

Scenario 12: The Biazzo Ridge

11th July 1943

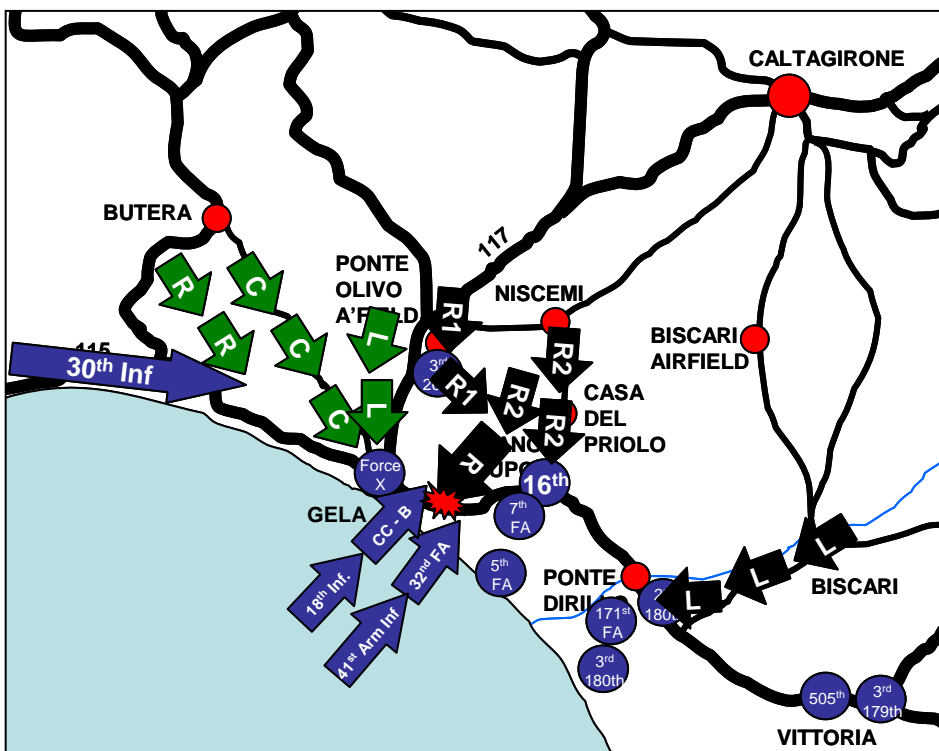
At the same time that *Kampfgruppe Rechts* advanced towards Gela and Priolo, *Kampfgruppe Links* was ordered forward down the Biscari road onto Highway 115, driving towards the Ponte Dirillo bridge. There they ran into Company F, 180th Infantry, who resisted for a short time before retiring towards the beaches west of the Acate river mouth.

At around 0900hrs, as the Germans, under constant fire from 71st Field Artillery Battalion and the destroyer *Beatty*, headed past the highway, they were hit in the rear by a small group of American paratroopers who suddenly appeared from the east.

On D-Day, Colonel James M. Gavin, commander of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, had, as had so many of his men, landed miles away from where he was supposed to. He had managed to gather together about fifteen men, and had spent the previous day and night leading this impressive force north and west towards the sound of battle. At around 0230hrs on 11th July, he finally encountered another American unit: Company I, 179th Infantry. They were able to tell Gavin that they were about five miles south-east of Vittoria. Finally Gavin knew where he was!

Entering Vittoria at around 0500 hrs, Gavin collected up the paratroopers and three airborne howitzers that had helped capture the town the day before, and continued his march west towards the sounds of battle. About five miles along Highway 115, he encountered 180 men of the 3rd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry, led by Major Edward C. Krause, who were also looking for either American forces to join or Germans to fight.

Leaving Krause to organise the column (now 250 strong) into a proper fighting formation and then follow on, Gavin and his S-3 Major Benjamin H. Vandervoort continued west along Highway 115. Two miles up the road they then ran into forty men from Company L, 180th Infantry and twenty paratroop engineers. Although they could tell Gavin that the Germans were on the Highway to the west, they had no information as to strengths and dispositions.



