

TAC NEWS

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March - April 2002

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CONRATH'S CHARGE

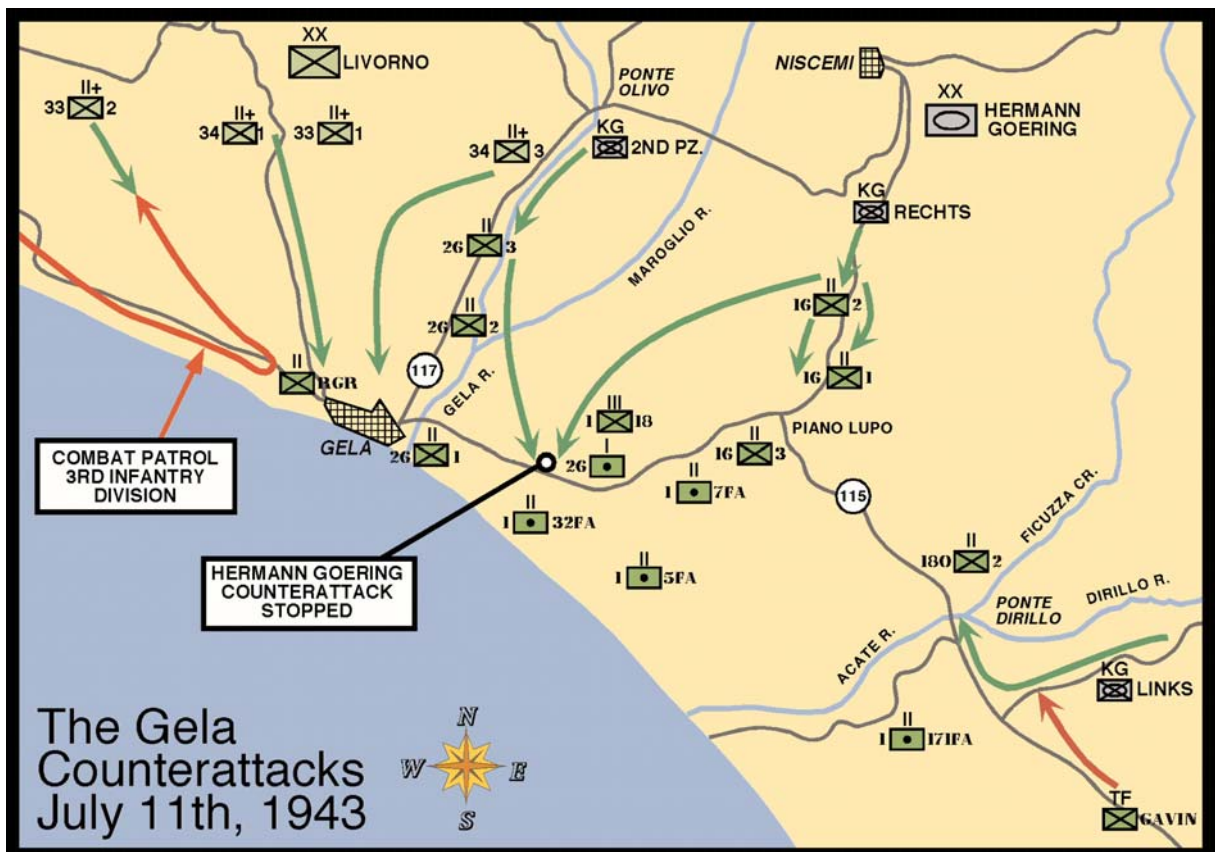
Gela Beachhead - Sicily - 11 July 1943

Operation Husky", the Allied invasion of Sicily, began in the earliest hours of 10 July, 1943 with a "Night Drop" by troopers of the U.S. 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment and British 1st Airborne Division. Their objectives were to seize vital road junctions and bridges, paving the way for the amphibious assault the following morning. The Allied invasion forces consisted of the British 8th Army, landing on the southwestern corner of the Sicilian coast, and the U.S. 7th Army, landing about 30-40 miles west of the British.

Three infantry divisions of the U.S. 2nd Corps conducted the American landings. The 3rd Infantry Division, reinforced by the 3rd Ranger Battalion, formed the right flank of the 2nd Corps beachhead. The division came ashore east and west of the port town of Licata, quickly secured the town, and pushed inland against weak opposition. The 45th Infantry Division,

whose landing beaches were spread out for over twelve miles east the Acate River, formed the right wing of the 2nd Corps beachhead. The division's 157th and 179th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) landed against little resistance, moved inland, and made contact with scattered elements of the 2nd and 3rd battalions of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment. The division's 180th RCT came ashore furthest west, near the Acate River,

and came under attack by elements of the Hermann Goring Division on D+1. The 1st Infantry Division, commanded by Maj. General Terry Allen and augmented by the 1st and 4th Ranger Battalions, landed at the port of Gela, forming the center of the 2nd Corps beachhead. Although elements of the both the Italian Livorno and German Hermann Goring Divisions launched abortive counterattacks on D-Day against the 1st Infantry Division's beachhead,



the real threats came on D+1.

