



**CATANIA, ITALY, 14/15 July 1943:** On the morning of 10 July, when the oft-anticipated order came to meet the Allies' first offensive in continental Europe since 1940, General Kurt Student had two battle-ready parachute divisions available - the 1st at Avignon and the 2nd at Nimes. By an ironic quirk of history, Student's 1st Fallschirm Division was soon to go into action against the 1st British Airborne Division, which its pyrrhic victory in Crete had moved Churchill to create two years before.

The Allied planners had decided that Sicily would be a bolder operation than any ever undertaken by the British Eighth Army. Now under the command of General Bernard L. Montgomery, it was a well-equipped and confident force, which had finally triumphed over Rommel's famed "Afrika Korps". As a result, Alexander and Eisenhower decided that the Eighth Army would conduct its campaign on the Italian island in a fast and furious manner - unlike the pedestrian pace, which had characterized it heretofore. The Eighth Army would, after an unopposed landing, drive up the major coastal road, with its right flank on the sea and its left on the impressive bulk of Mount Etna, headed for the city of Messina at the headland of the straits which separated Sicily from the Italian mainland. In order to ensure that rapid progress was made across the "stepping-stone between Africa and Europe", three vital bridges would have to be seized - Ponte Grande, the bridge guarding the approach to the town of Syracuse; dei Malati, northeast of Lentini; and, the third and furthest, the girder bridge spanning the Simeto on the southern outskirts of Catania.

Operation "Marston", as the attack on the Primosole Bridge over the River Simeto was known, was given to the 1st Parachute Brigade of the 1st British Airborne Division to accomplish. It was planned to the last detail: equipment, weaponry, route, tactics, codes, and even the type of food the British paratroopers could eat before the drop ("plenty of sugar, but little fat"). It

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envisaged two platoons of Colonel Alastair's 1st Battalion with the 1st Field Squadron Royal Engineers, commanded by Major C. Murray, landing right on the bridge or as close as possible and capturing the span by a coup de main. The rest of the 1st Battalion under Alastair would then drop and organize the defense of the bridge while the 2nd Battalion, under Colonel Pearson, would establish itself in a loop of the river roughly 1000 yards from the bridge. Colonel Frost's 3rd Battalion would seize and hold the high ground to the south of the river.

At sunset on 13 July, the British troops lifted from airfields in North Africa for the long haul to Sicily, being carried to their objectives by USAAF Dakotas. The flight was uneventful until the airborne armada neared the dark coast of Sicily. Then, as the Dakotas passed over the Allied invasion fleet, the anti-aircraft gunners below, inexperienced and nervous, opened fire. Several American planes were hit and went down in flames. Others turned back, while the rest hastily altered course. Thereafter, everything went wrong. The men of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, who had been sent sprawling onto the metal floors by the pilots' evasive action, were ordered to jump while they were still over the sea. And they did. Others dropped to their deaths in the inhospitable hills of the interior, where their skeletons were found even years later. In the case of the 1st Battalion, some distance ahead of the main wave, the pilots ordered the troops to jump when the aircraft were too low, so that the casualty rate from broken bones and twisted limbs shot up alarmingly.

But in spite of the absolute confusion, some fifty men of the 1st Battalion managed to drop in the right area. Soon they were joined by another group under Colonel Pearson, who assumed the command of the defense of the bridge. Swiftly he mustered his few troops to face the inevitable counterattack. Pearson managed to assemble three antitank rifles, two mortars, a machinegun and 250 men. These he deployed on the northern edge of the bridge, facing Catania, a short distance away. Pearson had just completed his dispositions, when an exhausted young paratrooper came hurrying up from the direction of the Italian-held airfield, where he had dropped by error. Excitedly he explained to his CO what had happened and then said that, during the confusion he had bumped into another paratrooper, who had come down close beside him. "But he spoke in German—he asked where his Schmeisser was!" The first troops of Colonel Heilmann's 3rd Fallschirmjaeger Regiment of the 1st Fallschirm Division were landing, ready to seize and hold—or destroy—the bridge. For the first and only time in the Second World War, two brigade-sized combat forces

were landing simultaneously from the air. The battle for the Primosole Bridge had begun.

**VICTORY CONDITIONS:** Victory is evaluated on the basis of a point differential (see Special Rule 1002. for distribution of victory points) The total number of Axis victory points is subtracted from the total number of Allied victory points. The result is then applied to the following criteria:

VICTORY CHART	
Point Differential	Result
-111 points or lower	Decisive Axis Victory
-61 to -110 points	Strategic Axis Victory
-31 to -60 points	Tactical Axis Victory
-1 to -30 points	Marginal Axis Victory
0 points	Draw
+1 to +55 points	Marginal Allied Victory
+56 to +120 points	Tactical Allied Victory
+121 to +165 points	Strategic Allied Victory
+166 points or higher	Decisive Allied Victory

*This scenario is intended as a monster game version of a tactical exercise. As such, it will require availability of two complete SL systems (i.e. two copies of SL, COI, COD and GIA). This scenario has proven most enjoyable when played by multi-player teams over the course of several days. Rules for command control and communication between players of a team are left to the discretions of the players.*

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## BOARD CONFIGURATION:

*The compass directions are utilized to indicate the Allied and Axis points of entry (see SSR 1005).*

	1	NW	14	N	15	NE
	3	NW	2	C	4	NE
	7	W	7	C	8	E
	13	SW	4	C	5	SE
	6	SW	2	S	12	SE

## TURN RECORD CHART:

Stage I: 0330 Hours, 14 July 1943

 Axis Sets up First	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
 British Moves first	11	12	Restart with Stage II, consult SSR's							

Stage II: 0330 Hours, 14 July 1943

 Axis Moves First	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	11	12	13	14	15	Restart with Stage III, consult SSR's				

Stage III: 1550 Hours, 15 July 1943

 British move first	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	18	20
	21	22	23	24	25	Restart with Stage IV, consult SSR's				

Stage IV: 2010 Hours, 15 July 1943

 British move first	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	11	12	END							

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**Italian Garrison, Catania - set up as follows:**

On Board 1NW:



F5: G3: J5: L7: M9: U8:

X5: AA7: DD7:

L9: EE8: Y6: Z5: AA6:

On Board 14N:

I7: I9: K8: L5: L7:

L9: I6: J8: **10**

Anywhere on Board 1NW and/or Board 14N:



**Elements, 3rd Fallschirmjaeger Regiment, 1st Fallschirm Division - enter via Parachute Drop (as per rule 99 and Special Rule 5.1) during Stage I, Turn 1:**

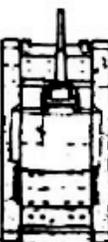


**34 6**

**2 4 4 3 2 56**



**Elements, Special Duties Panzer Regiment, SS Tagdkommando - enter via Road Hex II on Board 14N during Stage II, Turn 1, (see Special Rule 5.21):**



**2 2 6 7 2**

SPW250/3 PzKw III E STG III F Hvy Truck

**3 4 6 2 3**

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**Scattered Remnants 1st Parachute Brigade, 1st British Airborne Division** - enter via Parachute Drop (as per 99. and Special Rule 1005.1) during Stage I, Turn 1:

	2		24	6	2	3	2		42

3	3	3

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**Elements 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Durham Light Infantry** – enter via road hex Y10 on board 12SE during Turn 1, Stage III:

	2	2			40	6	2	4	8	3	2

2	3	2			2	3	3	3	6	10

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**Advanced Detachment, 4<sup>th</sup> British Armoured Brigade** – enter via road hex Q1 on board 2S during Turn 1, Stage IV:

3	10	3	

## SPECIAL SCENARIO RULES:

**SSR 1001** The scenario is played in four distinct and separate stages, each of which recreates a historical phase in the battle for the bridge. The periods of relative inactivity between these scenario stages—during which the troops of the opposing sides entrenched, slept, ate, sniped at each other, awaited orders and were redeployed—are handled in an abstract manner.

