

# STRIKE FOR THE SEA

When informed of the landings, the commander of 84. *Armee* (84<sup>th</sup> Army Corps), General Erich Marcks, wanted 21. *Panzerdivision* to attack east of the Orne against the British airborne landings. But as the strategic picture became clearer, stopping the amphibious assault that was quickly gaining a beachhead became the priority.

Only part of the division was thus sent to attack east of the Orne, a *Kampfgruppe* (Battlegroup) under Major von Luck containing most of his 125. *Panzergrenadierregiment*, one of the division's five Panzer companies, assault guns, the reconnaissance battalion, and supporting elements. However von Luck was driven back by the defending British paras calling on support from the Royal Navy.

The task of breaking through to the sea fell to the remainder of the division. *Kampfgruppe* Oppeln, comprising his own 22. *Panzerregiment*, part of I/125. *Panzergrenadierregiment*, the self-propelled guns of III/155. *Panzerartillerieregiment*, and a company of pioneers, would attack on the right.

*Kampfgruppe* Rauch with 192. *Panzergrenadierregiment* (less the battalion still detached to 716. *Infanteriedivision*), the self-propelled guns of III/155. *Panzerartillerieregiment*, and most of the divisional pioneers would attack to Oppeln's left, aiming for Lion-sur-Mer and the radar station at Douvres-la-Délivrande.

As the invaders poured inland, further time was lost in reorganising the men who now had to re-trace their steps through Caen, now choked with rubble following naval and air bombardment, which also created hordes of refugees.

Oppeln's tanks did not begin to deploy near the village of Lebisey until 1600hrs. Frustrated with what he saw as *Generalleutnant* Feuchtinger's delay, General Marcks arrived to take charge of the deployment of the *Kampfgruppen*. He remarked to Oppeln 'If you don't succeed in throwing the British into the sea, we will have lost the war.'

Just how hard this was to be was quickly demonstrated. Oppeln's first objective was the high ground of the Périers Ridge, thought to be German held. It was not. His spearhead ran headlong into troops of 185 Brigade Group, British 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, who were pressing inland from the beaches.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, The King's Own Shropshire Light Infantry were in the process of attacking Lebisey themselves with the support of the tanks of the Staffordshire Yeomanry. Hearing tanks they prepared for the onslaught, siting their anti-tank guns carefully. They held their fire until the first wave of 40 Panzer IV tanks came into view and then opened a devastating fire, quickly destroying sixteen of the attacking tanks. The Panzers tried to move around the British flank, but running into more British troops, ground to a halt.

Further to the left however, *Kampfgruppe* Rauch found the gap between the Canadian and British beachheads. The battlegroup forced their way through to the coast, linking up with troops from 736. *Grenadierregiment* still holding coastal positions to the west of Lion-sur-Mer. This breakthrough caused considerable alarm among the Allied command who rushed troops to deal with the breakthrough. Rauch's men had no sooner reached the coast than they heard and saw masses of gliders flying overhead. Fearing he was about to be cut off, Rauch ordered a withdrawal, giving the initiative back to the Allies.

Overnight, Rauch's men, along with the remnants of Oppeln's group, dug in north of Caen. They had denied the city to the initial thrusts to take it, but their own strike to the sea had amounted to little. With *Panzer Lehr* and 12. *SS-Panzerdivision* failing to arrive on D-Day, the planned hammer blow against the landings had fizzled. 21. *Panzerdivision* was down to 70 of the 104 tanks with which it had begun the day—losses that it could ill afford with the Allies landing another 300 tanks the next day. The Allies were ashore to stay.



# KAMPFGRUPPE OPPELN ATTACKS

As the afternoon of D-Day wears on, the British forces are nearing Caen. One last village stands in their way. As they launch their assault, the German counterattack begins.

The Kampfgruppe Oppeln Attacks scenario uses the **Airborne at Dusk** (below), **Ambush**, **Delayed Reserves**, **Meeting Engagement**, **Reserves**, and **Scattered Reserves** (see pages 264 to 269 of the rulebook) special rules.