Of all Italian divisions stationed on Sicily, the Livorno Division was the only one at 100% of its authorized strength in personnel and equipment at the time of the landings. Mobile Group E, a battalion sized unit equipped with obsolete French light tanks, stationed in the vicinity of the Gela landings, would provide armored support for the Livorno Division. The Hermann Goering Division, commanded by Lt. General Paul Conrath, was still rebuilding its component units after suffering severe losses in Tunisia. The division's infantry strength was well below the minimum necessary for effective performance. It had also lost many leaders at both battalion and regimental levels. In addition, the division had several units attached to "Group Schmalz", stationed in eastern Sicily. However, the division's panzer battalions were at full strength with a total of 80-90 Mark III and Mark IV medium tanks and, a full strength Tiger tank company from the 215th Heavy Panzer Battalion was attached to the division.

Axis plans for the D+1 counterattacks involved several battle-groups from the Livorno and Hermann Goering Divisions converging on the American beachhead simultaneously. Due to poor communications, the separate counterattacks were uncoordinated. The Livorno Division attacked from the northwest in three separate columns. A combat patrol from the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division, attempting to establish contact with the 1st Infantry Division, repelled the westernmost column. Intense fire from U.S. troops in Gela and naval gunfire provided by the U.S.S. *Savannah*, which pumped out more than 500 rounds of 6-inch high explosive shells, decimated the other

two Livorno Division columns and sent them reeling. On the eastern perimeter of the Gela beachhead, "Kampfgruppe (KG) Links" attacked west from Biscari intending to link up with the other two Hermann Goering Division columns. Consisting of two battalions of panzergrenadiers and the Tiger tank company, KG Links overran elements of the 180th RCT and a handful of paratroopers near Ponte Dirillo. Reinforcements in the form of a scratch force of paratroopers, infantry, and armor under command of Colonel James Gavin were successful in repulsing this column.

Despite the determined Axis attacks on the eastern and western flanks of the beachhead, the greatest danger on D+1 came from the 2nd Panzer Battalion KG and "KG Rechts" from the Hermann Goering Division. Both units consisted of a panzer battalion reinforced with elements of the divisional reconnaissance and pioneer battalions fighting as infantry. Artillery support was provided by 100mm guns and 105mm howitzers located to the North, near Niscemi. KG Rechts advanced south towards Piano Lupo, where it ran headlong into the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 16th RCT near Casa del Priolo. Supported by the 105mm howitzers of the 7th Field Artillery Battalion and regimental anti-tank guns, the 16th RCT eventually checked KG Rechts drive north of Piano Lupo. Frustrated in his attempts to break through on this front, Conrath ordered most of Recht's column to bypass the enemy positions and sweep west and join the 2nd Panzer Battalion column on the Gela Plain. Meanwhile, the 2nd Panzer Battalion KG escaped serious damage from U.S. naval gunfire and advanced from the northwest towards the Gela beachhead.

Pushing south, both *kampfgruppen* were able to bring fire to bear against the supply dumps and landing craft scattered along the beach. The only U.S. forces standing between them and disaster were the 18th RCT and the regimental cannon company from the 16th RCT. Just as the Germans felt that victory was within their grasp, the 32nd Field Artillery Battalion landed in DUKWs, advanced up the sand dunes, deployed their 105mm howitzers, and commenced firing over open sights at the German armor. Joining them were elements of the 41st Armored Infantry Regiment and a handful of Shermans that managed to finally make it off the beach. The German attack was halted just 2000 yards north of the high tide line. After losing about a third of their armored strength, the Hermann Goering tankers had had enough and decided to withdraw under increasingly destructive American fire. Although the retreat never deteriorated into a rout, Conrath was unable to resume the attack and ordered his units back to their original positions south of Niscemi.

