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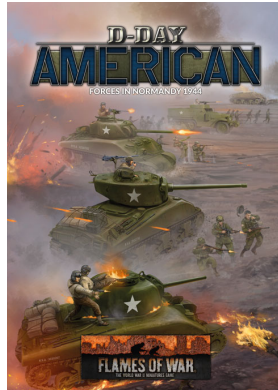
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## Axis of Attack: The Advance to Cerisy Forest

*By Jason Moffatt*

Newly arrived in Normandy, the US 2nd Division is rushed straight into action for the drive inland. Their objective: the high ground beyond Cerisy Forest. The forest itself is a suspected assembly point for enemy counterattack. What opposition will the Americans meet? Can they overcome it in their first taste of battle, and truly prove themselves 'Second to None'?

**June 1944:** The fierce German opposition to the US landings at Omaha Beach had badly disrupted the timetable of General Gerow's V Corps. On D+1, the first troops from the 9th Infantry Regiment, part of Major General Walter M. Robertson's 2nd 'Indian Head' Division, waded ashore near St. Laurent-sur-Mer. Over the next two days they were to be followed by their compatriots from the 38th and 23rd Infantry Regiments. The divisional artillery and transport, along with vital machine-guns and mortars, was slow in unloading but there was no time to lose. On 8 June, Gerow ordered the 2nd Division to take its place in the front-line between the 29th and 1st Divisions for the crucial attack south.

The Division's main objective was the high ground at Cerisy Forest, five miles south of the coast. The heavily wooded slopes would make an ideal assembly point for an enemy counterattack. Already, ominous reports were coming in of the approach of two SS Panzer Divisions from the east. This coupled with the fact that the Litteau Ridge at the southern extremity of the forest commanded the entire beachhead rendered the impending US attack imperative.

The 2nd Division's immediate objective was the village of Trevieres, just south of the Aure River. To the west the valley had been substantially flooded but at Trevieres the river was fordable to infantry. The village itself was heavily fortified and German resistance here was expected to be stiff. General Robertson's plan of attack called for the 38th Regiment to strike directly at Trevieres from the north and west while the 9th Regiment worked their way towards Rubercy, southeast of Trevieres, thus isolating the German position.

On 9 June, the 9th Regiment relieves 1st Division units around Egranville and Mandeville in preparation for the attack. The 38th Regiment crosses the Aure River to strike at Trevieres.



Can these green troops carry the considerable German strongpoint before them? Or will they be stopped in their tracks by the battle-hardened, if disorganised, German forces?

## US Briefing

After months of preparation in Ireland and Wales your unit is finally about to see action for the first time. The march inland to your present position has given you some idea of the reception you will receive. Everywhere there was evidence of the stubborn resistance put up by the German soldiers: a steady stream of casualties, the wreckage of M-4s, sniping from the trees that line the country lanes. You believe your men are ready but where are those damn machine-guns and mortars? And where can you find a radio that works? You'll need every resource at your disposal if you're to make it into that well-defended German HQ at Trevieres. And those woods you can just make out to the south look a long way off through this infernal maze of hedges. But come hell or high water you must get up onto that ridge before the Krauts can mount a counterattack.

## German Briefing

Since the Allied landings three days ago your men have been in almost constant combat. Now you find yourself in command of a hotchpotch of troops from several neighbouring units, hastily thrown together and poorly equipped. The last band of soldiers joined you only a few hours ago, battle-weary and leaderless, bringing with them tales of a large enemy force preparing to attack. The situation seems hopeless but you must hold on. If only your men can just hold Trevieres that will be something. Failing that, deny the enemy the ridge at Cerisy Forest and all may not be lost. Then, perhaps, with a few reinforcements you can strike back at these clumsy American troops and drive them back from where they came!



## Where is the Luftwaffe?

Allied air superiority is total. Not a single German plane can get anywhere near the battlefield.

*The German player may not receive any Air Support for the entire campaign.*



## Situation Report

At the start of the campaign the US forces are jumping off from their assembly point around Egranville, attempting to overcome an enemy strongpoint at Haute Hameau on the route to Rubercy.

*Use the Axis of Attack rules (Axis of Attack Campaigns rules PDF) to play this campaign. The US Player starts the campaign with 5 victory points. The German player starts the campaign with 0 victory points. The first mission is a No Retreat mission fought at Haute Hameau with the US player as the attacker.*

## Terrain

Across the Aure River, the countryside is a checkerboard of small fields bordered by thick hedgerows and narrow lanes: bocage country.

