

**Ambush at Grammichele**  
**Grammichele, Sicily, July 15, 1943**  
*A Battlefield WWII Scenario by Bill Slavin*

*"In defiance of the rules of war and of common sense, the mile-long line of vehicles crawled forward in the emptiness of the vast bowl. From the ramparts of Grammichele the watchers must have congratulated each other on an unprecedented stroke of luck, for it must have appeared certain that their trap would close upon the whole of that naked and unsuspecting force."*

Farley Mowat, *The Regiment*



*The Canadians mounted and in in column along the highway to Grammichele.*

## Scenario

Five days after the launch of the Allied invasion of Sicily, code named Operation Husky, Canadian forces push north into the rugged Sicilian interior against stiffening German resistance. As the Hermann Göring Division disengages from the Americans around Gela in order to shift their forces east, they initiate a series of rear guard actions against the 8th Army's left flank to buy time to establish a defensive line in the Catania plain.

At the town of Grammichele elements of the HG Flak Regiment, supported by infantry and tanks, carefully prepare an ambush for the advancing enemy. The town perched on a height of land has a commanding view of the wide, empty plain devoid of cover traversed by Highway 124 running straight as an arrow. The German commander cannot believe his eyes as the Canadian units come into view, advancing in a single two mile column strung out along the highway under the sights of his waiting guns.

The Canadian Hastings Prince Edward Regiment, supported by tanks of the Three Rivers Tank Regiment, spearhead the 8<sup>th</sup> Army's left hand thrust. The Three Rivers' reconnaissance section, accompanied by a platoon of Hasty P's B Company mounted on tanks, precedes the column into the seemingly empty town, cautiously probing for enemy resistance. As these lead elements disappear from view into Grammichele, the remainder of the column is brought up short by a crater on Hwy. 124 that is effectively blocking the way forward for wheeled transport. Lt. Col. Tweedsmuir, the Hasty P's commander, had just ordered the crater filled when firing erupts. Machine gun and small artillery fire tear into the exposed column as the infantry bail off their transporting tanks and into the cover of a shallow ditch. The battle has begun.

The object of this scenario is to mirror the unique challenges posed for both sides. For the Canadian player it is to make good a bad situation while the German player tries to execute a successful rear guard action, inflicting as much damage as possible while tying up enemy troops before exiting his units as intact as possible.

## **Duration**

Game ends after 12 turns or if Canadian tanks or troop stands occupy Pts. A, B, C and D undisordered at the end of German turn. The game begins on the German offensive fire phase.

## **Scenario specific rules**

### ***1. Tank Riders***

Although not a scenario specific rule, because of the use of tank riders at the start of this scenario it may be worthwhile to consult these clarifications on their use.

<http://www.fireandfury.com/extra/tankriders.shtml>

### ***2. Tank Cover***

Troop units conformed to armour will receive +1 hard cover modifier if line of fire to closest aiming point passes through any part of the vehicle (even if a second aiming point on the target is visible). In addition, these units will be considered to have benefit of this cover the entire maneuver phase if they move in tandem with the armour, regardless of separation resulting from ME's moving at different times. Knocked out armour will offer the same cover, but only if they are not burning.

