

THE 1ST SPECIAL SERVICE FORCE IN ITALY

“... the Force never in all its service yielded an inch of ground nor left a battle with an indecisive conclusion. The Force won everything it fought for...”

The Independent Record, Helena, Montana – Sunday, August 7, 1955, page 6

ITALY, OCTOBER 1943 TO JUNE 1944

Popularly known as the Devil's Brigade, the 1st Special Service Force (FSSF) was a joint American-Canadian commando-style unit originally raised to operate in Norway in an attempt to prevent the Germans from obtaining that country's critical raw materials and to knockout strategic targets such as hydroelectric power plants.

Originally conceived as a three-battalion force, initially 1600 volunteers were carefully selected with preference being given to men previously employed as lumberjacks, forest rangers, hunters, game wardens and the like. Approximately one-third of the unit's enlisted personnel were drawn from the Canadian Army and approximately half the officers and NCOs were Canadians. The force was activated on 20 July 1942 at Fort Harrison near Helena, Montana under the command of LTC Robert T. Frederick.

The initial training period was rigorous and intensive. Training included stealth tactics, hand-to-hand fighting, demolitions, amphibious warfare, rock climbing, mountain combat, winter operations, skiing, and parachute jumping. Every man in the force was a qualified parachutist.

The originally planned mission to Norway was eventually cancelled. In August 1943 the FSSF participated in the unopposed retaking of several islands in the Aleutians.

In October 1943, the FSSF was in Italy and assigned to the US Fifth Army. Previously a twelve-day attack on Mount la Difense had been stopped cold by the veteran German 104. *Panzergranadier* Regiment. Attacking the peak from the rear up the steep cliffs, the FSSF cleared the summit (a feat immortalized in the 1968 motion picture *The Devil's Brigade*). That was followed by Monte la Remetanea. It was in their next battle at Mount Sammucro that the Germans tagged them with the nickname of the “Black Devils” (because the brigade's members smeared their faces with black boot polish for their covert night operations).

Radicosa, Mount Majo and Monte Vischiataro followed in January 1944 but by 8 January the 1800 men making up the initial combat strength of the FSSF had dropped to just over 500 effectives.

At the end of January 1944, the FSSF went into the Anzio beachhead, where for the next 90 days they occupied defensive positions opposite the crack Hermann Goring Panzer Division and often terrorized the Germans with their nighttime raids. Replacements arrived during that period and on 23 May 1944 they moved forward again, leading the advance of the US VI Corps towards Rome. On 4 June the FSSF was the first unit sent into Rome with the assignment of capturing seven essential bridges intact. By the time the parades and celebrations started, the FSSF was

again in combat along the twenty-mile front of the Tiber River.

FRANCE, AUGUST 1944 TO DECEMBER 1944

Moved out of the line for refitting, they were soon back to their old tricks, nearly every man was seen driving his own jeep, each of which had been liberated from some other unit. On 23 June, Frederick was promoted and transferred to command the 1st Airborne Task Force. The FSSF then began training for its last real combat role ~ the invasion of southern France on 15 August 1944. The FSSF's assignment was to seize two of three small islands between Toulon and the Riviera where there were ancient forts that the Germans had strengthened. By taking them, the FSSF would protect the invasion force from enfilading fire from the left flank.

With a little help from the Navy and the U.S. Army Air Forces, the FSSF men crawled, charged, and blasted their way into the German fortifications on Ile de Port-Cros and Ile du Levant, losing many good men due to unnecessary acts of bravado. “The men were too courageous,” one FSSF man said later. “They had a mistaken concept that courage and physical fitness were all that was necessary.”

While the rest of the Seventh Army moved northward through southeastern France the FSSF, however, was sent eastward along the Riviera against substandard, rear-guard enemy units, finally taking up positions along the French-Italian border. There the men stayed, their prodigious fighting talents wasting away as the war moved on.

The FSSF's days were numbered. Without Frederick at the helm, and unable to find the calibre of men necessary to fill out its diminished ranks and carry on its glorious tradition, the FSSF was doomed to be disbanded on 5 December, its officers and men reassigned to other units.

In December 1944 Frederick was made commanding general of the 45th Infantry Division, which was locked in fighting in the Vosges Mountains, close to the German border. Wounded nine times during the war, Frederick was praised by Churchill as “the greatest fighting general of all time.”