**SSR 1001.1** At the conclusion of each scenario stage (*Exception:* Stage IV, 2010 Hours), each player may, within certain artificial restrictions, redeploy all unbroken squads, crews, leaders and snipers and all mobile vehicles. Support weapons may be redeployed but must remain with the unit which had possession of the weapon at the end of the final game turn of the previous scenario

stage. Support weapons not in possession of any unit at the conclusion of a stage may not be redeployed; such weapons simply remain where they lay until possessed (164.) or destroyed. All mobile vehicles which are redeployed must still contain all passengers and/or equipment which was being carried at the end of the final game turn of the previous scenario stage. All ordnance 60mm or larger may not be redeployed, unless the gun is being towed by a mobile vehicle at the end of the final game turn of the previous scenario stage or unless the mortar is dismantled (142.8); if ordnance is redeployed, it must be placed in the same hex as the towing vehicle or possessing infantry. Ordnance unable to be redeployed must be abandoned, but may be deliberately

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malfunctioned if desired by the abandoning player; it may *not* be deliberately destroyed.

**SSR 1001.11** The “status” of each and every board, for redeployment purposes, must be determined at the conclusion of each scenario stage. “Status” is determined by the ratio of opposing *combat* units on each board. “Combat units” are defined as unbroken armed squads, crews, leaders and snipers and all vehicles with functioning armament of any type; broken units, scouts, heroes, unarmed vehicles, support weapons, aircraft and ordnance are not considered combat units. Units on half-hexes formed by the junction of two boards may be considered to be on either, but not both, of the relevant boards; the owning player must announce to which board each such unit is credited during determination of status.

**SSR 1001.12** Of each board on which a player has at least *one* combat unit and the opposing player has no combat units, that board is *controlled*. The player may freely redeploy any eligible units on that board into any whole hex on that board no closer than five hexes, inclusive, to any non-hidden enemy combat unit (see NOTE—1001.13). Broken enemy units and immobile enemy vehicles—along with all support weapons and/or ordnance in their possession—immediately surrender and are captured should an unbroken *squad* be redeployed into the hex. Mobile enemy vehicles, with all passengers and/or support weapons being carried and/or ordnance being towed, must be redeployed off the “controlled” board. If it is impossible for the opposing player to redeploy these mobile vehicles, these are also captured should an unbroken squad be redeployed into the hex (all passengers of such are automatically broken).

**SSR 1001.13** Of each board on which a player has at least *four* times the number of combat units than the opposing player, that board is *dominated*. (*Example*: the Allied player has 16 unbroken squads/crews, three unbroken leaders and two AEC I while the Axis player has four unbroken squads and one StuG IIIF on Board 4NE at the conclusion of Stage III; Board 4NE is thus determined to be “dominated” by the Allied player.) The player may redeploy any eligible units on that board into any whole hex on that board no closer than five hexes, inclusive, to any non-hidden enemy combat unit. (**NOTE: the five-hex range from enemy combat units is in effect throughout the redeployment procedure; further, the five-hex range is not affected in any manner by board edges nor by intervening terrain.**) Further, the player may redeploy any eligible units from adjacent boards into any whole hex on that board no closer than five hexes, inclusive, to any non-hidden enemy combat unit. Eligible

units redeployed into hexes which contain only broken enemy infantry units or immobile enemy vehicles automatically capture these units, along with all support weapons and/or ordnance in their possession. Enemy units may not be redeployed on any “dominated” board. Further, all Unbroken enemy infantry units and mobile unarmed vehicles, with all support weapons and/or passengers being carried and/or ordnance being towed, must be redeployed off that board *unless* in a hex containing a building, entrenchment or woods at the end of the final game turn of the previous scenario stage. (Exception: units locked in melee must redeploy regardless of terrain — 1001.111.) If it is impossible for the opposing player to redeploy such units, these — along with all support weapons and/or passengers being carried and/or ordnance being towed — must be redeployed into the nearest (in terms of hexes) hex which contains a building or woods containing no combat units of either player.

**SSR 1001.14** Of each board on which a player has at least *twice* the number of combat units than the opposing player, that board is *influenced*. (*Example*: the Axis player has 12 unbroken squads, one unbroken sniper and two unbroken leaders while the Allied player has six unbroken squads and one unbroken leader on Board 7C at the conclusion of Stage I; Board 7C is “influenced” by the Axis player.) The player may redeploy any eligible units on that board into any whole hex on that board no closer than five hexes, inclusive, to *any* non-hidden enemy infantry unit or *any* enemy vehicle (see NOTE — 1001.13). Further, the player may redeploy any eligible units from adjacent boards into any whole hex on that board, inclusive, to any non-hidden enemy infantry unit or any enemy vehicle. Enemy units may not be redeployed onto any “influenced” board from adjacent boards. However, eligible enemy units on any “influenced” board may be redeployed into any whole hex on that board which contains units of the same side (Axis or Allied). Enemy units need not be redeployed off an “influenced” board.

**SSR 1001.15** Of each board on which a player has less than twice the number of combat units than the opposing player, that board is *contested*. (*Example*: the Axis player has 17 unbroken squads/crews, three unbroken leaders and four PzKw IIIE while the Allied player has 16 unbroken squads and three unbroken leaders on Board 14N at the conclusion of Stage II; Board 14N is “contested” ) Neither player may redeploy eligible units from adjacent boards onto a “contested” board. Both players may redeploy eligible units on that board into any

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whole hex on that board which contains units of the same side (Allied or Axis).

**SSR 1001.16** Of each board which contains *no* combat units of either side, that board is *uncontested*. Neither player may redeploy eligible units from adjacent boards onto any “uncontested” board. Nor may any eligible units on that board be redeployed on that board.

**SSR 1001.17** After the status of all the boards has been determined, redeployment occurs. The player whose movement and fire concluded the last game turn of the previous scenario stage must redeploy his eligible units which he controls first (*i.e.*: following Stage I and Stage III, the Axis player redeploys first; following Stage II, the Allied player redeploys first). A player may redeploy as many eligible units as he desires but each eligible unit may be redeployed only once.

**SSR 1001.18** In all instances, units may be freely redeployed *from* any adjacent board; the sole restriction is that the board such are transferred *to* is legitimate (*i.e.*: is controlled, dominated or influenced). An adjacent board, for redeployment purposes, is any board which connects with any edge or corner of that board. (*Example*: the boards adjacent to Board 2S are Bd. 6SW, Bd. 13SW, Bd. 4C, Bd. 5SE and Bd. 12SE.)

**SSR 1001.19** No eligible unit may ever be redeployed across the River Simeto (*i.e.*: a unit south of any water hex may never be redeployed into any hex north of a water hex, and *visa versa*). Units eligible for redeployment which are in a water hex or on a bridge counter may be redeployed into a hex on either side of the river. No eligible unit may ever be redeployed into a water hex or onto any bridge counter.

**SSR 1001.110** Units which are redeployed may utilize Hidden Initial Placement (42.) provided all relevant conditions are satisfied. Note however, that restrictions on enemy redeployment on “influenced” (Special Rule 1001.14) or “dominated” (Special Rule 1001.13) boards are in effect only for non-hidden combat units.

**SSR 1001.111** Eligible units may not be redeployed into hexes in which opposing forces are “locked in melee” (20.8). Further, all units which are “locked in melee” at the conclusion of a scenario stage *must* be redeployed (in effect, the hex is vacated by both sides). Should a Unit “locked in melee” be unable to redeploy, it is immediately eliminated.