### ***3. Machine gun grazing fire***

Rules found here: <http://www.fireandfury.com/extra/mggrazing.shtml>

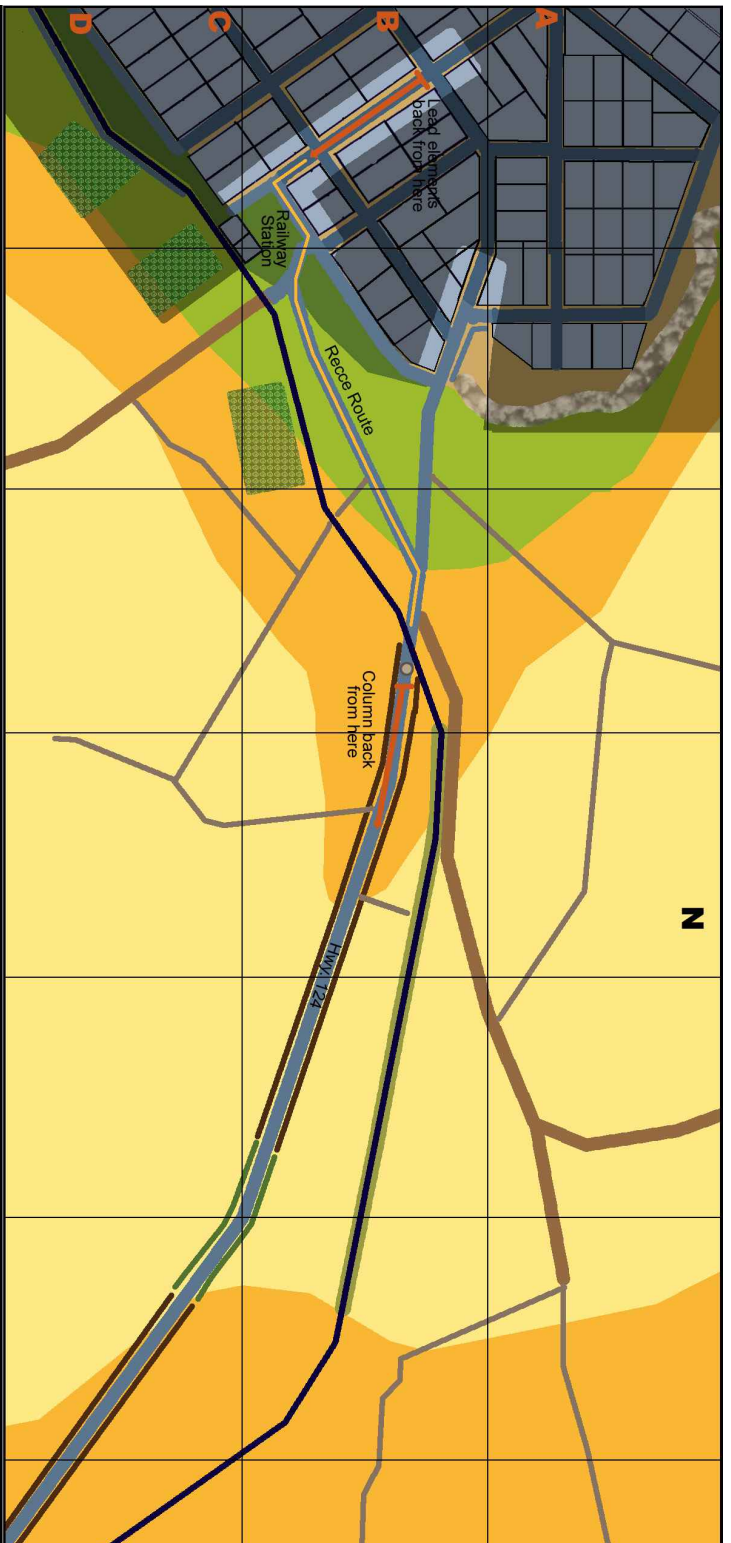
with the addition that the template needs to be centered on a spotted or suspected target and only "cover" modifiers apply (i.e. suspected target status and smoke do not).

### ***4. Destroying BUS and Rubble (Optional)***



















Rules found here, Section 12.: <http://www.fireandfury.com/scenarios/bhoptionalrules.pdf> or, alternatively, try out my pared down version, *Destroying BUS and Rubble for Dummies*, attached to the end of this scenario!

### ***5. Smoke***

All mortars and Bishops have two smoke missions each. 2" mortars have unlimited smoke.



### Terrain Chart

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | Paved Road                                      |  | Orchards  |
|  | Street  |  | BUS Stone   |
|  | Unpaved Road                                    |  | Level 4 (Treat top of escarpment non-BUA as sparse area concealment)          |
|  | Lane (Cross country speed, negates terrain)     |  | Level 3 (Steep slope)   |
|  | Railway   |  | Level 2 (Gentle slope)  |
|  | Shallow Ditch (-4 bogdown for wheeled vehicles) |  | Level 1   |
|  | High Hedge                                      |  | Level 0   |
|  | Low embankment                                  |  | Sheer Slope   |
|  | Walled embankment (treat as "High wall")        |  | Crater (Impassable to wheeled, breach/bogdown for tracked, breach for troops) |

## Terrain Notes

**Ditch on either side of Hwy. 124** - "Shallow" but has an additional -4 on bog down roll to cross for wheeled vehicles. Troops conformed to edge of road considered to have advantage of ditch cover. Note that lanes span ditch.