THE FSSF IN FLAMES OF WAR

The FSSF was outfitted entirely by the US with uniforms, equipment and weapons. The force consisted of three combat regiments and an integral service battalion (a unique concept at the time of its introduction in 1942, it consisted of a maintenance company, a service company, a military police platoon and forward air controllers). The goal was to have all non-combat personnel at the FSSF head-quarters.

Each combat regiment was approximately 600 strong and was divided into two combat battalions, each of three

companies. Each Company consisted of a headquarters platoon and three combat platoons. Each combat platoon had a platoon HQ and two combat sections. The section was described as being a Staff Sergeant and twelve men including a Johnson Light Machine Gun, a Browning Automatic Rifle, an SMG, a special weapon (bazooka or 60mm Mortar), a M1919A4 Browning LMG (sometimes) and up to eight M1 carbines.

FSSF SPECIAL RULES

The following special rules apply the FSSF. Other US or Canadian special rules do not apply to the FSSF:

I SHALL NEVER FAIL MY COMRADES

The 1st Special Service Force is a close-knit organisation. The Devil's Brigade operated independently and relied on each other for support and the companies work closely together.

A FSSF Company never has to take a Company Morale Check for being below half strength. They still take Platoon Morale Checks as normal though.

However, if the total number of destroyed FSSF Platoons (the Combat platoons) exceeds the number still on the table, the FSSF player must roll a die at the start of each turn. On a roll of 3+ the force fights on, heedless of its losses. On any other roll the remaining FSSF commandos withdraw to conserve their remaining strength and the game ends. If there are no remaining FSSF Company Command teams then this roll is automatically failed.

THE FORCE LEADS THE WAY

Aggressively trained for movement in any type of terrain, FSSF infantry make quick time over any terrain.

FSSF infantry teams may move 16"/40cm instead of the normal 12"/30cm when moving At the Double and may move At the Double through both Normal and Difficult Going.

TRAINED MOUNTAIN TROOPS

The FSSF commandos are trained in climbing cliffs and other seemingly impassable obstacles allowing them to go anywhere.

FSSF Infantry and Man-packed Gun team are Mountaineers.

V-42 "FORCE" KNIFE

The FSSF is extensively trained in the Fairbairn-Sykes style

of hand-to-hand combat under their Canadian Commando instructors.

FSSF infantry teams hit on a roll of 2+ in assault combat.

AGGRESSIVE TROOPS

Because of their previous occupations and extensive training, the FSSF soon developed a reputation as aggressive assault troops.

Any FSSF Platoon that becomes pinned down may re-roll its first failed motivation test to become unpinned.

BLACK DEVILS

The FSSF was very aggressive, especially so at night.

In any mission in which either opponent may be the attacker, a player commanding a FSSF Company or Battalion gets a +1 bonus when rolling to determine who will attack. In addition, they may elect to make a night attack when attacking. If they do so, the game starts in Darkness with the night fighting rules in effect.

EXCELLENT COMMUNICATIONS

Like all US trained and equipped troops, Platoon and 2iC Command teams can act as observers and request artillery fire in the same manner as a Company Command team.

UNDER COMMAND

Like all US trained and equipped troops, Company, 2iC and Platoon Command teams do not suffer their normal +1 penalty to range in when calling for artillery bombardments from platoons taken as historical support choices.

FIRE MAP REFERENCE DELTA TANGO

Prior to deployment, some or all of the integral light mortars in a FSSF Company or Battalion may be consolidated under the appropriate 2iC into a single battery for the duration of the engagement.



FSSF COMPANY

INFANTRY COMPANY

A force based around a FSSF Company must contain:

- 1 Company HQ, and
- 2 to 3 FSSF Platoons.

There are no Weapons Platoons available to a FSSF Company.

Support Platoons for a FSSF Company can be:

- 0 to 1 Parachute Pack Howitzer Battery,
- 0 to 1 Parachute Anti-tank Platoon,
- 0 to 1 Ranger Assault Gun Platoon,
- 0 to 1 Recon Platoon or Light Tank Platoon, and
- 0 to 1 Transport Platoon.

You may attach up to **one** Support Platoon to your company for every **two** FSSF Platoons you field.

MOTIVATION AND SKILL



The soldiers of the First Special Service Force are well motivated, tough volunteers. They are lead by many experience veterans. A FSSF Company is **Fearless Trained**.