**SSR 1001.112** Should any Unit guarding prisoners (89.6) be required to redeploy, the prisoners are not redeployed with it but rather freed (89.9) in the hex vacated. Should

any unit with captured enemy support weapons or captured mobile enemy vehicles be redeployed, the weapons and/or vehicles may be redeployed with the unit.

**SSR 1001.2** Following all redeployment, all unbroken squads may automatically entrench (as per 54.2).

**SSR 1001.3** Following placement of all entrenchments desired, all broken units, except prisoners (89.4), automatically regain their unbroken status. All stun (64.44) and shock (131.) effects are automatically negated.

**SSR 1001.4** Following the automatic morale recovery, attempts to repair any and all malfunctioning weapons (as per 18. and 38.) and immobilized vehicles (66.3) may be made. Only a single attempt may be made to repair each malfunctioning weapon or immobilized vehicle.

**SSR 1001.5** Following the repair of malfunctioning equipment and immobilized vehicles, all unarmed troops (164.3) are considered rearmed from reserve stocks. Replace any unarmed units with an appropriate counter.

**SSR 1001.6** Finally, each and every squad, half-squad and crew within three hexes, inclusive, and LOS of any enemy non-hidden *squad* must make a single -2 unmodified morale check. Units which fail this morale check must commence the next scenario stage as broken units.

**SSR 1002.** Victory points are awarded to each player for fulfilling certain specific conditions, capture or destruction of certain enemy units and/or occupation of certain hexes, unoccupied by unbroken enemy infantry units or enemy vehicles with functioning armament of any type. Victory points are totaled at the conclusion of Stage IV.

**SSR 1002.1** German strategic objectives in the region were to seize and defend the Primosole Bridge, hold the Simeto River line and secure the town of Catania. Should defense of the bridge prove impossible, demolition of the vital bridge was to be effected to render it impassable to Allied vehicles. A secondary objective was to take British prisoners in order to determine, by interrogation, the objectives, composition and plans of the British Eighth Army. Axis victory points are predicated on the basis of these objectives.

**SSR 1002.11** The Axis player is awarded one point for each stone building hex on Board 1NW which is unoccupied by any unbroken Allied unit. Points may not be awarded for hexes which are rubble (58.).

**SSR 1002.12** The Axis player is awarded fifty points

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should one or more bridge spans be destroyed (as per 133.7). This condition may be applied once.

**SSR 1002.13** Should the bridge remain intact (*i.e.*: should Special Rule 1002.12 not apply), the Axis player is awarded ten points for each bridge counter occupied by an unbroken Axis squad.

**SSR 1002.14** Should the bridge remain intact (*i.e.*: should SSR 1002.12 not apply), the Axis player is awarded five points for each of the following hexes occupied by an unbroken Axis squad: hexes 7C-R1, 7C-P2, 7C-R4, 7C-P4 and 7C-P10.

**SSR 1002.15** The Axis player is awarded ten points for each of the following boards which is “controlled” (1001.12) or “dominated” (1001.13) by Axis combat units or is “uncontested” (Special Rule 1001.16): Bd. 1NW, Bd. 14N, Bd. 15NE, Bd. 3NW, Bd. 2C and Bd. 4NE.

**SSR 1002.16** The Axis player is awarded two points for each Allied squad/crew taken prisoner.

**SSR 1002.17** The Axis player is awarded five points for each Allied leader taken prisoner.

**SSR 1002.18** The Axis player is awarded five points for each Allied vehicle, of any type, destroyed.

**SSR 1002.2** Montgomery’s plans demanded the seizure intact of the Primosole Bridge and establishment of a secure bridgehead north of the River Simeto. Capture of Catania and rapid thrust to Messina were the ultimate objectives. And, of course, capture of Axis troops and officers would provide Montgomery with intelligence on what his forces would have to contend with further north. Allied victory points are predicated on the basis of these objectives.

**SSR 1002.21** The Allied player is awarded five points for each stone building hex on Board 1NW which is occupied by an unbroken Allied squad Points may not be awarded for hexes which are rubbled (58.).

**SSR 1002.22** The Allied player is awarded 100 points should any route, composed of contiguous road (and bridge) hexes which are neither occupied nor adjacent to any enemy unbroken squads/half-squads/crew and/or AFVs with functioning armament, from the south edge to the north edge be viable. Wire, entrenchments and/or wrecks which occupy a road hex of the route do not negate this condition. This condition may be applied once.

**SSR 1002.2.3** The Allied player is awarded ten points for

each of the following boards which is “controlled” (Special Rule 1001.12) or “dominated” (Special Rule 1002.13) by Allied combat units: Bd. 1NW, Bd. 14N, Bd. 15NE, Bd. 3NW, Bd. 2C and Bd. 4NE.

**SSR 1002.24** The Allied player is awarded two points for each Allied squad exited off the north edge.

**SSR 1002.25** The Allied player is awarded ten points for each M4 Sherman or Churchill IV with functioning main armament exited off the north edge.

**SSR 1002.26** The Allied player is awarded two points for each Axis squad/crew taken prisoner.

**SSR 1002.27** The Allied player is awarded five points for each Axis leader taken prisoner.

**SSR 1003.** A two-lane, vehicular, stone bridge extends from hex 7C-Q3 to hex 7C-Q10.

**SSR 1004.** The river is deep, running at normal level, and with a strong current flowing east.

**SSR 1004.1** Marsh hexes on Board 7C do not exist. Treat all such marsh hexes as water hexes.

**SSR 1004.2** Although the River Simeto was deep, a relatively shallow area where it was possible for infantry to cross existed west of the bridge. All water hexes on Board 7W between hex line D and hex line P, inclusive, are considered shallow water and infantry units may cross such hexes by fording (126.5), as well as by boat or by swimming.

**SSR 1004.3** All streams are dry (157.2).

**SSR 1005.** Entry of forces into play must occur on the designated turn of entry and at the designated point of entry, except as follows:

**SSR 1005.1** Following initial Axis placement but prior to the first game turn of Stage I, the Allied player and the Axis player must each secretly record the point of entry for their respective paratroop units.

**SSR 1005.11** All paratrooper units of both players must enter play in the first game turn of Stage I.

**SSR 1005.12** Each player must record any two boards as the point of entry. (*Example*: “Bd. 7C and Bd. 2C” would indicate that all paratroopers and their support weapons—appropriately separated into plane capacity groups—would select drop points on these two boards only and enter play on th first game turn of Stage I.)

**SSR 1005.13** Upon the two designated boards, each “plane capacity group” (99.21) may select any whole hex

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as the “drop point” (99.22). At least one plane capacity group must select a drop point on each of the two designated boards.

**SSR 1005.2** Units of the Special Duties Panzer Regiment, SS Tagdkommando and the 8th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry, and the Advanced Detachment of the 4th British Armoured Brigade must enter on the first game turn of the appropriate scenario stage on the designated road hex *unless* radio contact (46.11) has been established during the initial Rally Phase of that first game turn.

**SSR 1005.21** Should the Axis player have established radio contact, entry of the Special Duties Panzer Regiment, SS Tagdkommando may be delayed until Axis Movement Phase of any game turn prior to the last turn of Stage II. Further, the point of entry may be shifted to any road hex of the north edge. The new turn of entry and point of entry must be secretly recorded during the Rally Phase of the first game turn of Stage II, (*NOTE*: either the turn of entry or the point of entry may, of course, remain unchanged if desired and so recorded.) All units comprising the SS Special Duties Panzer Regiment must enter, sequentially, upon this road hex commencing that game turn.