**Crater blocking road** - Impassable to wheeled vehicles, breach bog down for tracked vehicles, normal speed for troops.

**Walled Embankments** - These are treated as "High Walls" for crossing, but as they are buttressing terrain they only block LOS from the downslope side. For instance, elements on the road south of the walled embankment bordering the escarpment would have LOS blocked to the north and northeast, but elements on the north side would have unobstructed views.

**Dark green elevation level** - Treat as "Steep Slope". Note that there is no dark green steep slope on the northeast edge of Grammichele, as this becomes a "sheer slope".

**Town** - All of town with the exception of the railway station is considered on Level 4 (beige), and all BUS's are one level only. The allocation of BUS's is totally arbitrary and can be adjusted to suit your own BUS models. Grammichele was laid out on a hexagonal pattern, however, with streets radiating from the center (Point A), so the road configuration should be followed as closely as possible.

**Escarpment** - Units conformed to the top edge of the escarpment have an unobstructed LOS, with the exception of flak guns and tanks which may not spot any enemy units with their front aiming points within 2" of the base of the escarpment (due to restrictions on lowering guns). Units not conformed to the top may spot any unit with their front aiming point more than 5" from the base of the escarpment. Units below and within 5" of the base of the escarpment may only spot units conformed to the upper edge.



*The main Canadian column halts at a crater blocking the road, not yet knowing that they are walking into an ambush.*

## Victory Conditions

Game ends after 12 turns or if undisordered Canadian tanks or troop stands occupy Pts. A, B, C and D at the end of German turn (see below). *At game end all German units other than troop stands still on the board are considered knocked out for VP purposes.*

VP's are calculated in the following manner:

- 1 VP for each tank (including Bishops and turretless Stuart) or gun knocked out.
- 1 VP for every three troops stands or three soft or armoured transport knocked out.

Germans must score 2 VP's for every 1 VP scored by Canadians (i.e. halve German VP's, rounding down).

Destroyed soft transport does not count towards ME totals but does count as casualties when determining maneuver roll results.

### **Canadian Victory**

#### *Major*

Occupy Pts. A, B, C and D (exit route blocked) causing early game end *and* Canadians score more VP's than Germans.

#### *Minor*

Canadians score more VP's than Germans.

### **German Victory**

#### *Major*

Germans score more VP's than Canadians (must score a minimum 3 VP's i.e. 6 halved) *and* all surviving units (troops included) exit board on west side.

#### *Minor*

Germans score more VP's than Canadians (minimum 3 VP's i.e. 6 halved).



*German 88 opens up on the carrier platoon as it approaches on the town's outskirts.*

## **Briefing for Canadian Commanding Officer, Lt.-Col. Tweedsmuir, Hastings Prince Edward Regiment**

Early this morning your regiment assumed the lead from the Royal Canadian Regiment in the village of Vizzini and after plodding through the heat and dust of Sicily for the past five days now spearheads the 30<sup>th</sup> Corps advance. Supported by Shermans of the Three Rivers Tanks and a battery of Bishop self propelled artillery of the Devon Yeomanry, you are to advance north along Hwy. 124 and secure the town of Grammichele before pressing on towards Enna. With resistance lighter than expected on the Eighth Army's right flank Allied command has recently decided that they can develop an axes of attack for both Corps, the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup>, with the plan "to split the island in half".

Your transport, along with most of the transport of the Canadian forces, was sunk at sea and now rests on the bottom of the Atlantic, but your troops mounted on tanks, carriers, gun transport and a hodgepodge of borrowed and captured lorries, are making good time, grateful to no longer be slogging it on foot. At about 9:00 a.m. the town of Grammichele comes into view.