## YOUR ORDERS

### GERMAN

The Allies have landed. High command has finally released you to counterattack and push them back into the sea. You must punch through the leading British troops and breakthrough to the beaches.

### BRITISH

Progress toward Caen was going well. Until your lead companies bumped into dozens of counterattacking German tanks. You must hold your gains and push on to Lebisey Wood, ready to push into Caen tomorrow.

## PREPARING FOR BATTLE

1. Set up the terrain as shown on the next page. Place the objectives at the indicated points. The table is 4'/120cm by 6'/180cm.
2. The German player places their starting troops at the indicated points. The remainder of their force is held in Reserve.
3. The British player places their starting troops at the indicated points. 5 (Anti-tank) Platoon and 41 Battery are held off the table in Ambush. The remainder of the force is in Delayed and Scattered Reserve.

## BEGINNING THE BATTLE

1. The British player has the first turn.
2. This is a mobile battle, so for the British player's first turn of the game all teams (including those deploying from ambush) are considered to be moving.

## ENDING THE BATTLE

The battle ends when:

- Either player starts their turn in possession of one of their objectives, or
- Dusk falls under the Airborne at Dusk special rule, and both sides break off the battle.

## DECIDING WHO WON

If either player holds one of their objectives, they win the battle. Otherwise the outcome is inconclusive as both sides retire for the few hours of darkness before making another effort in the morning.

## AIRBORNE AT DUSK

As dusk fell hundreds of gliders flew over the battlefield, reinforcing the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division. Fearing being cut off, *General Feuchtinger* ordered the Panzers to break off.

*At the start of the British player's turn 7, after taking a Company Morale Check if necessary, the British player rolls a die. On a roll of 5+, dusk falls and the game ends. Otherwise, the German player rolls two dice in their turn, also needing a 5+ on either die to end the game. Each player continues to roll in turn, adding one die each time, until they roll a 5+ and the game ends.*

## D-DAY MINI CAMPAIGN

Kampfgruppe Oppeln Attacks can be played as part of a mini campaign along with the Kampfgruppe Rauch Attacks scenario on page 72.

The winner of the Kampfgruppe Rauch Attacks scenario wins the campaign. However, your chances of winning that battle will be greatly enhanced or reduced by your performance in this battle.

## OTHER PLACES, OTHER TIMES

As it turned out, the only significant armoured force to launch a counterattack on D-Day was *Kampfgruppe Oppeln* of 21. *Panzerdivision*. Scattered German tank units did counterattack against the Americans on Utah Beach, but never in more than platoon strength.

You could fight this battle with a US Rifle Company, or even better an Assault Company from *Bloody Omaha*, taking the part of the British. Replace both Armoured Platoons with a single Tank Platoon of three M4 Sherman tanks and the M10 self-propelled guns with towed 3" guns.

To make the game interesting, you could give the Germans all of the tanks available to oppose the landings on Utah Beach. Equip the German counterattack force with obsolete French

tanks being used for training. So, instead of Panzer IV tanks, the German Panzer Platoons have Panzer 39H(f) Hotchkiss tanks with a Panzer III tank as the command vehicle.

The Germans debated moving their 12. *SS-Panzerdivision* into a position opposite Omaha Beach. You could also play the scenario with the same American force facing off against a counterattack by fearless SS-Panzer Platoons equipped with Panzer IV tanks.

Moving further afield, the Red Army conducted many river crossing operations. These often faced German counterattacks trying to push them back to the river line. You could play the scenario with a Soviet Strelkovy Batalon in place of the British force.

## GERMAN KAMPFGRUPPE OPPELN

### 22. PANZERREGIMENT

Oberst von Oppeln-Bronikowski  
5. Panzerkompanie  
1./125. Panzergrenadierregiment

### VERSTÄRKUNGEN

2. Panzerkompanie  
3. Panzerkompanie  
III/155. Panzerartillerieregiment

### PANZERKOMPANIE (CONFIDENT VETERAN) (PAGE 52 ATLANTIK WALL)

Company HQ (with two Panzer IV H tanks at **A**)  
Panzer Platoon (with five Panzer IV tanks at **A**)  
Panzergrenadier Platoon (at full strength, with no Panzerfaust anti-tank launchers and no trucks, at **B**)