Taking the paratroop engineers with him, Gavin continued westwards towards Biscari railway station, which was on Highway 115 less than a mile east of the junction with the Biscari road from where the Germans had attacked the 180th. As the Americans marched along, a German motorcycle suddenly came around a corner in the road, with the soldier and officer on board promptly being captured. Although their presence confirmed the

fact that there were Germans nearby, they would give no information other than the usual name, rank and serial number.

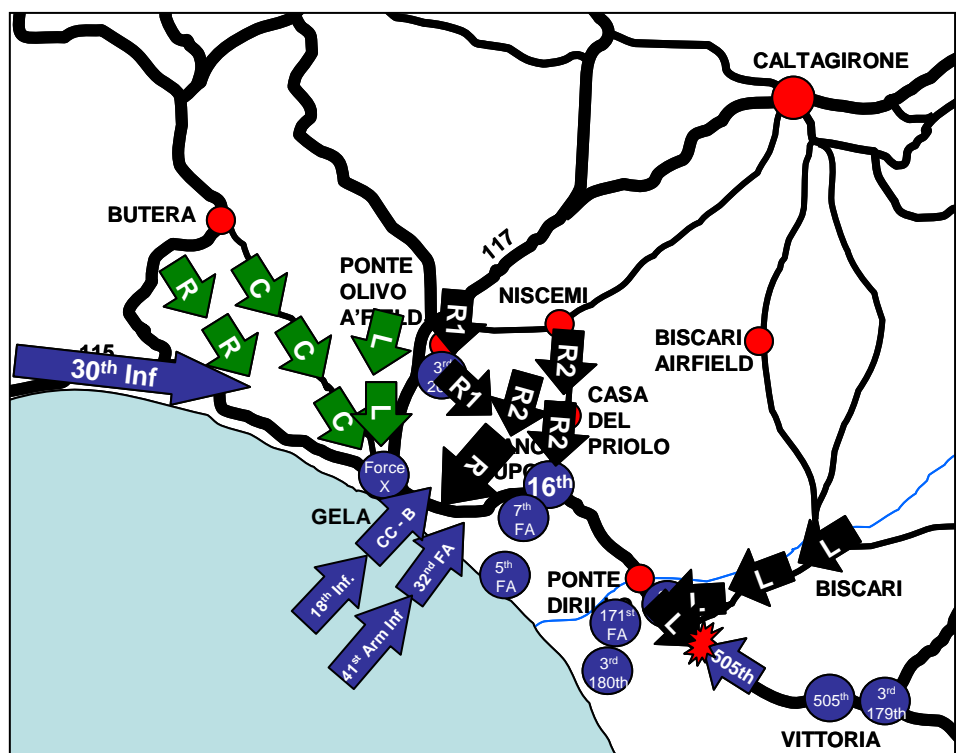
Gavin sent Vandervoort back to bring up the rest of his men, and led his engineers towards the Casa Biazzo: a group of five buildings on a ridge overlooking the Acate river. At the foot of the ridge ran the Biscari road. As they got to within about 100 yards of the buildings, they came under small arms fire from a small German detachment posted to defend the flank of the main German column. These were driven off down the slope, but as incoming fire increased as the Americans prepared to follow, Gavin ordered his men to dig in and wait for the rest of his column to arrive.

By about 1000hrs, the majority of the paratroopers had come up, so Gavin ordered the advance. Slow progress against increasing opposition was made for about a mile, with the paratroopers augmenting their numbers with random troops from the 180th encountered en route. Then four Tiger tanks supported by infantry came into view, and began driving the Americans back once more. Fortunately, by this time two of the three airborne howitzers had arrived behind the Biazzo ridge, and their fire halted the German advance.