**SSR 1005.22** Should the Allied player have established radio contact, entry of the 8th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry may be delayed until the Allied Movement Phase of any game turn prior to the last turn of Stage III. Further, the point of entry may be shifted to any road hex on the south edge. The new turn of entry and point of entry must be secretly recorded during the initial Rally Phase of the first game turn of Stage III. All units comprising the Durham Light Infantry battalion must enter, sequentially, upon this road hex commencing that game turn.

**SSR 1005.23** Should the Allied player have established radio contact, entry of the Advanced Detachment of the 4th Armoured Brigade may be delayed until the Allied Movement Phase of any game turn prior to the last turn of Stage IV. Further, the point of entry may be shifted to any road hex on any edge south of the river. The new turn of entry and point of entry must be secretly recorded during the initial Rally Phase of the first game turn of Stage IV. All units comprising the 4th Armoured Brigade detachment must enter, sequentially, upon this road hex commencing that game turn.

**SSR 1005.3** There is but one involuntary withdrawal imposed upon the play—that of the armor of the Special Duties Panzer Regiment, SS Tagdkommando. At the conclusion of the redeployment of all forces prior to the

commencement of Stage III, all surviving PzKw IIIE and StuG IIIF must be withdrawn for other duties. These units are immediately and simply removed from the mapboard.

**SSR 1006.** The trucks of the 8th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry, regardless of turn of entry or point of entry, must enter play in convoy (84.). The AFVs and jeeps need not be part of this convoy, but may be integrated into the convoy if desired (in which case all rules for convoys apply).

**SSR 1006.1** All crews, boats and support weapons (with the exception of LMGs) must enter play loaded on vehicles in the convoy; all ordnance must be towed.

**SSR 1006.2** The convoy may not be voluntarily broken up until the game turn following the turn in which all vehicles of the convoy are in play. (Thus, if four trucks and two AEC I of the convoy enter play on Turn 5 of Stage III, with the remaining two trucks entering on Turn 6 at the end of the onboard elements of the convoy, the convoy may not be broken up until Turn 7.) Further, towed guns may not be deployed, nor passengers and/or equipment be offloaded until the convoy is broken up. The convoy is confined to road hexes only.

**SSR 1007.** Italian troops are represented by the Axis Minor Allies counters and all rules for Allied Troops (74.) apply. (Upon publication of the Italian troops and support weapons counters, players may substitute—on an equivalent basis—these counters for the Axis Minor Allies counters. At this time all rules for Italians will be in force.)

**SSR 1008.** Building 6SWN4, building 6SW-K8 and all designated buildings on Board 1, Board 12 and Board 3 are of stone construction. All other buildings are of wooden construction.

**SSR 1009.** The following hexes are third-Level building hexes: 1NW-K4, 1NW-X3, 1NW-X5, 1NW-AA7, 14N-L5, 12SE-U5, 12SE-V4, 6SWJ8, 8E-R9, 8E-N2 and 8E-M3.

**SSR 1010.** Ignore all shellholes.

**SSR 1011.** The Italian garrison, asleep for the night, was thrown into total confusion by the initial shock of the mass aerial landings. During the first game turn of Stage I, Italian units may not move during their Movement Phase nor fire during their Prep Fire Phase. Further, during the first game turn, each Italian unit must, during the Defensive Fire Phase and the Advancing Fire Phase (99.3), fire upon the nearest parachute unit—German or British—in its LOS and range with its inherent firepower

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only. Should two parachute units be equidistant, the choice of target falls to the Axis player. All restrictions upon Italian units are negated on the second game turn and thenceforth.

**SSR 1012.** Both sides may generate snipers (174.1).

**SSR 1012.1** Snipers may be generated from unbroken squads of the following forces only: 1st British Airborne Brigade, 3rd Fallschirmjaeger Regiment, SS Special Duties Panzer Regiment. Up to four snipers may be created from *each* of these forces during the course of the scenario.

**SSR 1012.2** Snipers may not be reabsorbed. Snipers may only be removed from play by being KIA or captured. They may never be voluntarily removed.

**SSR 1013.** Italian units may not utilize Bore Sighting (78.) initially. Commencing with Stage II, any appropriate weapon (78.1) of either side which has not been redeployed and is crewed by an unbroken infantry unit may utilize bore sighting. The bore sighted target hex (78.3) must be recorded prior to the first game turn of the upcoming scenario stage.

**SSR 1014.** Field Promotions (115.) are not allowed.

**SSR 1015.** During all game turns of Stage I only, Night rules (49.) are in effect.

**SSR 1016.** The Weather is Clear (111.1); Environmental Conditions (102.3) are Dry. Wind Force (102.6) is Mild Breeze at the beginning of each stage. Wind Direction (102.5) must be determined prior to the first game turn of each stage.

**SSR 1017.** All unbroken British paratrooper squads (638s), German airborne assault engineer squads (838s) and SS squads (658s) may place smoke (24).

**SSR 1018.** All German AFV crews are SS, with appropriate morale. All SS rules (83.) are in effect except East Front special characteristics (83.5 and 83.6).

**SSR 1019.** Neither player may ever voluntarily eliminate units, broken or unbroken, which are in play (*Exception:* SS units may eliminate captured units—89.3).

**SSR 1020.** Battlefield Integrity (93.) is in effect for the following forces only Italian Garrison, Catania and 8th Battalion. Durham Light Infantry. Entrance of other forces, including stragglers, and/or losses among other forces have no effect on the battlefield integrity of those two forces (negate 93.4—93.8). Players should note that rules for Surrender (153.) are in effect.

**SSR 1021.** The Axis player enjoys the possibility of air support during Stages II and Stage III.

**SSR 1021.1** Beginning on the first game turn of each of these scenario stages, should the Axis player have established radio contact, he may roll to receive air support (as per 139.1) during the initial Rally Phase of each game turn.

**SSR 1021.2** Should the Axis player receive air support, it will take the form of four 1943 fighters, all of which must enter play on the same game turn (as per 139.1).

**SSR 1021.3** The Axis fighters may not remain in play in excess of six game turns, inclusive of the turn of entry. The fighters may exit play individually. All fighters must exit play prior to the conclusion of the scenario stage.

**SSR 1021.4** The Axis player may receive air support once during Stage II and once during Stage III.

**SSR 1021.5** Other than the above, all rules for Air Support (139.) are in effect.

**SSR 1022.** The Kleine Flossack (128.2), part of the equipment of the Durham Light Infantry battalion, must enter play loaded on a single truck (as per 128.9) These pneumatic boats must be “inflated” before being placed in any water hex (128.9). Whether inflated or deflated, these boats may be carried overland (as per 128.4).

**SSR 1023.** Only unbroken British paratroop squads (6-3-8), German airborne engineer squads (8-3-8) and leaders of any nationality with a leadership modifier of -2 or -3 may place Demolition Charges (23.) or effect demolitions (133.7). Note that SS squads/crews may not utilize demo charges (negate 83.4 in relation to demolition charges).

**SSR 1024.** Only unbroken German paratroop squads (4-6-8), airborne engineer squads (8-3-8), SS squads (6-5-8) and leaders of any nationality with a leadership modifier of -2 or -3 may utilize Flamethrowers (22.). Note that British paratroop squads/crews may not utilize flamethrowers (negate 104.22 in relation to flamethrowers).

**SSR 1025.** All wheatfield hexes on all boards are considered vineyards.

**SSR 1025.1** A vineyard has the same LOS and LOF characteristics as a wheatfield (44.21-44.23).

**SSR 1025.2** AFVs executing Overrun Attacks in vineyards attack with half effectiveness (72.4).

**SSR 1025.3** All paratroop units landing in a vineyard hex

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must make a normal Morale Check upon landing, even if already broken (99.4).