It is unknown whether the town on its height of land ahead of you is defended by the enemy, but recce has seen no signs of resistance. Crossing the open terrain below the town, your main column has been brought up short by a large crater that blocks wheeled traffic along the highway as the Three Rivers' recce section disappear into Grammichele. You have just issued orders to have the crater filled when firing erupts. You are caught in the open under blistering enemy fire but you quickly order your men into action, moving to escape the murderous open plain and get your troops and tanks into the town to close with the enemy. And if possible, to turn this difficult situation into victory by cutting off the German escape routes through the town and forcing them to withdraw.

### **Deployment**

Deployment for this scenario is very specific and based on the historic deployment. As the scenario is intended to have the Canadian player take a bad situation and turn it around, this deployment should be followed in the order indicated. All vehicles are placed in column along the route with no more than 1/2" spacing between.

Carrying capacity has been increased by one unit for all vehicles in this scenario, and those without carrying capacity are allowed to carry one troop. This is to reflect the fact that the Hasty P's lacked transport of their own and were "making do". All troop units (marked with asterisk) transported above carrying capacity or on transport usually dedicated to other purpose (i.e. gun transport) must disembark at first contact with enemy on the friendly maneuver phase of Turn 1 (e.g. if three tank riders are mounted then at least one tank rider must disembark).

#### ***Recce and advance units***

Set up in Grammichele as indicated on map, with recce section in lead and tank following. All must be within 1/2" of each other.

Three Rivers recce section (Dingo and carrier)

1X Sherman

3 X Infantry (Platoon of B Co. mounted on tank)\*

#### ***Leading Force***

(On road behind crater)

6X Sherman

Remainder of B Co. mounted on tanks\*

1X Commander

6 X Infantry (1 with PIAT)

1 X 2" mortar

A Co. mounted on tanks (9T) and carriers of carrier platoon (2T)\*

1X Commander

9 X Infantry (1 with PIAT)  
1 X 2" mortar

Carrier Platoon (Including 2T from A Co. transported)  
1X Commander  
4 X Infantry  
2X 2" mortar  
5X carrier with MG

***Following Force***

(These are placed immediately after leading force but may be ordered as desired.)

Battalion Commander  
Transport: 1 X White Scout Car

C Co.  
1X Commander  
9 X Infantry (1 with PIAT)  
1 X 2" mortar  
Transport: 3 trucks

D Co. \*  
1X Commander  
9 X Infantry (1 with PIAT)  
1 X 2" mortar  
Transport: Assorted transport below, (allow 1 extra T transport per vehicle, including Bishops)\*

3X carriers (mortar)

2X carriers with MG (Vickers)