*All battles, except those in the Trevieres sector, are fought on a 4'x4'/120cm x 120cm table using the Bocage rules (see D-Day: British). There is no terrain chart for this campaign, instead construct your battlefields using the terrain guide given for each sector. The entire campaign is fought in bocage country so, unless otherwise specified, remember to liberally cover any open areas on your table with small fields bordered by hedgerows with a few narrow lanes running between them.*

## US Forces

The 23rd Infantry Regiment was still assembling near St. Laurent when General Gerow ordered the V Corps offensive to the south. Consequently, in the 2nd Division zone, the attack was led by the 38th and 9th Infantry Regiments. Initially, the GIs received armoured assistance from the 747th Tank Battalion and the 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion, as well as artillery support from Divisional Artillery assets.

*To represent these forces you could field a US Assault Company or Rifle Company from D-Day American.*

## German Forces

Although almost smashed to pieces by the D-Day landings the shattered remnants of 352. *Infanteriedivision* fight on courageously against the US advance inland. The 2nd Division's attack falls largely upon the woefully under strength and disorganised 916. *Grenadierregiment*. Displaying admirable initiative, local German commanders employ ad hoc *kampfgruppen* to oppose the invaders, pulling together whatever troops and equipment are to hand.



The German troops are no longer fighting from fixed defensive lines of fortification, however, instead using the Normandy terrain to establish strongpoints from which to delay the American advance.

To represent these forces you could field a German Grenadier Company from **Fortress Euope**.

### What If Forces

Alternatively, you could play a "What If" campaign to see what would have happened if different forces had fought for Cerisy Forest and the Litteau Ridge, and use whatever company you have.



### Egranville

Egranville is a small Norman village nestled alongside the road running north from Trevieres to St. Laurent-sur-mer. The ancient looking stone buildings are too scattered and few in number to make for much of a strongpoint, more of a waypoint for troops travelling inland.

#### Victory

If the German player reaches Egranville they have won the campaign. By driving the US forces back across the Aure River they now have a good chance of bottling up the US troops within their own beachhead. The US Army will never capture the Cerisy Forest or the ridge it is perched upon, if they can't even fight their way out of their initial beachhead!

### Haute Hameau

It is no accident that the German troops have chosen this tiny settlement at which to make a stand against the encroaching Americans. Here an old Norman farm with its stone walled courtyard forms an ideal defensive position, commanding, as it does, the neighbouring country lane running south in the direction of Rubercy.

#### Terrain

A narrow hedge-lined road runs across the table lengthways from edge to edge. In the centre of the German player's deployment zone is the farmstead. The farm comprises several stone buildings surrounded by a stonewall encompassing an area large enough to shelter almost an entire infantry company.

#### No Machine-guns, No Mortars

The US attack has been ordered so peremptorily that most 2nd Division units are still without machine-guns and mortars when the attack is launched. The heavier infantry weapons are still being unloaded at Omaha beach. They'll be here in a day or two but that ain't much help when your facing well dug-in Krauts behind hedges, today!

*All US M1917 HMG and all Mortar teams must fight as M1 Grand rifle teams for the duration of this battle.*

#### Outflanking Trevieres

In spite of its unassuming name, the location of Haute Hameau bestows it with significance out of all proportion to its size. If the hasty US advance can be stalled here, the Germans' chances of holding Trevieres will be greatly improved.

*Only a single mission is fought at Haute Hameau, at the outset of the campaign. If the US player loses this mission their efforts to outflank Trevieres have been temporarily thwarted. The US player loses 5 victory points for this unexpected reversal of their fortunes.*

*However, if the US player is victorious here, the outflanking of Trevieres will be completed in a timely fashion, severely undermining the German defense of that village.*

*Whatever the outcome of the mission at Haute Hameau, the campaign moves directly to Trevieres. No further missions will be fought in this sector for the duration of the campaign. The first mission played at Trevieres is a Hold the Line mission with the US player attacking.*







## Trevieres

This large village, with a population of around 700, lies just south of the Aure River. The village is well sited for defense against attack from the north as any attacker approaching from this direction must first traverse the river. The old stone buildings on the outskirts of Trevieres, still largely intact after the Allied bombings, lend themselves to use as defensive strongpoints. This fact, along with the location of the village on the road to St. Lo, no doubt influenced the selection of Trevieres as a German regimental headquarters.

