

The battle of Bir Bagahr

A Western Desert WWII scenario

by Bart Veters for the Schild en Vriend Gentlemen's wargames society

Introduction

This scenario is one representing a staple military operation: a deliberate assault on a defended position. In this case, it is a (fictional) attack of Commonwealth troops against an Italo-German position in the Western Desert in mid to late 1941.

The Axis are defending the area around the village of Bir Bagahr which fronts the only gap in an escarpment for miles around. The Commonwealth has chosen to attack through this gap in order to hook behind the Axis positions.

This scenario was written with Blitzkrieg Commander rules in mind.

Umpire notes

On the following pages you will find the hand outs for both players' sides.

They include a general introduction, orders of battle and a photograph of the table for the players to map their deployments and/or preplanned artillery strikes on.

The photographs also give an idea as to the layout of the table. The game as laid out in the photograph was played on a 2x1.5m table. The main features that need to be represented are Bir Baghar itself (the four-block village west of the ridge), the ridge and the large arc of barbed wire. The lichen on various places on the table represent areas of sparse desert shrub and were classed as low area terrain (little effect on movement or cover). The two rocky areas on the bottom of the picture (North in the scenario) represent the escarpment and are impassible to all troops.

The Axis troops use hidden deployment, only being put on the table when moving or firing or when they are spotted by the enemy. The

Axis player(s) should mark their deployment down to company level on their map / photograph. There is no need to note the location of individual platoons within the company position.

A number of special scenario rules are used in this scenario. They are listed in the 'Coordinating Instructions' sections of both players' briefings.

Finally, although the OOBs do not mention this, both sides have enough trucks to transport every unit.



Fig.1 A few outlying buildings burn after a British artillery shoot. This is an actual in game photo from our game with this scenario.

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Axis player briefing

Situation

You are Major Guisepppe Barbieri, commanding a composite battlegroup of the Trieste Motorized division, Il Duce's finest. You have been stationed in the Bir Bagahr area, which is instrumental in protecting the strategic flank of the Axis positions in Cyrenaica. The enemy is expected to open a new offensive and you are certain that your command will come under attack, as you block access to the only way through the coastal escarpment for vehicles.

With the limited resources at your disposal, you have dug in your troops as best as you can, but you feel that a lot more could have been done. Unfortunately, this is the second year of a long and strenuous campaign and it seems resources are stretched a bit thin.

Luckily, you have been promised the support of the army reserve, a German armoured Kampfgruppe led by a Major Stacheldraht, should you need it. You have no idea of the strength of this battlegroup however, nor how near to the front it is stationed.

Orders

You are to defend the Bir Bagahr area with the aim of denying the enemy the use of the gap in the escarpment.

Coordinating Instructions

Your position is protected by wire, as indicated on the map. You may not move the wire.

Before the game starts, you may reassign the AT guns in the Bersaglieri battalions to either another battalion or to the CiC. This reassignment is permanent for the duration of the game. If you assign an AT gun to another HQ (not the CiC), it uses that HQ's command rolls and automatically causes a -1 on that HQ's CV for all command rolls that include the AT gun. If you assign an

AT gun to the CiC, the -1 penalty does not apply -- the risk of ending your turn is deemed bad enough.

The Semovente company may start the game in a special 'reserve'

status. This means it is not attached to any HQ yet. When you wish to activate it, the CiC needs to make a successful command roll (no modifiers) and designate an HQ or himself for the Semovente battalion. The Semovente battalion then uses the command rolls of its new HQ. As long as it has not fired yet and is moving closer to its new HQ, the penalty for command distance is not applied for the Semovente company. Once it does anything else besides moving closer to its HQ, the penalty is applied as normal.

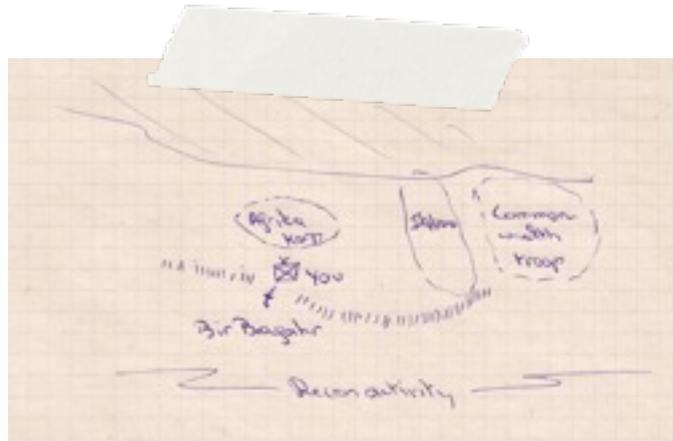
Before the game you may designate 2D6-2 points anywhere on the table. These points have been registered for artillery fire and any fire called in on them is automatically on target without having to roll for deviation.