3X 6 lbr.  
3X carriers

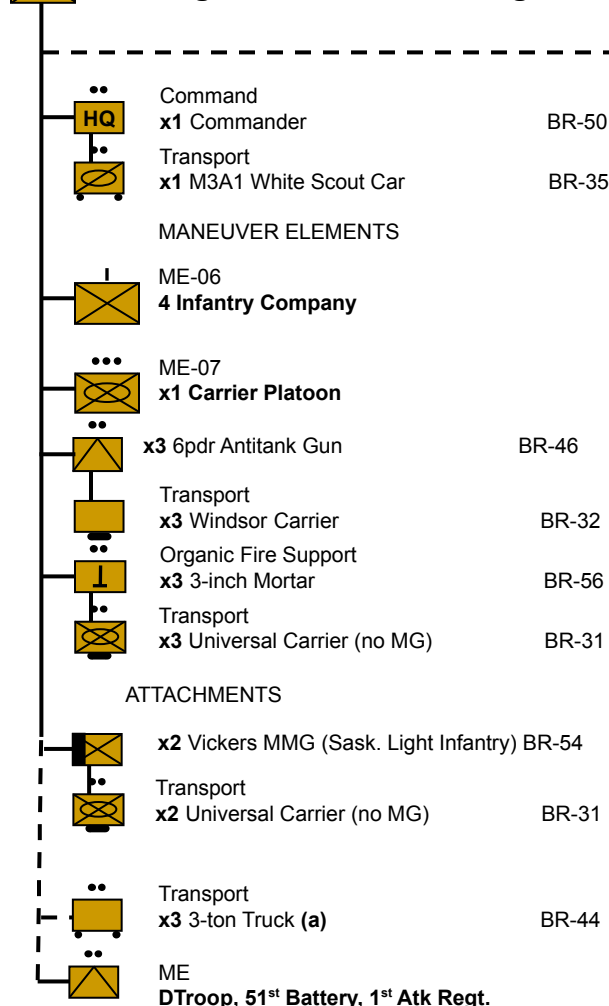
2X 17 pdrs.  
2X quad tractor

On Board Troop Self-propelled field artillery  
2 X FOO  
2X carriers  
4X Bishop (25 lbr.)

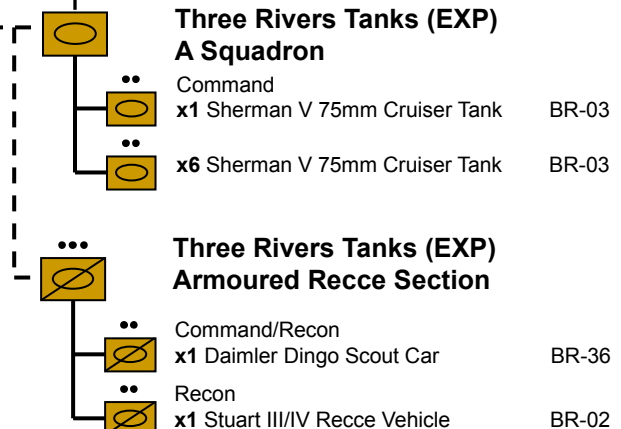
\* All troop units transported above carrying capacity or on transport usually dedicated to other purpose (i.e. gun transport) must disembark at first contact with enemy.

# Allied Forces

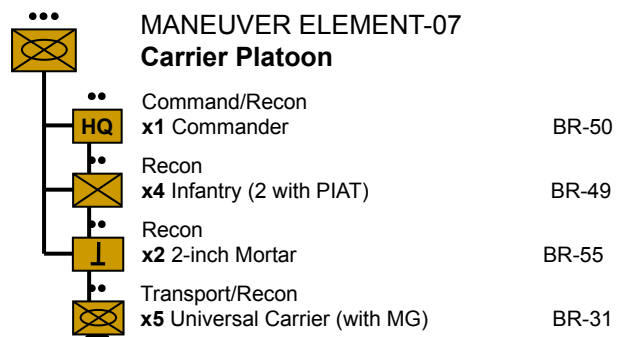
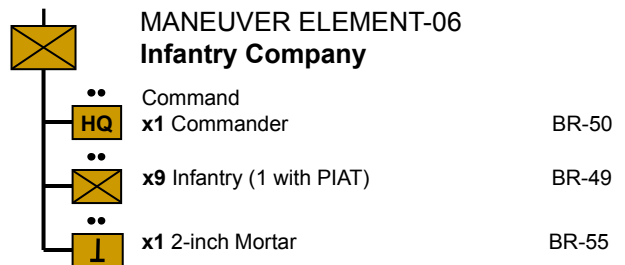
## Hastings Prince Edward Regiment (VET)



(a) These trucks may be represented with pretty well whatever models you care to use. With most Canadian transport lost at sea the transport was a hodge podge of borrowed 8<sup>th</sup> Army vehicles and captured Italian trucks. On the morning of this encounter a German truck, captured when its occupants had taken the wrong road and run head long into the advancing Canadians, was also pressed into service!



### MANEUVER ELEMENT DETAILS



### ON-TABLE FIRE SUPPORT Field Artillery Battery (Self-Propelled) 383<sup>rd</sup> Battery, Devon Yeomanry 142 Field Regiment, RA (EXP)



### MANEUVER ELEMENT D Troop 51<sup>st</sup> Battery, 1<sup>st</sup> Atk. Regt., RCA





## Briefing for German Commander Major Preuß

As the enemy pushes north towards the key Sicilian hill town of Enna Feldmarschall Kesserling has instructed the Hermann Göring Division to disengage around Gela and shift its weight towards the Catania plain to protect the key airfields and harbours in that area. To facilitate this a series of rearguard actions are ordered in a string of hill towns along the route of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army's advancing left flank. These delaying actions are imperative to keep the east west lateral routes open for the Division's withdrawal.