### Terrain

Missions fought in this sector are fought on a normal sized (6' x 4'/180cm x 120cm) table. Narrow, hedge-lined roads, run from the table edges and converge in the German player's deployment zone. Here, a dozen or more stone and brick buildings mark the edge of the village. In the US player's deployment zone the Aure River cuts across the table, parallel to the US player's table edge and crossed by a single, narrow bridge. The river is quite shallow in this sector and classed as Difficult Going. Away from the village and the riverbanks, the surrounding countryside is the ubiquitous Norman bocage.

## Haute Litée Crossroads

The German commanders recognize that, with the limited forces at their disposal, holding the large Cerisy Forest would prove impossible. Instead, they have settled on this minor crossroads at which to make a last stand, barring the way east to the summit of the Litteau Ridge.

### Terrain

The narrow hedge-lined road leading onto the Litteau Ridge crosses the table from one player's table edge to the other. In the German player's deployment zone the road branches north towards the forest, forming the crossroads. At the German player's table edge is a small area of woodland (approximately 6" - 8" / 15cm - 20cm across), representing the edge of Cerisy Forest itself. Everywhere else on the table is covered with Norman bocage.

### Prepared Positions

With customary efficiency, the German troops at Haute Litée have been busy digging foxholes in readiness for the American attack.

*In the first mission fought in this sector, only, the German force may begin the game in Foxholes and Gone to Ground.*

## Litteau Ridge

The military significance of this sector of the Normandy battlefield, besides the forest that slopes away to the north, is its altitude. At its highest point the Litteau Ridge is some 500 feet above sea level, and commands the entire US beachhead. Control of this ridge is thus of vital strategic importance to both sides.

### Victory

If the US player reaches the Litteau Ridge they have won the campaign. By controlling the ridge they have struck a major blow in ensuring the security of their beachhead. The German forces appear to have disintegrated before the American advance. Patrols are already pushing further inland to ascertain the remaining strength of the German forces in this area.



## The Conclusion of the Cerisy Forest Campaign

The US attack gets off to a bad start. Elements of the 9th Regiment do not receive the order to attack until late morning on 9 June. Lacking transport and delayed by heavy enemy fire east of Trevieres, the 9th regiment makes only slow progress towards Rubercy. At the village of Haute Hameau heavy German fire halts Company L. Tank, artillery and even naval gunfire support is required before the Germans are finally dislodged. It would be midnight before the 9th Regiment approaches their assigned objective.

Meanwhile, to the west the 38th Regiment are having an even tougher time of it at Trevieres.



The village is well-defended by remnants of 916. Grenadierregiment. By nightfall, with the assistance of heavy fire from divisional artillery, elements of the 38th Regiment have overcome the outer defences and are beginning to work their way into the village.

As much of the missing equipment and transport arrives, on 10 June the attack is renewed in greater strength. With the village now outflanked on both sides, the German defenders are forced to withdraw. Trevieres is liberated by 0845 hours and the 2nd Division press southwards in pursuit of the retreating Germans. Meeting little opposition the Americans are able to advance all the way to Cerisy Forest.

Surprisingly the forest itself is practically undefended. The 9th Regiment brush aside weak enemy resistance as they pass through the forest to Balleroy, on the eastern side. To the west the 38th Regiment capture the village of Cerisy la Foret. That evening the 1st Battalion continues south to capture the Haute Littee crossroads at the south-western extremity of the forest. However, they are stopped in their tracks by the Engineer Battalion of the German 352. *Infanteriedivision*, dug in around the crossroads.

The battle for possession of the crossroads continues on 11 June. The Germans fight stubbornly but by midday they have been driven into the fringes of the woods. From this position they fight on, holding up the American advance.



Finally, their mortars are silenced with artillery barrages from the US 38th and 12th Field Artillery Battalions. The 38th Regiment now presses forward to complete their capture of the Litteau Ridge. In their first taste of battle the men of the 2nd Division have struck a major blow in securing the precarious US beachhead.

## Fighting a Multi-player Campaign

If you have four players you can combine ***Axis of Attack: The Advance to Cerisy Forest*** with ***Axis of Attack: Across the Aure Valley*** to fight a multiplayer campaign. Will the US V Corps attack succeed in pushing inland from Omaha? Or can the wily Germans stop the American advance in its tracks?

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