**SSR 1025.4** Due to the heavy, tangled vegetation of a vineyard, all unarmored vehicles and light AFVs (*Exceptions*: PzKw IIIE, StuG IIIF, Bishop, Sherman I and A22 Churchill IV) are subject to Bog (75.8) for each vineyard hex entered.

**SSR 1026.** Throughout the course of the two-day battle for the bridge, stragglers of both sides appeared on the battlefield. To represent this facet of the action in an abstract manner, the following rules are utilized.

**SSR 1026.1** Following all mandatory Morale Checks (Special Rule 1001.6) but prior to the first game turn of Stage II, the Axis player may roll two dice. The result of this dice roll (2-12) represents the number of German paratroop squads (4-6-8) which may enter play as stragglers. These squads must be placed by the *Allied* player in any whole hex on any and/or all of the following boards which are “controlled” (Special Rule 1001.12) or “dominated” (Special Rule 1001.12) by Axis combat units or are “uncontested” (Special Rule 1001.16): Bd. 13SW, Bd. 6SW, Bd. 4C, Bd. 2S, Bd. 5SE and Bd. 12SE. Such units may not be placed within five hexes, inclusive, of any Allied unit of any type. Should there be no board available for the placement of these units, all such stragglers are considered eliminated and do not enter play at any time. Victory points are not accrued for elimination of such units that do not enter play.

**SSR 1026.2:** Following all mandatory Morale Checks (SSR 1001.6) but prior to the first game turn of Stage IV, the Allied player may roll two dice. The result of this dice roll (2-12) represents the number of British infantry squads (4-5-7) which enter play as stragglers. These squads must be placed by the Allied player in any whole hex on any and/or all of the following boards which are “controlled” (Special Rule 1001.12) or “dominated” (Special Rule 1001.13) by Allied combat units or are “uncontested” (Special Rule 1001.16): Bd. 13SW, Bd. 6SW, Bd. 4C, Bd. 2S, Bd. 5SE and Bd. 12SE. Such units may not be placed within five hexes, inclusive, of any Axis unit of any type. Should there be no board available for the placement of these units, all such stragglers are considered eliminated and do not enter play at any time. Victory points are not accrued for elimination of such units that do not enter play.

**SSR 1027.** In respect to determination of “status” for redeployment, to victory conditions, to occupation of key terrain features, and to all other aspects of the special rules, two half-squads (142.3) are considered the

equivalent of a squad. (*For example*: a captured half-squad is worth one victory point—1002.16 and 1002.26; two unbroken Allied half-squads may claim occupation, even if in different levels, of a building hex—1002.21; a board which contains only a single unbroken half-squad is uncontrolled—1001.12.)

**SSR 1021.** The 4th Armoured Brigade had been largely re-equipped with the American Sherman for the Sicilian campaign. All rules for U.S. Armor (147. and all Armor Notes relating to the Sherman in British service are in effect.

**SSR 1029.** A small district prison, fortified by German engineers, served as headquarters of the local Fascist commandant. The Axis player may select and secretly record the first level of any single building on Board 1NW as an improved building (161.).

**SSR 1030.** In support of the 1st Parachute Brigade, plans were made to land a number of AT guns by glider at dawn. However, due to the fire over the fleet and adverse winds, the glider train was likewise scattered. Only three came down near the battlefield. Three gliders, carrying a single crew and 40mm AT gun each, may enter play during the first Stage.

**SSR 1030.1** All rules for gliders (140.) are in play except as noted below.

**SSR 1030.2** Intended glider landing hexes must be upon *either* one of the British paratroop point of entry mapboards. These gliders must land upon the sixth game turn of Stage I.

**SSR 1030.3** The AT gun of a crashed glider is assumed to have been permanently and irrevocably damaged. Remove such from play immediately. The crew survives if able to pass a normal MC.

**SSR 1031.** Should a Hero (159.) be generated during any stage, prior to the first game turn of the next scenario stage he must be returned to original form. If generated from a squad, half-squad or crew, he is reabsorbed (simply remove the hero counter from play); if generated from a single-man counter, he reverts to his original role (replace the hero counter with the appropriate counter).

### Optional ELR rules:

Players may wish to use the following optional ELR and Heat of Battle rules for more exciting play of this scenario.

## UNIT SUBSTITUTION

**1. EXPERIENCE LEVEL RATING (ELR):** All OB forces in each scenario will specify a given number of Elite, 1st Line, 2nd Line, or Green/Conscript squads/HS with which each Player starts the game. However, during the course of play, each of these units is subject to possible Replacement by poorer quality squads/HS, depending on the interaction of fire, fate, and the prior experience level of the unit. Each scenario OB will list an ELR for that group of units as a number ranging from 0 to 5. This number represents the maximum amount by which an unbroken squad/HS/leader may fail any MC (after modification) without being Replaced by a lesser quality squad/HS/leader. Thus, an unbroken squad/HS/leader with an ELR of 1 would automatically be downgraded if it broke with a MC DR two or more > the number it needed to avoid breaking.

**2. ELR IMMUNITY:** All crew-types, Commissars, Heroes, unarmed, and already broken units are never subject to Replacement due to ELR failure.

**3. DISRUPTION:** Should an unbroken squad, HS, or a 6+1 leader which can no longer be Replaced by a lower quality unit fail a MC by more than its ELR, it is broken and is marked as Disrupted [EXC: Fanatic units and PRC are never Disrupted; only broken]. Non-6+1 leaders become Disrupted only by Heat of Battle outcome. A Disrupted unit may not attempt Self-Rally. Unless rallied by a leader first, a Disrupted unit will surrender at the start of any RtPh it begins ADJACENT to, or during any phase it occupies the same Location as, a Good Order Known enemy Personnel unit not held in Melee. Unless in Open Ground, or in a Water Obstacle hex, or if the only armed enemy units ADJACENT are in-Melee / berserk / vehicular, Disrupted infantry may rout if in an Open Ground hex but once it reaches a woods or building hex a Disrupted unit will remain there as Disrupted (marked as TI) until it is either rallied or captured. Disrupted units do not prevent enemy movement into or through their hex, but they do prevent an enemy unit from routing towards or through them. Disrupted units in Melee may not Withdraw; unless captured, they will be eliminated at the end of the CCPh if still in Melee.

**4. UNIT REPLACEMENT:** An unbroken Personnel unit which fails a MC by an amount > its ELR is immediately Replaced by a broken Personnel unit of lesser quality but of the same size. [EXC: The British 6-3-8 and German 8-3-8 squads are Replaced by two broken HS. A Casualty MC (i.e. boxcars) failure which also exceeds a squad's ELR causes that squad to be Reduced to a single broken HS of its type.] When Replacing a Personnel unit with one of lesser quality, none of the individual parts of the Strength Factor may increase, and at least one must decrease. When replacing a MMC, the unit's Class must also decrease (i.e., a 1st Line squad/HS cannot be replaced by another 1st Line squad/HS even if all of the individual factors of its Strength factor are less) (EX: A German 468 ↔ 467 ↔ 447 ↔ 436 ↔ Disrupted; a British

458 ↔ 457 ↔ 447 ↔ 436 ↔ Disrupted). An unbroken leader which fails a MC by more than its ELR is immediately Replaced with a broken leader of the next lower quality (i.e., a 9-2 is Replaced by a 9-1, a 9-1 is Replaced by an 8-1, etc.).