Your orders are to provide flank protection for your division now slowly falling back for the defense of Catania by delaying the enemy for as long as possible. To this end you are given the command of a Kampfgruppe composed of elements of your HG Flak Regiment supported by tanks and infantry.

Remember, this will be only the first of a series of delaying actions, so inflict as much damage as possible on the enemy but withdraw before your force is seriously threatened.

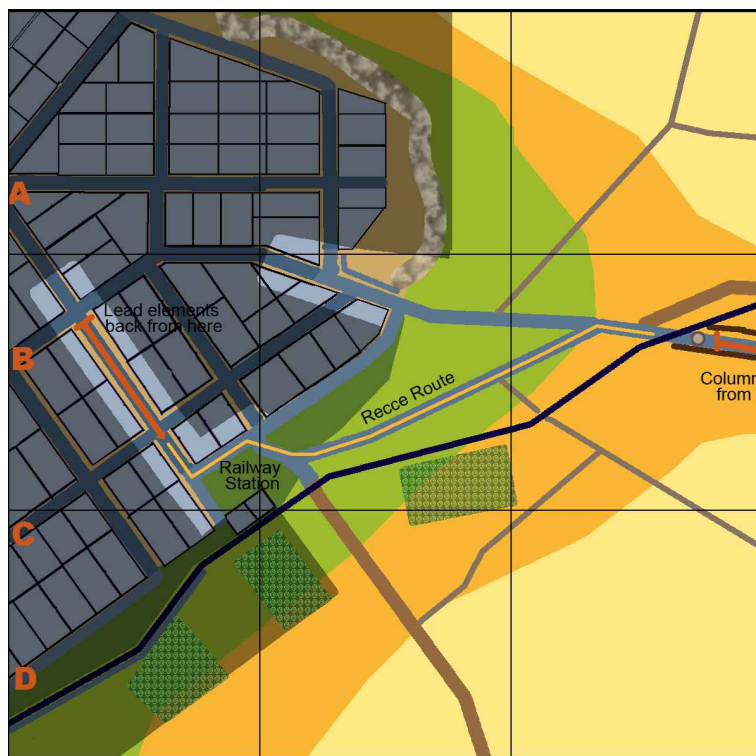
### Deployment

German deployment area is marked in grey on the map below. Gun and troop units begin dug in or, if in the BUA, improved positions. Vehicles may begin hull down. Tanks enter at points A, B and C on the first German maneuver phase.

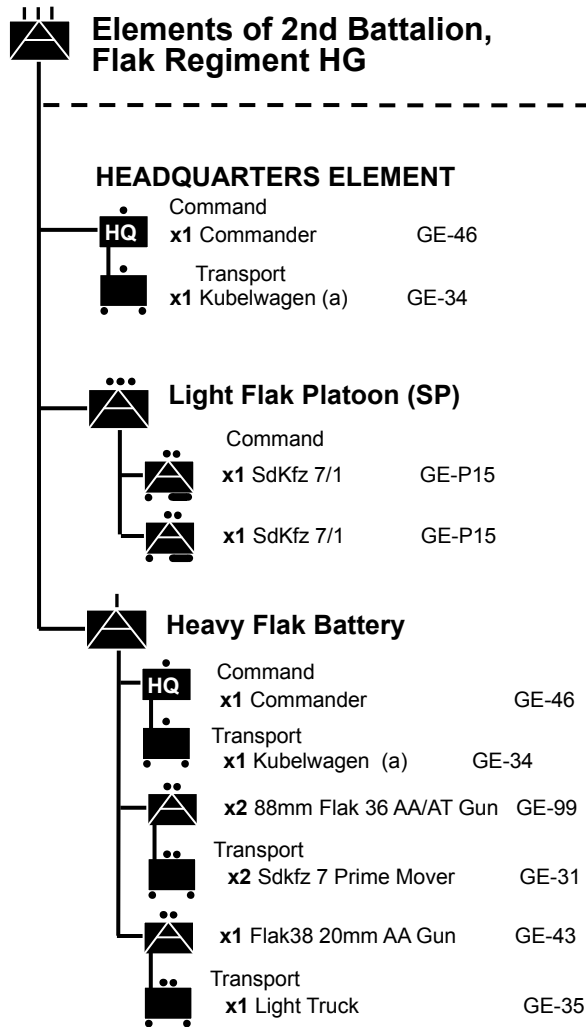
It is important to note that all units must be placed so that they may not be spotted from any point along the recon route of advance (marked on map in beige). The same applies to dummy markers, which are allotted as per rulebook.