The 81st Reconnaissance Battalion (detached from the US 1st Armored Division) was assigned to the First Special Service Force to provide recon. The 81st are **Confident Trained**.



The 456th Parachute Artillery Battalion provided the FSSF with gun support with 75mm pack howitzers and 37mm anti-tank guns. They are **Fearless Veteran**.

HEADQUARTERS

1 COMPANY HQ

HEADQUARTERS



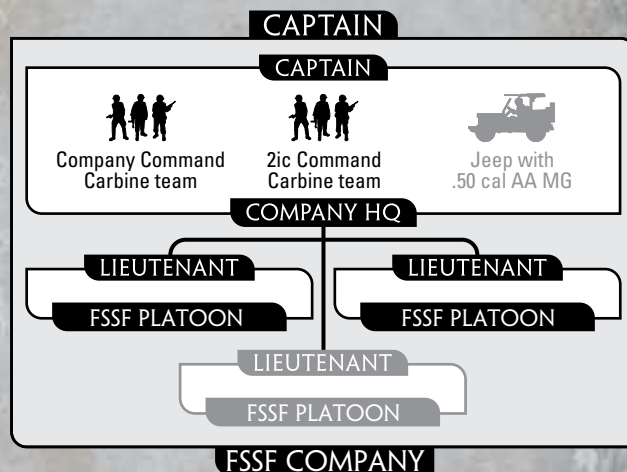
Company HQ

30 points

OPTIONS

- Add Jeep with .50 cal AA MG for +10 points.
- Add up to three Sniper teams for +50 points per team.

Trained in the doctrine of the British Commando the men of a FSSF Company are highly skilled raiders and fighters. They do not have a lot of support, but their high morale and excellent fighting abilities more than make up for their lack of numbers and heavy support.



In *Flames Of War* you can field multiple companies in the same force. This is particularly useful with the FSSF as a FSSF company is quite small and they usually operate in battalions of up to three companies. You should be thinking in terms of fielding multiple FSSF companies in your force.



V-42 "Force" Knife.



COMBAT PLATOONS

2 TO 3 FSSF PLATOONS

PLATOON

HQ Section with:



2 FSSF Sections

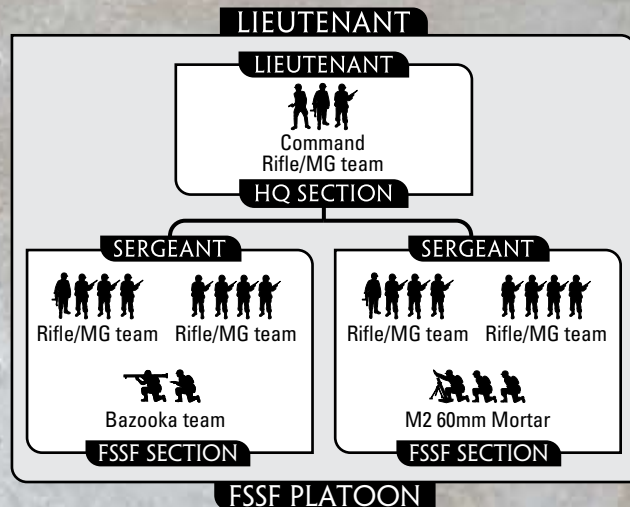
180 points

OPTIONS

- Upgrade the Command Rifle/MG team to a Command SMG team at no cost.

At the core of a FSSF Company are the highly trained individuals that make up the FSSF Platoons. They were selected for their excellence and then provided with an intensive training program in stealth, hand-to-hand fighting, demolitions, amphibious and airborne warfare, mountain terrain and combat, and winter operations.

Once in the thick of the fighting in Italy and France they proved themselves time and time again in all types of combat conditions, be it conducting raids or fighting in the line with other units.



You may replace up to one M2 60mm mortar or Bazooka team in each FSSF Platoon with a Flame-thrower team at the start of the game before deployment.