## HEAT OF BATTLE

**1. HEAT OF BATTLE:** The cauldron of battle, which destroyed so many units that failed the test of arms, could also forge better soldiers and/or acts of desperation borne of heroism or despair. This process is reflected by a Heat of Battle DR which follows any *Original* MC or Rally (not Self-Rally) DR of 2. Unarmed units, Cavalry, PRC<sup>1</sup>, Heroes, crews, already berserk units, units which are Climbing, Swimming, Wading, in boats, or on parachute counters, are not subject to Heat of Battle. The Heat of Battle DR is subject to the following cumulative DRM. The +1 DRM for a broken unit applies even if the unit rallied as a result of the 2 DR which allowed the Heat of Battle DR. A Final Heat of Battle DR of 5 or 6 results in both Hero Generation and Battle Hardening.

<b>Heat of Battle</b>			
follows any <i>Original</i> IFT MC or Rally ( <i>not Self-Rally</i> ) DR of 2			
DR	Result	DRM's	
≤6	Hero Creation (159.)	Elite, British, Finnish (each)	-1
5-8	Battle Hardening	Broken, Inexperienced (each)	+1
9-11	Berserk †	French, Partisan	+1
12	Surrender †*	Russian, Allied Minor	+2
		Axis Minor, Italian, Japanese	+3
<p>* Non-elite Italian/Axis Minors Surrender on a Final HoB DR ≥ 10. Treat as Berserk if: Japanese, Gurkhas, Partisans, Fanatics, Commissars, SS vs Russians or the HoB was the result of a Rally DR.</p> <p>† Treat as Battle Hardening if in a Pillbox, Bunker, or the HoB resulted from a Rally DR.</p>			

**2. HEROES:** (*see GIA 159.-159.8 for the rules regarding Heroes.*) Note: A DR of 5 or 6 creates both a Hero and Battle Hardens the unit.

**3. BATTLE HARDENING:** An armed Personnel Unit can also benefit from a form of Unit Substitution whenever it rolls a 5-8 Final Heat of Battle DR (see also A15.44). This Battle Hardening effect improves the unit in Class (even if broken) by exchanging it for an unbroken, unpinned unit of the same size but the next higher quality. When substituting a unit of the next higher quality, none of the numbers of its Strength Factor can decrease and, if given a choice between two different unit types of the next higher class, must use the one which gains the least (e.g., a German 2-4-7 HS must be exchanged for a 2-4-8 HS; not a 3-4-8 SS HS). Battle Hardening can be refused. A leader which becomes Battle Hardened is exchanged for the next higher grade leader; i.e., a 6+1 becomes a 7-0, an 8-0 becomes an 8-1, or a 9-2 becomes a 10-2; a Finnish/Japanese 9-1 becomes a 10-0. An already elite MMC (or best possible leader or partisan) which is Battle Hardened becomes Fanatic (*SQL 26.*) and is marked with a Fanatic counter. It remains Fanatic for the remainder of the game even if subsequently Replaced or Reduced but cannot attain any loftier status due to yet another Battle Hardening result.

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**4. BERSERK:** Berserk units are created from infantry by a Final Heat of Battle DR of 9-11 [EXC: non-elite Italian/Axis Minor Personnel units surrender (A15.5) on a Final Heat of Battle DR  $\geq 10$ ]. Mark or replace units with a BERSERK counter when they go berserk. A broken unit which goes berserk is automatically rallied.

**4.1 LEADER CONSEQUENCES:** When a leader goes berserk, he must (after first resolving any fire attack vs any other targets in the same location) attempt to change any [EXC: units not normally subject to Heat of Battle] other friendly units (even if broken or not subject to that same attack) in the same Location to berserk status also. Each such unit must take a DM MC subject to the berserk leader's modification. If they pass the Berserk DM MC they become berserk; if not, there is no change to their status. After the Berserk DM MC, the leader forfeits his leadership DRM until he returns to normal.

**4.2 MORALE:** A Berserk unit assumes a base Morale Level of 10. If a berserk unit fails a MC it is not broken, but suffers Casualty Reduction (*GIA 142.311*). A berserk unit never takes a PAAMC, nor a LLMC, and never breaks, cowers, or becomes pinned. A berserk unit never has its Morale Level of 10 lowered by any cause (*Note: IFT MC's have an effect on the MC DR not the units Morale Level*) and automatically loses any CX, TI, Concealment or pinned status. A berserk unit never receives the leadership benefit of a friendly leader even if this deprives Good Order units of such benefits.

**4.3 CHARGE:** At the start of the MPh, each non-Melee berserk unit must charge the nearest (in hexes not MF) [EXC: A15.433] Known enemy unit in its LOS and must (if it has sufficient MF) enter its Location [EXC: pillbox/bunkers and Fortified Building locations] during that MPh in an attempt to destroy it in CC. If equidistant, the ATTACKER may choose which of those hexes he will charge. If multiple berserk units of the same side occupy the same Location they must move together as one combined stack unless they will require different MF expenditures to exit their Location (e.g., units inside and outside a foxhole in the same Location) or one is wounded and one is not.

**4.31** All berserk units have eight MF [EXC: Wounded still have only three MF]—a total which can never be increased [EXC: road bonus (*COI 73.1*); downhill skiers (*COD 114.*)]. A unit which becomes berserk while still moving (i.e., not pinned or wounded) must use the remainder of its MPh to charge. The unit's MF allotment for the rest of that MPh is eight minus whatever MF it has already expended during that MPh. At the start of its MPh before charging, a berserk unit must abandon any SW which individually costs more than 1 PP or which in combination with other 1 PP SW is in excess of its IPC, but may use them in the DFPh/AFPh prior to that, and must still carry those it can retain (DC can only be Thrown—not Placed or Set). A berserk unit never qualifies for Assault Movement even if its "charge" consists of just one hex. The charging unit must take the shortest route (in MF) to the enemy unit,

including the use of Bypass (counting Wire as 1 MF for purposes of this calculation only). If, in the act of charging the nearest Known enemy in its LOS, the berserk unit moves into the LOS of a closer (in hexes) Known enemy unit, he charges that unit from that point instead. Similarly, if it attempts to move into a concealed/hidden enemy units location and reveals it while charging another unit, the berserker must remain in the adjacent hex and attempt to eliminate all enemy units therein during the CC Phase instead. Should the only Known enemy unit no longer be in his LOS in the interim, the berserk unit still charges toward the hex originally occupied by that unit. If it still sees no Known enemy unit, it ends its move after entering that Location, and the berserk status is removed at the end of that current phase. Otherwise, it continues its charge to the now nearest Known enemy unit.

**4.32** A berserk unit must enter a Known enemy occupied Location during the APH and, as such, force any enemy infantry therein to attack them in CC. If the only Known enemy unit is a lone SMC in the hex the SMC may attempt to avoid CC by passing a NMC and if passed enter an adjacent hex. The berserk unit may also attack with TPBF during its AFPh, but this TPBF is halved due to taking place in the AFPh. Because a berserk unit must charge in its MPh, it may never fire during its PFPh—even if ADJACENT to the Location it must charge. However, it may fire during its AFPh and DFPh during his opponent's MPh. A berserk unit does not take prisoners.

**4.33** A berserk MG crew must use Sustained Fire during every PFPh and DFPh until the MG malfunctions (assuming there are enemy units in its LOS at the time it goes berserk), or it passes a special RPh leader-assisted NMC using its printed (not berserk) morale level. At that point, they are no longer considered berserk. Non-crew units (such as a squad or HS) manning such weapons when they go berserk would abandon the weapon and charge as normal infantry.

**4.4 NO ENEMY IN LOS:** If a unit suffers a berserk result, but has no Known enemy unit in its LOS at that time, the result is changed to Battle Hardening.

**4.5 TERRAIN RESTRICTIONS:** A berserk unit will not charge through unbridged Water Obstacles, nor a cliff, nor a Blaze; it will charge the next nearest Known enemy unit instead unless an alternate route to the nearest known enemy unit is still closer than the next nearest known enemy unit. If there is no other Known enemy unit, A15.44 applies. However, a berserk unit will move into minefields, FFE/Wire during a charge.

