

Bibliography

Ortona: Canada's Epic World War II Battle, Mark Zuehlke
The Canadians in Italy, Lt.-Col. G. W. L. Nicholson
The War in Italy 1943-1945, Field Marshal Lord Carver