SUPPORT PLATOONS

0 TO 1 PARACHUTE PACK ARTILLERY BATTERY

HEADQUARTERS



2 Gun Sections

85 points

1 Gun Section

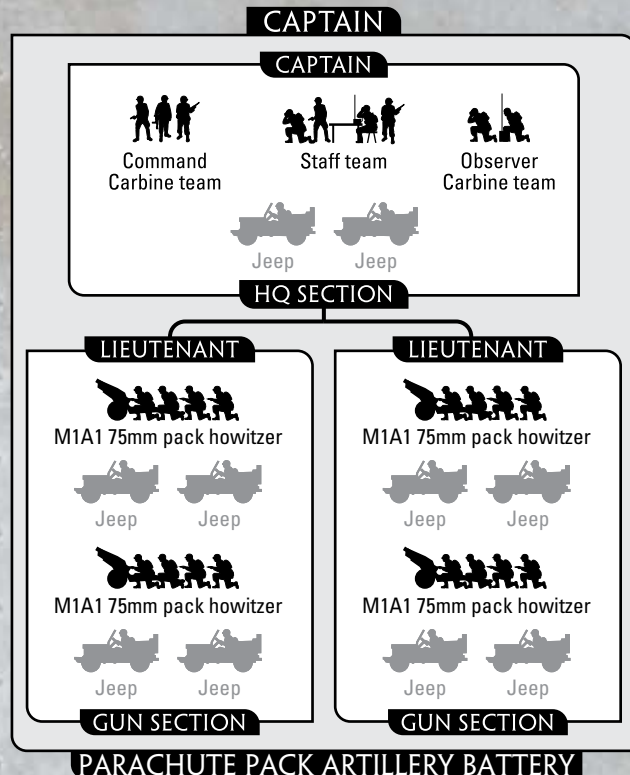
50 points

OPTIONS

- Add Jeeps at no cost.



When the FSSF hit the beach at Anzio they were supported by the 456th Parachute Artillery Battalion who provided three batteries of M1A1 75mm pack howitzers. This force of Parachute artillery was attached to the FSSF on a semi-permanent basis.

The 456th provided vitally needed fire support for the lightly equipped FSSF. The addition of the guns allowed them to conduct offensive operations with assured artillery support.



0 TO 1 PARACHUTE ANTI-TANK PLATOON

HEADQUARTERS

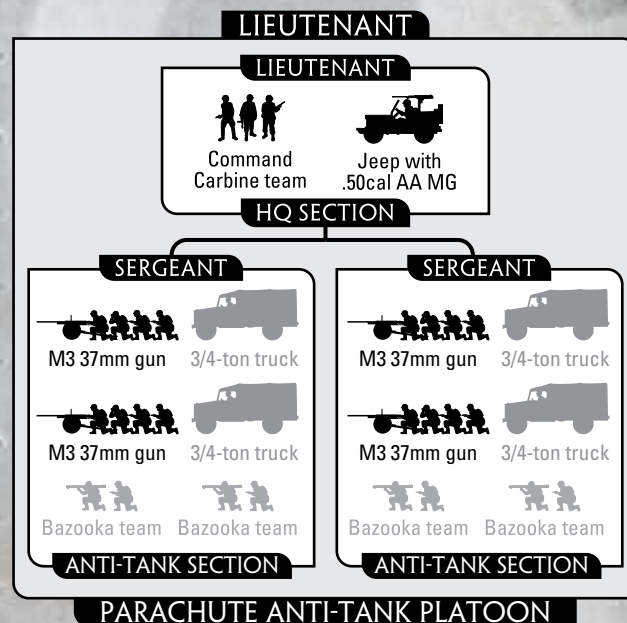
 2 Anti-tank Sections	150 points
 1 Anti-tank Section	85 points

OPTIONS

- Add 3/4-ton trucks at no cost.
- Add Bazooka teams for +20 points per team.




You may only field one Parachute Anti-tank Platoon even if you have more than one FSSF Company in your force.

The 456th Parachute Artillery Battalion also provided a platoon of M3 37mm anti-tank guns. Though only light guns they still proved dangerous to German half-tracks and armoured cars. They could also trouble tanks if given the opportunity to fire at the side armour.