The firefight continued for another hour or so, until at around noon the outnumbered and outgunned Americans were having to fight fiercely just to maintain their positions. The German column, under Colonel Bergengruen, consisted of 750 grenadiers; the Tigers; and a panzer artillery battalion. At one stage, one of the howitzers was manhandled right to the top of the ridge to engage in a point-blank range, direct-fire duel with one of the Tigers. Under heavy small arms fire, and despite several near misses from the Tiger itself, the paratrooper crew got off several quick shots, one of which knocked the tank out. Meanwhile, two half-tracks towing 57mm anti-tank guns had arrived from the 179th Infantry, and began exchanging shots with the other three Tigers.

By about 1500hrs, The Germans had now given up on trying to advance west, and turned their whole strength onto the small force of paratroopers holding the ridge. Fortunately, Gavin had earlier sent a request for reinforcements to 45th Division HQ and General Middleton, the Division's commander, had reacted quickly. As the anti-tank guns opened up on the other Tigers, a naval support party and forward observers from 189th Field Artillery Battery arrived at Gavin's command post. Within minutes rounds from the artillery and fire from navy ships began landing on the advancing Germans. An hour or so later, eleven tanks from 753rd Medium Tank Battalion arrived, further stabilising the situation. With the news that Lieutenant Swingler and his one hundred paratroopers (see Scenario 2) were also on their way, Gavin began planning to go onto the attack.

Swingler and his men arrived at about



2000hrs, in trucks furnished by 45th Infantry Division. Forty five minutes later, after a huge barrage from the artillery and Navy, the Americans launched their second attack of the day. Every man was committed, including several sailors who had enlisted in the paratroops during the day! This attack scattered the remnants of *Kampfgruppe Links*, effectively ending the German assault.

With both *Kampfgruppen* now retiring, Conrath ordered a general retreat. The Herman Göring Panzer Division's tank losses alone are estimated at around ten Tigers (out of seventeen); and thirty to forty Panzer IIIs or IVs: about one third of its original roster. Although The Big Red One had taken quite a battering, the beachhead was now safe, and American infantry, tanks and guns were pouring ashore.

Introduction

This scenario will cover the German counter-attack on the Biazzo ridge. I have compressed time slightly to allow all the different elements from the historical encounter to take place within the time frame of an evening's wargame; and made an attempt to proportionately shrink the forces involved as well. Note that the German were uncharacteristically hesitant in their attack on the ridge, and this is reflected in what Nationality Cards they have at their disposal.

Map & Terrain

The eastern edge of the table is dominated by the area of raised ground that came to be known as the Biazzo Ridge. The ridge consists of open ground (the lower slopes are fields) and deducts one from each dice rolled for movement if moving up hill. On the top of the ridge are the five buildings mentioned in the background. The map shows just two, representing the shrinking down of the game to approximate company- as opposed to battalion-size.

The road running along the southern edge of the table is Highway 115. It is a good quality, state road. Just south of the highway is the railway line (Biscari railway station is a mile off the map to the east). The rest of the terrain is flattish, open ground roughly divided into fields. The brown lines are rough paths separating one field from another. The line of trees running east from the western edge of the board is another, more substantial field divider. The tree-filled area to the north-west is a thick wood that subtracts two from each dice rolled for movement whether on foot or in a vehicle.

Initial Dispositions

The Germans begin the game off-table to the west. Each time the German Blinds card appears they may place up to three Blinds on the western edge of the battlefield. That is considered the move for those Blinds, although any other German Blinds already on table move as normal. The Germans have seven Blinds at their disposal: one per platoon and one False Blind.

The American troops begin the game already on-table, under Blinds. They have six Blinds at their disposal, up to three of which may be False. Those behind the crest of the ridge cannot be spotted from the west. The US player should mark the position of his Blinds, and what they cover, on the map prior to the start of the game.

The airborne howitzers must begin the game behind the crest of the ridge. The American reinforcements arrive from the east. They arrive on the relevant appearance of the Turn Card from the table to the right:

Turn Card Appears	Reinforcements
4 times	A: Anti-Tank Gun
5 times	B: FO & Naval Liaison Teams
7 times	C: Shermans
8 times	D: Swinger et al.