**4.6 RETURN TO NORMAL:** A berserk unit loses its berserk status and returns to normal whenever it (or the group it attacks with) eliminates at least one known enemy unit during the AFPh/CCPh, or if at the end of a charge there is no known enemy unit in its LOS (A15.431).

**5. SURRENDER:** A Final Heat of Battle DR  $\geq 12$  causes the affected unit to become broken (if it is not already) and to Surrender immediately to any ADJACENT Known Good

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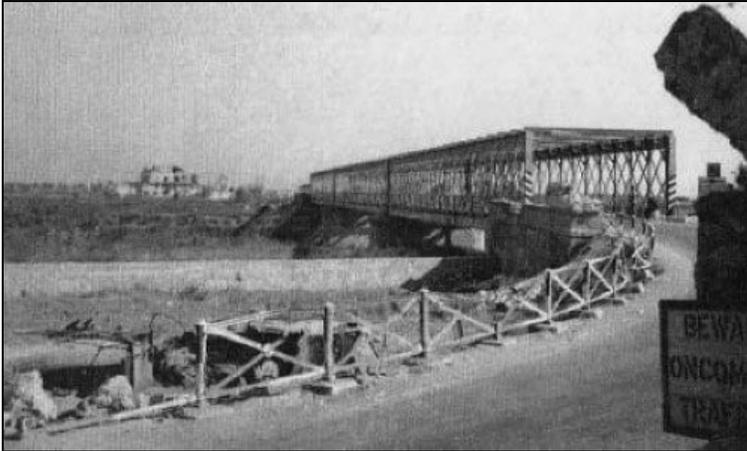
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Order enemy Infantry/Cavalry as if they shared the same Location. If no such enemy unit is ADJACENT, the unit is only broken instead [*EXC*: Japanese, Gurkhas, Partisans, Fanatics, and Commissars never surrender by the RtPh method nor do SS vs Russians (COI 83.5). They instead become berserk on a Final Heat of Battle  $DR \geq 12$ ].

### Notes:

1. Passengers/Riders/inherent Crew (PRC): Many vehicles have the capacity to transport Personnel in various quantities as specified on the vehicular counter. In addition, some AFVs after 1942 may carry Riders. PRC and their SW are placed on top of the transporting vehicular counter and do not count against Personnel Location stacking limits (3 Infantry, {2 of which may be Squads or their equivalent), below the counter) as long as they remain mounted on their transport. PRC may never overstack on their vehicles.



Primosole Bridge, Catania, Italy, July 1943

**AFTERMATH:** But even though the “Red Berets” realized that the German airborne landings were only a prelude, they were still caught off guard by this counterattack. Pearson had anticipated that the Germans would come from the north; but they didn’t—they attacked from the south. By mischance the bulk of the troops of the 3rd Fallschirmjaeger Regiment had scattered for miles on the wrong side of the river. The experienced Heilmann, using the forces he could gather quickly, turned the mistake to his own advantage. Under cover of a heavy mortar attack, a thin wave of German paratroops rushed their British counter parts. However, by this stage of the war the men of the 1st British Airborne were no longer the amateurs that had arrived in Africa in mid-1942. They waited for the barrage to lift and then rose from hastily-dug foxholes and delivered the full weight of their firepower at close range. The Germans simply melted away, leaving the rocky earth and long bridge littered with their dead and dying. Two hours after the abortive counterattack, near dawn, the only wireless set to survive the British drop came suddenly to life. Its short resurrection lasted exactly four minutes, but in that brief span of time Pearson reported that his force tenuously held the Primosole Bridge and learned that the 4th Armoured Brigade and Durham Light Infantry Brigade of the British Eighth Army were battling along the highway to link with them at all possible speed. But they were meeting very stiff opposition. Then the set went dead—and stayed dead. The hours passed but the promised relief did not come. The Germans and Italians however, did—time and again. And as the morning passed

into a hot afternoon, with the British paratroopers panting like dogs in the bottom of their foxholes, the enemy probing attacks steadily increased in ferocity. Now it seemed only a question of time before the Axis forces recaptured the bridge. Already the bulk of the British troops defending the northern end had been withdrawn to bolster those at the southern end who were under continuous and increasing small-arms fire, the signal for yet another counterattack. Worse, shortly after, in mid-afternoon on that 14 July, SS armor stationed at Messiest arrived from the north with a contingent of SS security personnel which had been ordered to arrest suspected Allied sympathizers behind the front lines. Heilmann immediately demanded—and assumed—command of these unexpected reinforcements, elements of a refitting SS panzer unit.

The German paratroopers started to wade across the river to the west of the bridge in an attempt to turn the British flank. The SS troops managed to get a 88mm gun close enough to the bridge and began to pound away at the powerless defenders at the northern end. In a crump of yellow-red flame, the first British-occupied building was hit and disappeared in a cloud of smoke and rubble. Moments later the second followed it. The bridge itself was swept with machinegun fire, effectively isolating the two battered British positions. And Pearson’s main force on the southern bank was locked in a fierce firefight with the German paratroops surrounding them as the enemy pressed their advantage. Finally, after thirty minutes of intense punishment, Pearson ordered what was left of his forces to withdraw to some high ground to the south of the river in order to make a last stand—fighting through the enemy to reach. By then the SS armor was crossing the bridge and the British paratroopers were rapidly running out of ammunition.

But the German commanders were satisfied with consolidating their positions along the river; the British survivors were left in peace. Of the defenders at the bridge, out of the original force of 250, there were thirty-seven dead, eighty-nine wounded and over fifty missing. Now, as darkness fell, Heilmann prepared his defense of the most important bridge in Sicily and waited for the British to try again. In their first action on the continent against the men they would soon rename ‘the Red Devils’, German paratroopers—with some assistance—had won a bitter fight. It appeared that, in spite of the terrible losses in Africa and Russia, Student’s “Hunters from the Sky” were still a match for the best the Western Allies could send against them.

After a forced march of twenty-five miles that morning, the weary infantrymen of the 8th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry reached the Ares at 1000 hours on 15 July. They were tough—products of the depression and two years of continuous warfare in North Africa with the Eighth Army—but now they were “whacked”. Utterly exhausted by the march and the bitter fighting of the previous day, they flung themselves down on the ground and fell asleep.

But the officers, weary as they were, had no time for sleep. A group of them approached the bridge, littered with

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German and British “cad in their camouflaged smocks, and surveyed it in silence. It did not look good. Although the bridge itself was clearly visible, nothing could be seen of the enemy’s positions north of the river where the rough, rolling countryside offered excellent cover. For all the British officers knew, a whole German division could be hidden over there. By contrast, the southern approach to the bridge was flat and offered little cover. They turned their binoculars on the bridge. Primosole Bridge was about 900 feet long; built of girders and concrete it was eight feet above the surging brown waters of the River Simeto. North of the bridge, on either side of the exit road that ran straight to the town of Catania, the officers could see two farms. At present they could spot no movement around the buildings, but even the most inexperienced subaltern knew they would make ideal strongpoint’s. The British officers crept back to plan their assault on the bridge.

Colonel A. Lidwell, commanding the 8th Battalion, was troubled by the situation report. As the Durham Light Infantry’s regimental history recorded, “the prospects looked gloomy indeed for the 8th Battalion.” Lidwell could not show his growing unease to his staff as he explained his plan of attack. Thirty minutes before the assault, mortars and light artillery would put down a bombardment on the north bank, moving it slowly to about 500 yards north of the bridge. Then, for the last ten minutes, the gunners would plaster the bridge itself. As soon as the barrage had lifted, the leading company of the 8th Battalion would cross the river and go for the bridge along the far bank. It was a poor plan and Lidwell knew it. Already that morning their running mate—the 9th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry—had assaulted across the river further up and been thrown back with heavy casualties. Another frontal attack looked “suicidal”. But Montgomery wanted the bridge and he wanted it quickly; it was holding up the advance of the whole Eighth Army.