0 TO 1 RANGER ASSAULT GUN PLATOON

PLATOON

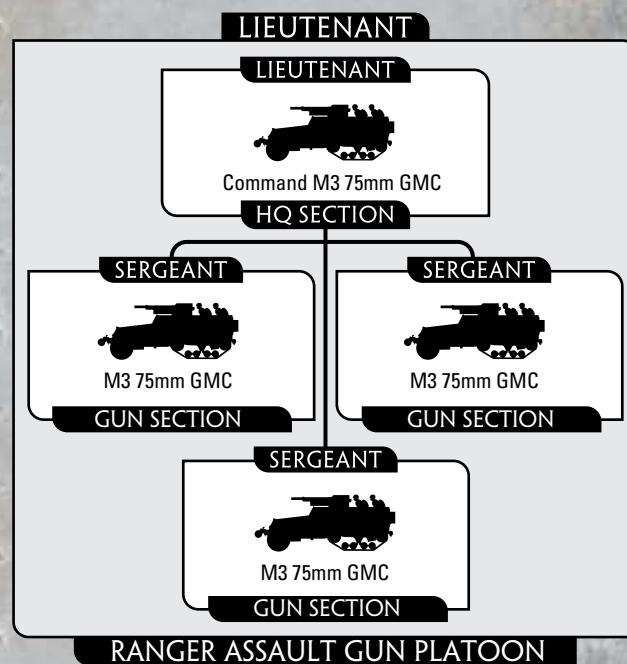
 4 M3 75mm GMC	160 points
 3 M3 75mm GMC	120 points
 2 M3 75mm GMC	80 points

You may only field one Ranger Assault Gun Platoon even if you have more than one FSSF Company in your force.

During the Rangers fighting in Sicily they managed to pick up some M3 75mm GMC tank-destroyers. These were taken over by men of the Cannon Company and put to good use. During Anzio these assault guns were used to support the 1st Special Service Force.

Though they don't have the specialist tank-destroyer training they still made good use of the 75mm guns protecting the FSSF from German tanks and assault guns and giving fire support.

The Ranger Assault Gun Platoon cannot use the Tank Destroyers (Tank Destroyer Doctrine and Seek, Strike, and Destroy) rules of p. 157 of the Flames Of War rulebook.



0 TO 1 RECON PLATOON

PLATOON

HQ Section with:

	1 Recon Section	170 points
	No Recon Section	85 points

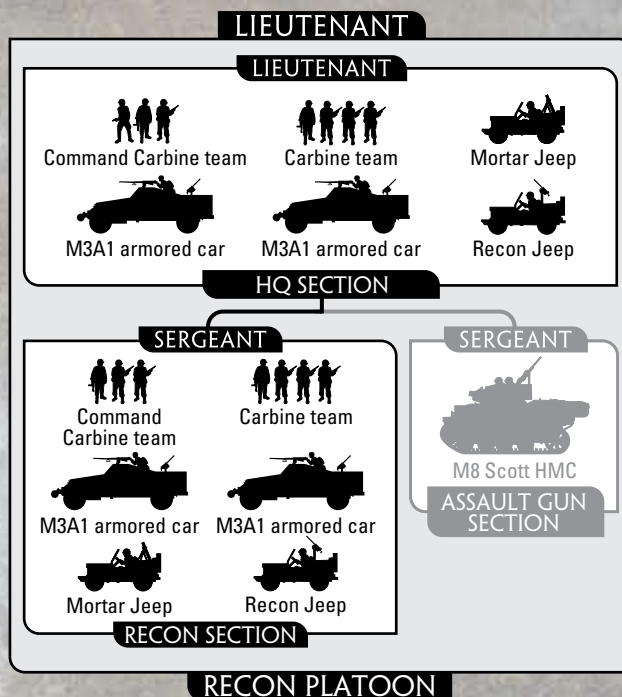
OPTIONS

- Add Assault Gun Section for +30 points.

The 81st Reconnaissance Battalion was assigned to the FSSF on a semi-permanent basis. They were detached from the 1st Armored Division 'Old Ironsides'. Each of the three FSSF Regiments were supported by one Company of the 81st Recon Battalion, so each of the three-company FSSF battalions usually had one recon patrol attached.

They provided the FSSF with the mobile scouting and intelligence that they were unable to do themselves on foot.

A Recon Platoon is a Reconnaissance Platoon.



The HQ Section and Recon Section operate as separate platoons, each with their own Command team. Although its sections count as separate platoons for all other purposes, a Recon Platoon deploys all at the same time as a single platoon. For example, the entire Recon Platoon is treated as a single platoon when calculating the number of platoons held in Ambush or Reserve.

If taken the Assault Gun Section must be attached to the Recon Platoon HQ Section.