There were several reasons for the Hermann Goering Division's failure on July 11th. First, their attacks were largely uncoordinated due to poor communications. Second, was the effectiveness of American artillery units employing both direct and indirect fire. Third, and perhaps most important, the Germans had underestimated the resolve of the American units facing them. The units they had mauled at Kasserine Pass the previous winter had taken their costly battle experience and developed it into a battle-field professionalism worthy of respect.

by George Chrestensen

Conrath's Charge

Gela Beachhead - Sicily - 11 July 1943

Conrath's Charge depicts the furious counterattack by the two western kampfguppen of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division against elements of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division on the outskirts of the Sicilian port of Gela on 11 July 1943. The U.S. forces, comprising elements of the 18th Regimental Combat Team of the 1st Infantry Division, was reinforced during the battle by a battalion of 105mm howitzers, elements of the 41st Armored Infantry, and a handful of M4 Shermans from the 2nd U.S. Armored Division.



Germans

Elements

Hermann Goering Division

Cohesion
15



Americans

Elements, 18th

Regimental Combat Team,
1st Infantry Division

Cohesion
16

INITIAL FORCES

GROUP 1 (2nd Pz Bttn. *Kampfgruppe*, Hermann Goering Div)

2nd Panzer Battalion

Battalion HQ: 1 x PzIVf2 (FO)
#1 Co: 4 x PzIVf2
#2 Co: 3 x PzIVf2
#3 Co: 4 x PzIIIj
1 x SdKfz7/37mm AA

Hermann Goering Recon Battalion (-)

Battalion HQ: 1 x Headquarters (FO), 1 x 251/1 Halftrack
#1 Co: 2 x 250/1 Halftrack, 1 x 250/10 Halftrack, 1 x 250/8 Halftrack, 3 x Recon Infantry

#2 Co: 4 x 250/9 Halftrack (R), 1 X 250/1 Halftrack (R)
#3 Co: 1 x 50mm ATG, 1 x 75mm Infantry Gun (1),
2 x Light Tractor

1 x Forward Observer (May be assigned to a stand of the player's choice)

Elements, Hermann Goering Pioneer Battalion (-)

#1 Co: 3 x 43' Engineer Infantry,
1 x Infantry Support, 4 x Light Truck
#2 Co: 3 x 43' Engineer Infantry,
1 x Infantry Support, 4 x Light Truck

GROUP 2 (Kampfgruppe Rechts, Hermann Goering Div)

Command Center 1 x GHQ (-1) (FO), 1 x Light Truck

1st Panzer Battalion (-)

Battalion HQ: 1 x PzIVf2 (FO)
#1 Co: 4 x PzIVf2
#2 Co: 3 x PzIIIj

Elements, Hermann Goering Recon Battalion
2 X 250/1 Halftrack, 1 X 250/8 Halftrack,
2 x Recon Infantry

Elements, Hermann Goering Pioneer Battalion
2 x 43' Engineer Infantry, 2 x Light Truck

OFF-BOARD ARTILLERY: Located off the north edge of map.
4 x 105mm How (2)
1 x 100mm Gun (2)

INITIAL FORCES: (see sketch map)

The American player deploys his units before play begins

Command Center 1 x GHQ (+1) (FO), 1 x Light Truck

1st Battalion

Battalion HQ: 1 x HQ (FO), 2 x Light Truck
#1 Co: 3 x '43 Infantry, 1 x Infantry Support
#2 Co: 3 x '43 Infantry, 1 x Infantry Support
#3 Co: 2 x '43 Infantry
Support Co: 2 x Infantry Support, 1 x 81mm Mortar (3),
1 x 57mm A/T Gun, 1 x Light Truck

2nd Battalion

Battalion HQ: 1 x HQ (FO), 2 x Light Truck
#1 Co: 3 x '43 Infantry, 1 x Infantry Support
#2 Co: 3 x '43 Infantry, 1 x Infantry Support
#3 Co: 3 x '43 Infantry
Support Co: 2 x Infantry Support,
1 x 57mm A/T Gun, 1 x Truck

16th RCT Cannon Company 1 x 105mm How (3)

Field Works: 34 x Light Improved Positions

REINFORCEMENTS Arrive Turn 3: southwest edge of map
32nd Field Artillery Battalion 3 x 105mm How (2)
3 x DUKW

(Note: The Howitzers are carried in the DUKWs, not towed behind)

REINFORCEMENTS Arrive Turn 6: southwest edge of map
Elements, 41st Armored Infantry Regiment, 2nd U.S. Arm. Div.