Because this is an ambush scenario, the only exception is troop units, which may be placed in BUS's along the route if the unit is conformed to the back of the BUS (away from the route), and a single gun unit which must be placed *in front* of the recon column on the street at the spotting limit (4"). After the German offensive fire phase on Turn 1 these units are all spotted as normal, regardless as to whether they have fired or not.

All gun transport must be placed on board as the scenario requires the German player to attempt to withdraw his units from the board at the appropriate time, but the German player may opt to leave troop transport off. Also, gun units with a movement rate of 0" may not be placed in BUS's because of the need for their transport to be able to access them when withdrawing.



# Kampfgruppe Preuß (all EXP)



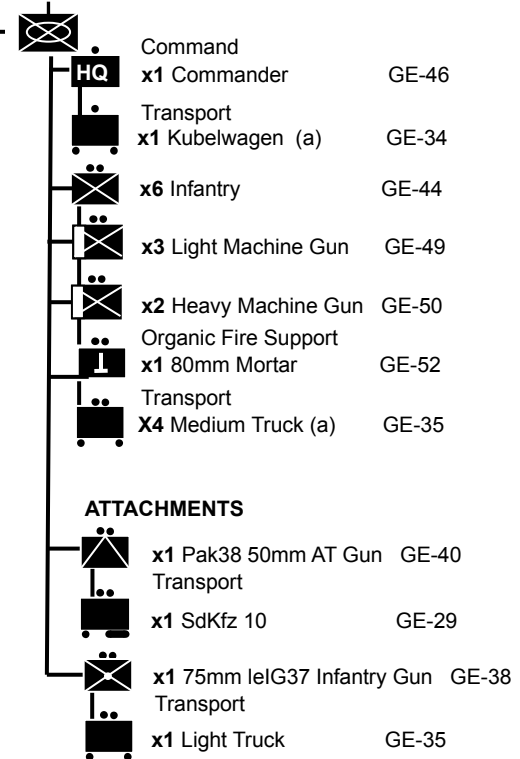
(a) These vehicles may be left off the orbits.

## ATTACHMENTS

### Elements of II./Pz.Regt. HG



### Panzergranadier Company (Mtz.)



## Historical Outcome

The brief fight at Grammichele was the Hasty P's first battle of WWII and the Canadians' first encounter with the German enemy since Dieppe. When the trap was sprung, the Canadian forces quickly moved into action, reacting as they had dozens of times in training exercises over the past three years spent waiting out the war in Britain.

The speed of the Canadian response seemed to take the German defenders off guard, as the Hasty P's and their supporting armour initiated wide sweeping movements attacking the town from several directions. Threatened with having their escape routes cut off, the defenders were forced into a precipitate withdrawal. Despite the advantages of surprise and terrain, the Canadians escaped relatively unscathed, suffering 25 casualties and losing one tank, three carriers and a number of vehicles. The Germans fared worse, not only being forced out of a strong blocking position but also losing two flak guns, four tanks, and leaving behind a number of trucks and a large amount of supply in their hurried withdrawal. Their own casualties are unrecorded.