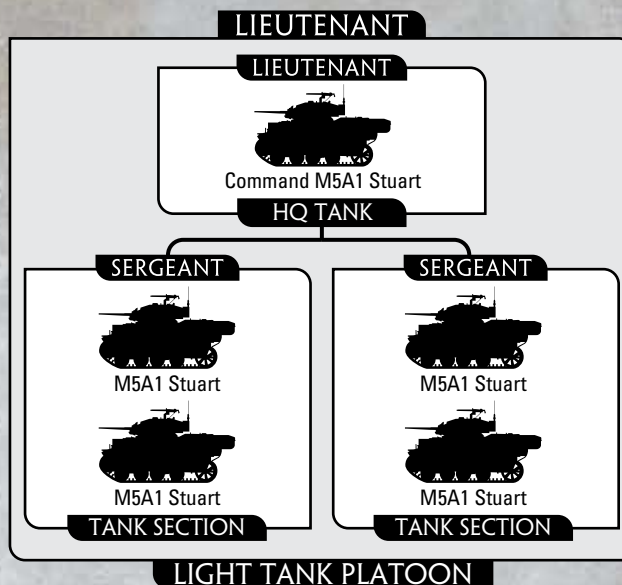
0 TO 1 LIGHT TANK PLATOON

PLATOON

	5 M5A1 Stuart	235 points
	4 M5A1 Stuart	190 points
	3 M5A1 Stuart	145 points

The 81st Reconnaissance Battalion also came with its own complement of M5A1 Stuart light tanks. The battalion had company of 17 light tanks and usually each Reconnaissance Company was assigned a platoon of five M5A1 Stuarts.

These fast light tanks provided an excellent forward probing force when the FSSF is advancing.



AIR SUPPORT

Aircraft	Priority Air Support	Limited Air Support
P38 Lightning	190 points	150 points
P47 Thunderbolt	190 points	150 points

SERGEANT TOMMY PRINCE

Tommy Prince was Canada's most decorated Native American war veteran. Prince served for Canada not only in WWII, but also later during the Korean conflict.

Prince hailed from the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation reserve north of Winnipeg. For many men on the Canadian reserves, like Tommy Prince, military service meant the chance for a job and three square meals. Tommy applied but was turned down several times, despite exceeding the requirements for recruitment. He persisted and finally was accepted on 3 June, 1940. He was assigned to the 1st Field Park Company of the Royal Canadian Engineers. He was soon proving himself as a soldier.

By 1942, Prince was a Sergeant with the Canadian Parachute Battalion. He was posted to the 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion and was among a select group of Canadian soldiers sent to train with Americans with the formation of the 1st Special Service Force.

Prince distinguished himself with the FSSF in Italy and France, using the skills he'd learned growing up as an Ojibway. In Italy, near Anzio, he volunteered to run a communications line 1400 metres to an abandoned farmhouse less than 200 metres from a German artillery emplacement. Prince set up his observation post in the farmhouse and for three days reported on the activity in the German camp.

During his solo watch, Prince's communication line was severed by shelling. Unfazed, the sergeant donned civilian clothing, grabbed a hoe and, in full view of German soldiers, acted like a farmer weeding his crops. He slowly inched his way along the line till he found where it was damaged. Then, pretending to tie his shoelaces, quickly rejoined the wires. His reporting continued and so did the damage to enemy artillery posts. In all, four German positions were destroyed. Prince was awarded the Military Medal. His citation explains, 'Sergeant Prince's courage and utter disregard for personal safety were an inspiration to his fellows and a marked credit to his unit.'

In the summer of 1944, the FSSF entered Southern France. On one mission, Prince walked 70 kilometres across rugged, mountainous terrain deep behind German lines near L'Escarene, going 72 hours without food or water, to locate an enemy bivouac area. He reported back to his unit and led the brigade to the encampment, resulting in the capture of over 1,000 German soldiers. Prince was decorated again for his valour fighting in France and in 1944 was summoned to Buckingham Palace where King George VI presented him with his Military Medal and on behalf of the American President, the United States Silver Star.

With the end of the fighting, Prince was honourably discharged in June of 1945 and returned to his home in Manitoba where he set up a small, but successful business. He married Verna Sinclair, with whom he had five children.



CHARACTERISTICS AND SPECIAL RULES

Sergeant Tommy Prince is a Sniper and a Warrior. He is rated as Fearless Veteran.

A FSSF force may replace a Sniper team with Sergeant Prince for +25 points.