Battalion HQ: 1 x HQ (FO), 1 x 57mm A/T Gun,
2 x M3 Halftrack
#1 Co: 3 x 43' Infantry, 3 x M3 Halftrack, 1 x M4 Sherman
#2 Co: 3 x 43' Infantry, 3 x M3 Halftrack

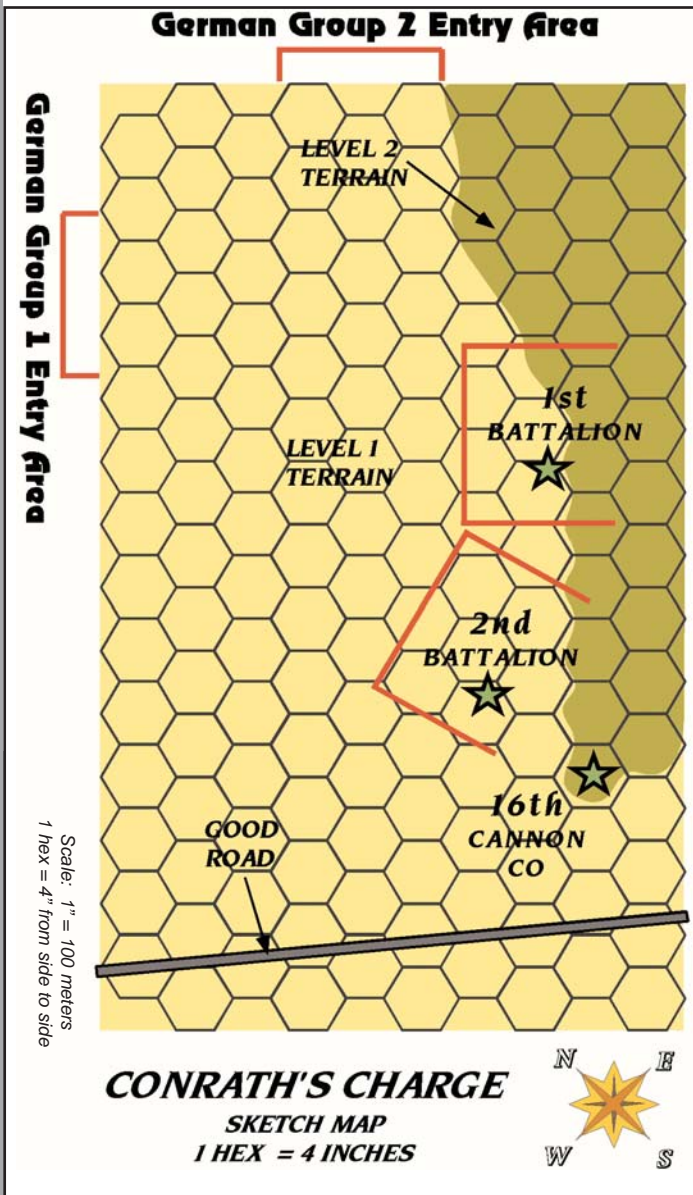
SPECIAL RULES

Optional rules to be used:

- 12.1 The Hot Shot!
- 12.2 The Communications Breakdown!

TERRAIN SUGGESTIONS:

- The map should be approximately 30" (East to West) x 60" (North to South)
- Terrain is open: Maximum sighting distance = 30"
- The road running East to West is a "Good" Road



VICTORY CONDITIONS:

German Victory:

Exit at least twelve (12) or more armed stands (empty truck and tractor stands do not count!) off the south edge of the map by the end of the scenario. The exiting stands may be Suppressed and/or Disorganized.

American Victory:

Eliminate 1/3 or more of the armed German stands before the German player achieves his victory conditions. Once again, empty truck and tractor stands do not count towards this total.

SCENARIO LENGTH: 12 TURNS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This is a short list of materials available on the battles for the Gela Beachheads. Each source listed below will help in understanding the battles fought on Sicilian soil in July of 1943.

1. Bitter Victory, Carlo D'Este, Harper Perennial, 1988.
2. U.S. Army in World War II - Mediterranean Theatre of Operations - Sicily and the Surrender of Italy, Lt. Col. Albert N. Garland and Howard McGraw Smyth, Center of Military History - United States Army, 1977.
3. The Battle of Sicily, Samuel W. Mircham Jr. and Friedrich von Stauffenberg, Orion Books, 1991.
4. Sicily: Whose Victory?, Martin Blumenson, Ballantine, 1968.
5. History of United States Naval Operations in World War II - Volume IX - Sicily-Salerno-Anzio, Samuel Eliot Morison, Castle Books, 1954.
6. Handbook on German Military Forces, U.S. War Department, Louisiana State University Press, 1990.

OPTIONS

1. U.S. truck units are optional and may be of any type
2. Infantry support tank platoons are optional and may be any of the following:
 - M5 Stuart
 - M4 Sherman
 - M4A4 (76) Sherman

SPECIAL UNITS

Vehicle/weapon	Points	Firepower AP / HE	Range AP / HE	Defense [armoured]	Speed W/T/F	Cargo Capacity	Transport Requirement
German Recon Infantry	9	1/3	1/5	6**	4F	-	8