You may deploy your troops anywhere north of the line through Bagahr and the ridge next to it, inclusive. The recon troops may be deployed anywhere on the board.

Your troops remain concealed until revealed (rules p.6). Use the supplied aerial recon photo of the battlefield to mark your deployment (down to company level)

All of your units except the recon elements (two Motorcycle platoons & 1 AB-41 platoon) count as being dug in until they move.

The recon elements may be deployed anywhere on the table. They are also allowed to pass through the wire



Sketch by your Corps commander of the operational situation

anywhere at no cost as long as they are not under fire by the enemy when they do so (it is assumed that they know where removable 'gates' are in the wire)

To call in KG Stacheldraht, you need to make a successful command roll. Once you do, KG Stacheldraht will arrive in 1D3 turns. KG Stacheldraht may enter anywhere on the northern edge of the table using Mobile Deployment (rules p.42).

OOB

See attached data sheets.

Your command consists of the following major components:

- 3rd Bersaglieri Regiment
 - 1st Battalion
 - 3rd Battalion
- 123rd Infantry Regiment
 - 2nd Battalion
- 123rd Semovente Company

Victory Conditions

You win if at the end of the wargames evening, you remain in a position to contest passage of the escarpment gap.

Commanding officer								
Major Barbieri	CO (CV 8)	1	60	-	3/30	-	6	6
3rd Bersaglieri Regiment, 1st battalion								
	HQ (CV 7)	1	40	-	2/30	-	4	6
Company 1	Infantry	3	10	-	3/30	4	6	-
Company 2	Infantry	3	10	-	3/30	4	6	-
AT Company	47mm AT gun	2	10	2/50	1/60	2	5	-
3rd Bersaglieri Regiment, 3rd battalion								
	HQ (CV 7)	1	40	-	2/30	-	4	6
Company 1	Infantry	3	10	-	3/30	4	6	-
Company 2	Infantry	3	10	-	3/30	4	6	-
AT Company	47mm AT gun	2	10	2/50	1/60	2	5	-
123rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Battalion								
	HQ (CV 7)	1	40	-	2/30	-	4	6
Company 1	Infantry	3	10	-	3/30	4	6	-
Company 2	Infantry	3	10	-	3/30	4	6	-
Company 3	Infantry	3	10	-	3/30	4	6	-
Support	81mm mortar	1	10	3/120	3/120	2	5	-
	MMG	1	10	-	3/60	2	5	-
Attachments								
Semovente company	Semovente 47	3	20	2/50	1/60	3	3	6
Recon	AB/41 Armored car	1	20	1/30	1/60	2	3	6
	Motorcycle Infantry	2	25	-	3/30	4	3	-
Divisional artillery								
Observer	FAO (CV 6)	1	40	-	-	-	4	6
Battery 1 (off table)	100mm artillery	3	-	3	3	-	3	-

Commanding officer								
Major Stacheldraht	HQ (CV 8)	1	60	-	3/30	-	6	6
Tank Battalion (-)								
Medium company	Pz III	2	20	2/50	2/60	3	4	6
Heavy company	Pz IV	2	20	2/40	3/80	3	4	5
Panzergranadier Company								
	Infantry	3	10	-	3/30	4	6	-
	Halftrack	3	25	-	1/40	2	3	6



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Commonwealth player briefing

Situation

You are Brigadier General Sir Alfred Count Boddington-Bass. You have been given command of a battlegroup composed of troops of 7th Armoured Division and 22nd Guards brigade and have been given the honour of being the vanguard of XXX Corps in its latest attack against the Axis troops in Cyrenaica.

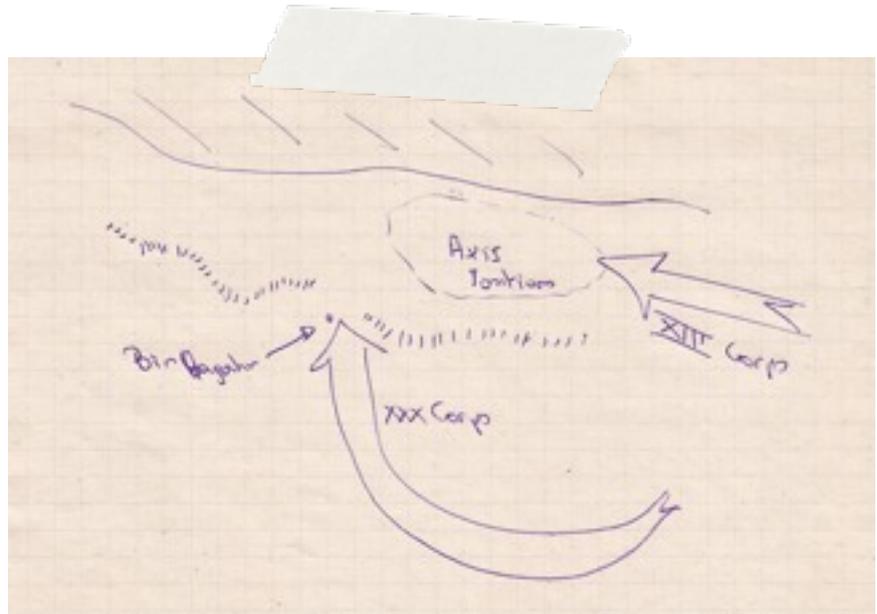
While XIII corps will attack the enemy frontally along the coast, XXX corps will swing out into the desert and outflank the enemy far to the west of the front line positions.