He operates as per the normal rules for Snipers with the following special rules:

Crack Shot: He may re-roll any first failed rolls to hit.

Stalker: His skills were phenomenal. He spent much of his time observing and keeping the lines of communication open. As a Sniper he can also relocate during the battle.

Sergeant Tommy Prince can also act as an Observer for the supporting Parachute Pack Artillery Battery. If he is used as an Observer he may not shoot in the same turn.

He may also be removed from the table at the start of any turn. At the start of each following turn roll a die. On a roll of 5+ he may be placed back on the table as per the Sniper's Hide rule.



FSSF ARSENAL

INFANTRY TEAMS

Team	Range	ROF	Anti-tank	Firepower	Notes
Carbine team	8"/20cm	1	1	6	Automatic rifles.
Rifle team	16"/40cm	1	2	6	Automatic rifles.
Rifle/MG team	16"/40cm	2	2	6	
SMG team	4"/10cm	3	1	6	Full ROF when moving.
Bazooka team	8"/20cm	1	10	5+	Tank assault 4.
Flame-thrower team	4"/10cm	2	-	6	Flame-thrower.
Staff team			cannot shoot		Moves as a Heavy Gun team.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT

Pioneer teams are rated as Tank Assault 3.

GUN TEAMS

Weapon	Mobility	Range	ROF	Anti-tank	Firepower	Notes
M2 60mm mortar	Man-packed	24"/60cm	2	1	3+	Can fire over friendly troops.
<i>Firing bombardments</i>		32"/80cm	-	1	6	
M3 37mm gun	Light	24"/60cm	3	7	4+	Gun shield.
M1A1 75mm pack howitzer	Light	16"/40cm	2	6	3+	Smoke.
<i>Firing bombardments</i>		64"/160cm	-	3	6	Smoke bombardment.

TRANSPORT TEAMS

Vehicle	Mobility	Front	Armour	Top	Equipment and Notes
<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>ROF</i>	<i>Side</i> <i>Anti-tank</i>	<i>Firepower</i>	
Jeep	Jeep	-	-	-	Optional Passenger-fired AA MG or .50 cal AA MG.
Dodge ¾-ton or 1½-ton truck	Wheeled	-	-	-	

TRUCKS

ARMoured PERSONNEL CARRIERS

M3A1 armored car (Recce)	Jeep	1	0	0	.50 cal AA MG, two Passenger-fired AA MG.
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VEHICLE MACHINE-GUNS

<i>Vehicle MG</i>	16"/40cm	3	2	6	<i>ROF 1 if other weapons fire.</i>
.50 cal <i>Vehicle MG</i>	16"/40cm	3	4	5+	<i>ROF 1 if other weapons fire.</i>



TANK TEAMS

Name Weapon	Mobility Range	Front ROF	Armour Side Anti-tank	Top Firepower	Equipment and Notes
TANKS					
M5A1 Stuart M6 37mm gun	Fully-tracked 24"/60cm	4 2	2 7	1 4+	Co-ax MG, Hull MG, AA MG, Light tank. Stabiliser.
ASSAULT GUNS					
M8 Scott HMC M1A1 75mm howitzer Firing bombardments	Fully-tracked 16"/40cm 64"/160cm	3 2 -	2 6 3	0 3+ 6	.50 cal AA MG, Light tank. Smoke. Smoke bombardment.
M3 75mm GMC M1897 75mm gun	Half-tracked 32"/80cm	1 2	0 9	0 3+	Hull mounted, Smoke.
RECONNAISSANCE VEHICLES					
Recon Jeep	Jeep	-	-	-	AA MG.
Mortar Jeep M2 60mm mortar Firing bombardments	Jeep 24"/60cm 32"/80cm	- 2 -	- 1 1	- 3+ 6	Hull-mounted, Portee, Can fire over friendly troops.
VEHICLE MACHINE-GUNS					
Vehicle MG	16"/40cm	3	2	6	ROF 1 if other weapons fire.
.50 cal Vehicle MG	16"/40cm	3	4	5+	ROF 1 if other weapons fire.

AIRCRAFT

Aircraft	Weapon	To Hit	Anti-tank	Firepower	Notes
P38 Lightning	Cannon	3+	7	5+	
	Bombs	4+	5	1+	
P47 Thunderbolt	MG	2+	6	5+	
	Bombs	4+	5	1+	