Once they are due to appear and the US Blinds card appears, they are placed as Blinds on Highway 115 on the eastern edge of the battlefield. That is considered the move for those Blinds, although any other US Blinds already on table move as normal.

Objectives and Victory Conditions

The German objective is to clear the American paratroopers from their rear. This they can be considered to have done if they take the Biazzo Ridge, as they will then hold the high ground dominating the area. The US objective is to hold their positions and then drive the Germans from the table.

The German player therefore wins the game if, at the end of the battle, there are no American troops and at least one initiative die's worth of German troops on the highest contour of the Biazzo Ridge. Any other result is a loss for the German player. The US player draws the game if he holds the Biazzo Ridge, defined as there being no Germans and at least one initiative die's worth of American troops on the highest contour of the ridge. He wins the game if, at the end of the battle, he has defeated the Germans to such an extent that he is able to advance off the western edge of the table.

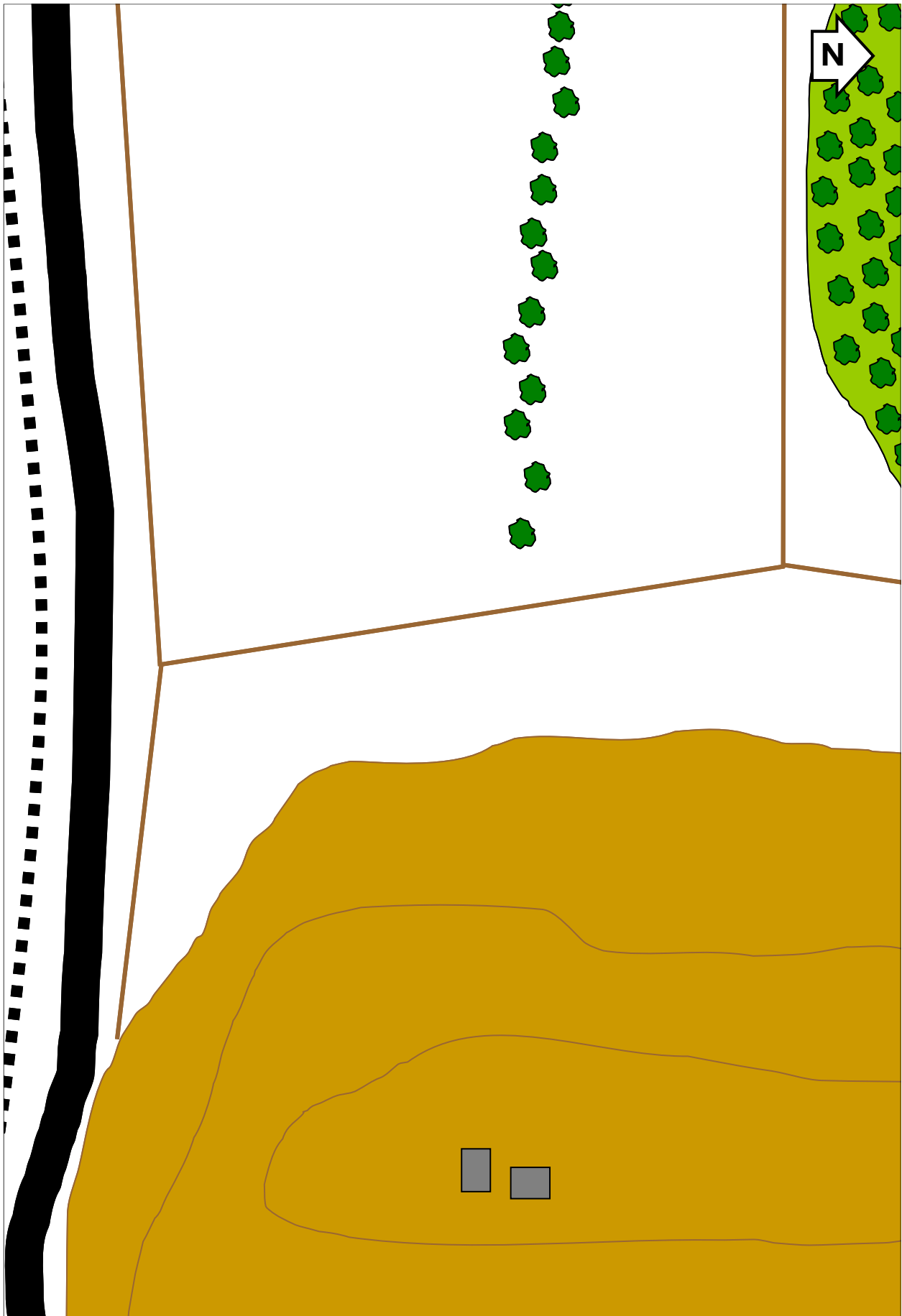
Notes on Big Men

The German Big Men are the same drinks-based crew from the Scenario Seven appearance of *Kampfgruppe Links*. The American Big Men are those that were there.

The Cards

Game Cards	US Cards	German Cards
Tea Break	US Blinds	German Blinds
Turn Card	Colonel Gavin	Hauptmann Starkbier
	Major Krause	Oberleutnant Apfelwein
	Company HQ	Leutnant Eierlikör
	1st Platoon	Leutnant Feuerzangenbowle
	Airborne Howitzers	Company HQ
	Anti-Tank Gun	1st Platoon
	Anti-Tank Gun Bonus Fire	2nd Platoon
	FOO Team	3rd Platoon
	Naval Liaison Party	Panzer Platoon
	Off-Table Artillery: Hwtzrs	Mobile Artillery
	Off-Table Artillery: Navy	Hesitant Troops
	Sergeant Daily	Vehicle Breakdown
	Shermans	Rally
	Lieutenant Swingler	Dynamic Commander
	Swingler's Crew	
	Rapid Deployment	
	Dynamic Commander	
	Heroic Leader	
	Rally	

Scenario 12: Map





Scenario 12: US Briefing