The initial focal point for XXX corps' attack is Lonely Ridge and the village of Bir Bagahr which dominate the approach to a gap in the escarpment which when forced will enable XXX Corps to debouch onto the plain behind the Axis line and force the Axis troops out of their position.

Your command has been given the task to open this gap for the rest of XXX Corps.

Orders

You are to defeat Axis troops in the area Bir Bagahr and establish a open the passage through the escarpment behind.



Sketch by your Corps commander of the operational situation

Coordinating Instructions

Your troops enter the southern edge of the table using mobile deployment rules. One of your tank battalions (your choice) may use flank deployment to enter the table on the east or west edges, up to the line formed by Bir Bagahr and the neighbouring ridge. (see Flank Deployment rules on p. 42)

Your artillery assets and air sorties must be preplanned before the start of the game. You can use the

provided aerial recon photograph to plan these. Write a note listing: asset, turn of fire, location of fire and number of guns firing on that shoot.

Enemy situation

According to Corps G2, the area is held by elements of the Italian Trieste Motorized Division in regiment strength at most. No German elements have been identified in the area.

OOB

See attached data sheets.

Your command consists of the following major elements:

22nd Guards Brigade
3rd battalion, Coldstream Guards
9th battalion Rifle brigade

2nd Royal Gloucestershire Hussars
8th Hussars

Victory objectives

At the end of the wargame evening, you will be judged the winner if you have clear control of the gap in the escarpment and there are no significant enemy elements remaining in the Bir Bagahr area.



Commanding officer								
General Count	CO (CV 9)	1	60	-	3/30	-	6	6
Boddington-Bass								
3rd Battalion, Coldstream Guards								
Battalion HQ	HQ (CV 8)	1	40	-	2/30	-	4	6
	3" mortar	1	10	2/80	2/80	2	5	-
Company 1	Infantry	2	10	-	3/30	4	6	-
	HMG	1	10	-	3/60	2	5	-
	Carrier platoon	1	20	1/20	3/30	2	3	6
Company 2	Infantry	2	10	-	3/30	4	6	-
	HMG	1	10	-	3/60	2	5	-
	Carrier platoon	1	20	1/20	3/30	2	3	6
Company 3	Infantry	2	10	-	3/30	4	6	-
	HMG	1	10	-	3/60	2	5	-
	Carrier platoon	1	20	1/20	3/30	2	3	6
AT Company	2pdr	2	5	2/50	-	2	5	-
9th Battalion, The Rifle Brigade								
Battalion HQ	HQ (CV 8)	1	40	-	2/30	-	4	6
	3" mortar	1	10	2/80	2/80	2	5	-
	HMG	1	10	-	3/60	2	5	-
Company 1	Infantry	3	10	-	3/30	4	6	-
Company 2	Infantry	3	10	-	3/30	4	6	-
Company 3	Infantry	3	10	-	3/30	4	6	-
AT Company	2pdr	2	5	2/50	-	2	5	-
2nd Royal Gloucestershire Hussars								
	HQ (CV 8)	1	40	-	2/30	-	4	6
Troop 1	Crusader II tank	3	25	2/50	1/40	3	4	6
Troop 2	Crusader II tank	3	25	2/50	1/40	3	4	6
Troop 3	Crusader II tank	3	25	2/50	1/40	3	4	6
8th Hussars								
	HQ (CV 8)	1	40	-	2/30	-	4	6
Troop 1	Honey tank	3	25	2/40	1/40	2	3	6
Troop 2	Honey tank	3	25	2/40	1/40	2	3	6
Troop 3	Honey tank	3	25	2/40	1/40	2	3	6
Divisional artillery								
Observer	FAO (CV 8)	1	40	-	-	-	4	6
Field battery	25 pdr field artillery	3	-	3	3	-	4	-
Medium battery	6" artillery	3	-	4	4	-	3	
	HE Assets	12						
	Smoke assets	6						

RAF 123rd Squadron								
Air Controller	FAC (CV 7)	1	40	-	-	-	4	6
	Hurricane	1	-	4	4	-	4	-
	Sorties	4						
King's Dragoon Guards								
Recce	Marmon-Herrington	3	20	1/20	1/40	2	3	6