## Designer's Notes

I have had this particular scenario sitting on my desktop for a long time, trying to figure out how to grapple with the mechanics of a delaying action and withdrawal. German references for this admittedly very minor encounter were sketchy and I confess to a best guess as to their composition. The historical record mentions elements of two battalions of the HG Division being present (primarily the HG Flak Regiment, which seemed to be fielding only the 1st Battalion at this point in time). There is also mention of supporting troops, and certainly tanks were present, as a number were left behind in the withdrawal.

At the end of the day, with a lack of historical evidence, I decided on a *kampfgruppe* that represented all of the elements mentioned in the Canadian accounts (88's, SdKfz. 7/1's and Pz. III's and IV's ) while attempting to create a reasonable game balance.

The discipline rating for the Canadians might seem a bit odd for troops engaged in their first battle, but their performance on this day seems to justify a veteran rating. Although inexperienced the Canadians were arguably some of the best-trained forces in the Allied armies. Other than a brief early foray into France the Hastings Prince Edward Regiment had been cooling its heels in England since 1940, involved in interminable training exercises. This high level of training coupled with a fearless optimism bred from inexperience meant that they were highly effective at Grammichele.

On the other hand the German forces that composed the HG Division were relatively inexperienced. The division had been all but wiped out in North Africa and although in time it would become one of the best known and respected units in the German army, at this point it was far from that. Composed in the most part of fairly recent conscripts built around a core of seasoned veterans, their performance at Grammichele underscores their limitations.

*Many thanks to Ryan Toews and Andy Parkes for their help with revisions in this second take on the scenario.*

## Bibliography

*The Canadians in Italy, 1943-1945* by Lt. Col. G. W. L. Nicholson

*Operation Husky* by Mark Zuehlke

*The Regiment* by Farley Mowat

*Duffy's Regiment, A History of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment* by Kenneth B. Smith

## Web references

*War Chronicles 1939-1945 Three Rivers Regiment (Tank)* by Charles Prieur

<http://www.12rbc.ca/PDF/Anglais.pdf>

## **Destroying BUS and Rubble for Dummies**

Allocate hit points to each BUS, using the following guides:

Stone Structure 4 HP's

Wood Structure 2 HP's

Stone walls 1 HP

Towers are half value, and don't count as multi-level BUS's. (i.e. are considered a single level above ground level for HP purposes.)

Some stone structures (churches, warehouses, etc. may warrant higher HP values.)

### **IDF against BUS**

Only IDF of 75 mm or greater may damage BUS's.

Use +/- IDF for TGsV (Ignore negative random shelling modifier for this roll.)

Roll separately for any BUS with at least one aiming point under the template. A KO result counts as a hit.

Note: Because of the common practice to suspect and target certain areas as likely observation points, church steeples, multi level BUS's, and areas of high ground (including BUS's on that spot) may be targeted as you would a spotted target. If an area of high ground or multi level BUS is being targeted, only one such area on the opposing player's side of the board may be so designated, and it needs to be a single area that clearly dominates the battleground more so than any other. All church steeples in the scenario are subject to being designated as if spotted. This means a player is not limited to random shelling on these terrain features, may target with concentrations, and also may target the feature by IDF elements firing as single sections.

### **DF against BUS**

Only DF of 75 mm or greater may damage BUS's, or heavy infantry anti tank weapons such as bazookas, panzerfausts and panzerschreks.

BUS's may be targeted for direct fire. If element within BUS is targeted, make second roll for damage to BUS, disregarding any modifiers directly related to the unit within (suspected target, improved positions, etc.) Attacks against BUS don't affect occupying units, unless sector is destroyed.

Use +/- DF for TGsV.

A KO result counts as a hit.

### **Multi-level BUS**

Double the number of HP's. Upper levels destroyed first.

### **Destroying BUS**

When a BUS's HP's are reduced to 0 (or a level destroyed in the case of multi-level BUS's) the BUS is destroyed. ("Improving position" markers can be used to keep track of hits.) Any adjoining streets to BUS are filled with rubble, as is the BUS. Improved positions are lost, and troops must conduct a bail out, with following modifiers:

+1 if troops disordered

+2 if troops suppressed

+3 if troops in good order

Guns in destroyed BUS are also destroyed.