You are Colonel James M. Gavin, commander of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment. It is 11th July 1943, and you think you have finally managed to get things firmly back on track.

Two nights ago, you dropped onto Sicily as part of the airborne force that led Operation Husky. Unfortunately, the drop was a disaster: poor navigation, not enough time for training, and extremely strong winds meant that your men, rather than dropping as a cohesive, fighting body, seem to have been scattered all over southern Sicily. Some, you know, never even made it that far: their planes ditching into the sea. You, yourself, found yourself miles from your planned landing sight (you weren't even sure exactly where you were) with only about fifteen men at your disposal. No matter, you marched towards the sound of the guns, looking both for more men and some enemy to fight!

The town of Vittoria brought your force up to about two hundred and fifty strong, including a couple of howitzers, and the knowledge that you were some twenty miles east of where you were supposed to be, and from where you could still hear the sounds of battle. You immediately set off along Highway 115, heading for Gela and the fighting.

About ten miles down the road, you hit a ridge from which you chased away a party of enemy soldiers. From the summit of the ridge, you could see the tail end of a German column, and decided to attack immediately. Things went well to start with: although progress was slow, it was definitely progress. Then the Tigers appeared! Four of them, supported by infantry.

You withdrew your men back to the Biazzo Ridge, and prepared to hold your position. After all, this is your mission: whilst you are fighting the rear of the column, the front of it can't be threatening the main invasion beaches. You have sent runners off towards Vittoria, to 45th Division's HQ, asking General Middleton for reinforcements, and you hope they get here in time, as there does seem to be an awful lot of Germans now coming your way.

Well, you tweaked the Tiger's tail, pun intended, now you just have to make sure you don't get bit!