It was about noon that a stranger appeared at the entrance of the small cave in which Lidwell had set up his headquarters. As Lidwell recalled “He was unshaven. his khaki shirt and trousers were covered with Stains and grime and he looked dog-tired.” All Lidwell could tell was that he was British; who he was and what rank he bore was not apparent. Warily this stranger walked in and seated himself next to the 8th Battalion commander. “My name’s Pearson,” he said. “I commanded the paratroopers down at the bridge. I understand you are attacking this afternoon. I think I can help you.” Pearson’s information was invaluable. He pointed out that a direct attack over the water at the bridge was out of the question; the German officers had concentrated all their firepower for this eventuality. However, he did know of a spot upstream where it was possible to wade across. He offered to guide the assault company at the ford.

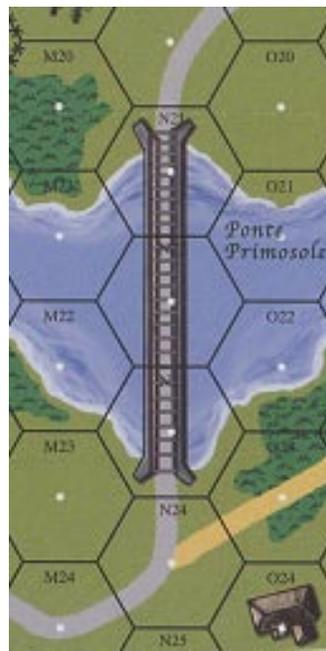
At 1250 the barrage opened. The gunners concentrated their fire on a narrow front and the crash of artillery, crump of mortars and chatter of heavy Vickers machineguns was deafening. In the abrupt silence that followed the

bombardment, a company of the 8th Battalion forded the river, guided by Colonel Pearson and his handful of paratroopers. The operation was a complete success. The unexpected direction of the attack caught Heilmann’s troops off guard. Under light automatic fire the British infantrymen dashed for the bridge. A few Germans resisted but, “to the accompaniment of shouts and cheers” these were speedily disposed of with bayonets, grenades and Tommy guns. With the first phase of the battle successfully carried out, the remainder of 8th Battalion could now cross the bridge; B and D Companies moved up the road, marching in single file. As they passed one of the blazing farmhouses, a wag arose and shouted, “Push on B Company! There’s only a few Eyties up front”

The burst of Spandau fire that met them a few moments later proved the wag wrong. They had hit the main line of the German defenses. The British scattered hastily, scrambling into the fields and vineyards and ditches. Lieutenant Jackson, with a few men, rushed the machinegun position; they were all killed, but now others followed and a grim game of hide and seek began in the thick undergrowth on both sides of the road. It was difficult to distinguish friend from foe in the shadows, and it meant every man for himself with no quarter given on either side. Some of the infantrymen were shot down at point-blank range as they blundered into concealed positions. Others stalked the SS and paratroops, shooting them in the back where they lay in wait. To the advancing British infantry, it seemed as if there was a German paratrooper behind every bush. Men on both sides fired at trees, thinking them the enemy. Many flung grenades, though these caused more casualties to their own side than to the other, Most were hesitant to use their automatic weapons at a range of more than a few yards for fear of hitting their comrades. Within twenty minutes—the bloodiest twenty minutes of the entire war for the 8th Battalion—both sides fought themselves to a standstill. The front half of B Company and the SS troops facing them suffered nearly 100% casualties! As if by some form of telepathy, both sides broke off the action and withdrew simultaneously, leaving behind their dead and dying.

But the German paratroopers fixed bayonets and rushed the withdrawing British. The rear platoon, rallied by Sergeant-Major Brannigan and Sergeant Mitchson, turned to act as rearguard.

Although overrun and wiped out, their sacrifice allowed what remained of B Company to retreat to the cover of a nearby embankment. By now the British were under heavy counterattack along the entire perimeter of their bridgehead;



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their losses were mounting dramatically—B Company was already down to thirty effectives. Colonel Lidwell, who had moved his headquarters to a shattered farmhouse, realized his hold on the bridge was momentary. The urgency with which he tried to obtain artillery and armored support from brigade headquarters revealed to his officers the seriousness of their position. Worse, Lidwell, who had lost both his radio sets during the river assault, was unable to contact the 4th Armoured Brigade, whose task was to exploit the infantry gains.

For several hours, Heilmann's forces sniped and launched minor attacks. Luftwaffe fighters strafed the British lines. Lidwell was informed by messenger that *the* bridgehead was to be enlarged after dark by both the 6th and 9th Battalions, Durham Light Infantry; anxiously he awaited darkness, aware that any concerted, energetic attack could throw him off the bridge. And he was sure that somewhere the SS armor lurked. (It had, in fact, departed before his arrival, leaving only the security troops to bolster the Italian garrison and German paratroopers.) Instead, shortly before sundown, the lead elements of the 4th Armoured Brigade arrived. Never hesitating, Lidwell ordered an immediate attack to end the threat to the bridge, but the Germans were not unprepared and fought back savagely. In the tangled chaos of the vineyards and woods they stood and fought until, as one British officer wrote, "they either shot down their enemies or were shot down themselves." The Durham Light Infantry crews pushed in their six-pounder antitank guns and began to "winkle out" the enemy at point-blank range; but still the Germans held on.

So the British commander committed the armor. The Shermans plunged into the vines, firing their big guns at everything in sight. At the far end of the bridge, Lidwell himself ordered each tanker to deploy left or right off the road to Catania, pointing out enemy strongpoint's. After twenty minutes this was too much even for the paratroopers and they began to surrender. A captured British 8th Battalion soldier arose with a soiled handkerchief. Behind him rimless helmets could be seen. The British troopers thought this yet another German trick, and kept up their fire. It was with some difficulty that their officers got them to cease. Now makeshift white flags appeared all along the ragged line held by the enemy paratroops. They came streaming in, hands raised above their heads, urged on by the bayonets of the sturdy little men from the north. It was finally over. The British had secured the Primosole Bridge and opened the road to Catania.

And what a bitter sight the road made as the infantry viewed it in silence. It was a shambles of abandoned rifles and machineguns, littered with bloody clothing, overturned ammunition boxes, a burned vehicle, a shattered antitank gun, rubble from the farm buildings, all the debris of war—and the dead. Along its whole length lay the bodies of German and British paratroopers, those of the Durham Light and the 55. Now, as the few SS vehicles retreated and the Allied armored forces pushed on, the infantry began to tidy

up. As their regimental history records. Men who had experienced the fiercest fighting of the North African campaign at Alamein and Mareth said they had never seen so much slaughter in such a small area. The Durham Light Infantry had lost over 500 men, killed and wounded. Some 300 German dead were found and another 160 were taken prisoner. And almost 200 British paratroopers still lay where they had fallen the previous day.

Thus Student's paratroopers had fought and lost their first great battle against the British in Europe. As night fell, Colonel Heilmann rallied the remnants of his staff and a few troops to attempt to elude capture. Even as British tanks rolled over the bridge above Catania, the "Hunters from the Sky" crept in single file under it, leaping from spar to spar, the rattle of tracks drowning the noise they made. Thus, the German paratroopers broke out of the trap. For another day they slipped between the various British formations heading north until finally, on the night of 16 July, they made contact with the Axis troops holding the newly-established line. Heilmann had led nearly 100 men to freedom, to fight again.