### RESERVES

Panzer Platoon (with five Panzer IV tanks)  
Panzer Platoon (with five Panzer IV tanks)  
Armoured Artillery Battery (with six 10.5cm (Sf) Lorraine Schlepper self-propelled guns)

Oberst Hermann von Oppeln-Bronikowski was a cavalryman since before the First World War, although he won his Iron Cross fighting as an infantryman in that war. His service in Poland, France and Russia won him a second Iron Cross and a Knight's Cross. After being wounded at Kursk, he took command of 22. Panzerregiment. On D-Day he was given

the task of striking for the beaches with the only Panzer force available to intervene. With his 4. *Kompanie* fighting paratroopers across the Orne and 1. *Kompanie* delayed, it was the composite 5. *Kompanie* from II *Panzerabteilung* that led the way. The remainder of the regiment followed as quickly as it could, pushing towards Lion-sur-Mer on the beach.

## BRITISH 185 BRIGADE GROUP

### 2<sup>ND</sup> BATTALION, KINGS OWN SHROPSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Lieutenant Colonel Maurice  
W Company  
X Company  
Y Company  
C Squadron, Staffordshire Yeomanry

### FLANK GUARD

5 (Anti-tank) Platoon  
41 Anti-tank Battery (SP), 20<sup>th</sup> Anti-tank Regiment

### RESERVES

Z Company  
A Squadron, Staffordshire Yeomanry  
7<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment, Royal Artillery

### RIFLE COMPANY (CONFIDENT TRAINED) (PAGE 142 OVERLORD)

Company HQ (with Universal Carrier)  
Rifle Platoon (at full strength at **W**)  
Rifle Platoon (at full strength at **X**)  
Rifle Platoon (at full strength at **Y**)  
Independent Armoured Platoon (rated Confident Veteran with three Sherman III tanks and one Firefly VC tank at **C**)

### AMBUSH

Anti-tank Platoon (with four 6 pdr guns)  
Assault Anti-tank Battery (SP), Royal Artillery (with two M10 (3") SP)

### DELAYED AND SCATTERED RESERVES

Rifle Platoon (at full strength)  
Independent Armoured Platoon (as above)  
Assault Field Battery (SP), Royal Artillery (with eight Priest self-propelled guns)

Lieutenant Colonel Maurice's Kings Own Shropshire Light Infantry led the push by 3<sup>rd</sup> Division's 185 Brigade to Caen on the afternoon of D-Day. After taking Beuville and Bieville, W and Y Companies (the KSLI used W, X, Y, and Z rather than the more usual A, B, C, and D for their companies) set out for Lebissey. This village was reported to

be lightly held, however the Panzergrenadiers of 125. *Panzergrenadierregiment* had just arrived there prior to their own attack. After halting at a tank obstacle, the Shropshires were preparing for another attack just as the first German tanks appeared over the ridge. Their tanks and anti-tank guns destroyed the leading German tanks as more approached.

## TERRAIN

The terrain behind Sword Beach is open fields. There are no fences or hedges to break up the wide open spaces. Even the crops are still young, barely knee high, giving no cover.

The low ridges are tall enough to hide a tank, with gentle slopes that provide no obstacle to movement.

However, the wooded stream between Bieville and Lebisey has been transformed into a tank obstacle for German training exercises. It is rated as Very Difficult Going.

The villages of Beuville, Bieville and Lebisey are set amongst orchards and woods and bounded by Bocage hedgerows. The hedgerows are tall, far too tall to be seen over from the ridges, and gave the villages the appearance of woods from a distance.

The roads were wider than in the western part of Normandy and allow vehicles to manoeuvre normally and pass other vehicles if need be.

## BOCAGE HEDGEROWS

All hedgerows on the table are Bocage hedgerows. These are taller than a tank, Very Difficult Going, and provide Bulletproof Cover to troops sheltering behind them. Teams must start adjacent to a Bocage hedgerow to cross it. The full Bocage rules are provided in more detail on pages 58 to 59 of the rulebook.