Map & Terrain

The eastern edge of the table is dominated by the area of raised ground known as the Biazzo Ridge. The ridge consists of open ground (the lower slopes are fields) and deducts one from each dice rolled for movement if moving up hill. On the top of the ridge are a couple of buildings. The road running along the southern edge of the table is Highway 115. It is a good quality, state road. Just south of the highway is the railway line (Biscari railway station is a mile off the map to the east).

The rest of the terrain is flattish, open ground roughly divided into fields. The brown lines are rough paths separating one field from another. The line of trees running east from the western edge of the board is another, more substantial field divider. The tree-filled area to the north-west is a thick wood that subtracts two from each dice rolled for movement whether on foot or in a vehicle.

Initial Dispositions

Your troops begin the game already on-table, under Blinds. Those behind the crest of the ridge cannot be spotted from the west. You should mark the position of your Blinds, and what they cover, on the map prior to the start of the game. The airborne howitzers must begin the game behind the crest of the ridge. You have six Blinds at your disposal, up to three of which may be False.



Objectives and Victory Conditions

The German objective is to clear you from their rear. This they can be considered to have done if they take the Biazzo Ridge, as they will then hold the high ground dominating the area. Your objective is to hold your position until reinforcements arrive, and then drive the Germans from the table.

You therefore draw the game if, at the end of the battle, you hold the Biazzo Ridge: defined as there being no Germans and at least one initiative die's worth of American troops on the highest contour of the ridge. You win the game if, at the end of the battle, you have defeated the Germans to such an extent that you are able to advance off the western edge of the table.

Special Rules

You have sent your S-3, Ben Vandervoort, towards where you think 45th Division's headquarters is. Hopefully reinforcements are on their way.

Gavin Force

Company HQ

Colonel James M. Gavin* (1d6+2)

1 x Carbine Squad (6 men)

1 x Bazooka Team (2 men)

1st Platoon

Major Edward C. Krause* (1d6+1)

3 x Carbine Squad (10 men each)

Airborne Howitzers

2 x 75mm Pack Howitzers (4 crew each)

(no tows)

Troops/Dice	0	1	2	3	4
505th Parachute	1, 2, 3	4	5	6, 7, 8	9, 10

Infantry AT	0-4"	4-8"	8-12"	12-16"	16-24"
Bazooka	8	8	8	8	-
Airborne Section	3	-	-	-	-
HMG	3	3	2	2	1

Weapon	Strike
75mm Howitzer	4



Scenario 12: US Reinforcements A

General Middleton has reacted quickly, and sent you an anti-tank gun to help you out. The gun captain tells you that there are more troops on the way, although he has no details.

Anti-Tank Gun from 179th Infantry

1 x 57mm Anti-Tank Gun

1 x M3 Half-Track

Weapon	Strike
57mm ATG	6

Vehicle	AC	Weapon	Calibre	Speed
M3 Half-Track	2	HMG	n/a	Fast

Scenario 12: US Reinforcements B

A small party of men have arrived. They have big radios, and tell you that they are a Forward Observation Team from 189th Field Artillery Battery, and a Naval Liaison Party. You now have access to off-table artillery support.

Observation Units

1 x Forward Observation Team (2 men)

1 x Naval Liaison Party (2 men)

2 x Jeep

Off-Table Artillery

Unlimited fire missions from 4 x 105mm howitzers and 4 x 6-inch naval guns. Note that each must be contacted and negotiated with separately.

Scenario 12: US Reinforcements C

With a welcome roar of engine and a clattering of tracks, tanks from 753rd Medium Tank Battalion have arrived.

Elements of 753rd Medium Tank Battalion

1st Sergeant Harry James Daily* (1d4)

2 x Sherman Tank

Vehicle	AC	Weapon	Calibre	Speed
M4 Sherman	6	7	75mm	Average

Scenario 12: US Reinforcements D

Well, well, if it isn't Lieutenant Swingler and his crew: looking battle-hardened and ready for action!

Elements of HQ Company, 505th Parachute Infantry

Lieutenant H. H. Swingler* (1d6+1)

2 x Carbine Squad (8 men each)

1 x Bazooka Team (2 men)

2 x Truck