BATTLE OF LANZERATH RIDGE

The following is summarized from the Wikipedia article at:

The Battle of Lanzerath Ridge during World War II was fought on December 16, 1944, the first day of the Battle of the Bulge near the town of Lanzerath, Belgium. It was fought between 18 men belonging to two American reconnaissance squads, four U.S. Forward Artillery Observers, and a battalion of about 500 German paratroopers. During a day-long confrontation, the platoon of Americans inflicted dozens of casualties on the Germans and bottled up the advance along a key route of the 1st SS Panzer Division, spearhead of the entire German 6th Panzer Army, which had been selected to make the main effort.

The American I&R platoon took over positions formerly occupied by the 2nd Infantry Division on a ridge top immediately northeast of the town. They were ordered to improve their foxhole positions and maintain contact with Task Force X, made up of four, towed, three-inch guns from the 2nd Platoon of Company A, 820th Tank Destroyer Battalion, attached to the 14th Cavalry Group, 106th Infantry Division of VIII Corps. They were reinforced by 22 members of the 2nd Recon Platoon, commanded by Lieutenant John Arculeer, who were mounted on an armored half-track and two jeeps. Members of the Second Platoon took up positions in two homes inside the village of Lanzerath about 200 yards (180 m) to the southeast. Together the two units comprised the foremost units in their sector of the American forces facing the Siegfried Line.
Many of the opposing German units were recent conscripts with very little experience. Sergeant Vinz Kuhlbach's platoon was typical. Most of his soldiers had little combat experience and even less training. The German units had been formed by conscripting teenage boys and men over 50, men previously rejected as physically unfit for service, wounded soldiers newly released from hospitals, and men transferred from the "jobless" personnel of the shrinking Kriegsmarine and Luftwaffe. The German 3rd Fallschirmjaeger Division, which had previously acquired a superb combat reputation, had been virtually destroyed during the Normandy invasion in the Falaise pocket. It had been resurrected by using replacements from the 22nd, 51st, and 53rd Luftwaffe Field Regiments. The German units were usually organized around small cadres of seasoned veterans.

To preserve the quantity of armor available, the infantry of the 9th Fallschirmjaeger Regiment, 3rd Fallschirmjaeger Division, had been ordered to lead the attack through Lanzerath and clear the village before advancing towards Bullingen. The German commanders estimated they would face a full division of U.S. troops.

Once the infantry captured Lanzerath, Sepp Dietrich’s Sixth Panzer Army led by Kampfgruppe SS Standartenführer Joachim Peiper's 1st SS Panzer Division would proceed without delay. The infantry would then secure the right flank of the attack route near Losheimergraben. Despite the losses that had brought the Allies to the border of their homeland, German morale was surprisingly strong. The men knew the Allies were demanding an unconditional surrender. They were now fighting for the fatherland, defending the soil of their beloved country, not just fighting for Hitler.

Following a preparatory artillery barrage, which was largely ineffective, German Fallschirmjaeger began their attack into and through Lanzerath, expecting little actual resistance in the village. As they discovered the American positions along the nearby ridge line, the German infantry deployed. About two platoons of the 2nd Company, 1st Battalion, attacked the Americans head-on, bunched together in the open and charging straight up the hill, directly at the platoon's hidden and fortified positions. The Americans were surprised at the inexperienced tactics. For the Americans, it was like "shooting clay ducks in California at an amusement park." Several attackers were killed trying to climb over the 4 feet (1.2 m)-high barbed wire fence that bisected the field, often shot at close range with a single shot to the heart or head.

After repeated, futile, attempts by the Germans to eliminate the defenders, they finally flanked the Americans at dusk and captured them. Only one American, a forward artillery observer, was killed, while 14 were wounded. German casualties totaled 92.

The Germans paused, believing the woods were filled with more Americans and tanks. Only when SS-Standartenführer Joachim Peiper and his Panzer tanks arrived at midnight, twelve hours behind schedule, did the Germans learn the woods were empty.

The Battle of Lanzerath Ridge scenario is based on the Roadblock mission described below, set in a recreation of the Belgian winter terrain and using forces typical of the historic situation, with the Americans defending the first aggressive acts of operation Wacht am Rhein.
MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Follow Up Forces

Some tactical situations warranted a rapid deployment of reserves, which were queued up behind the leading troops, and scheduled to move up and through their forward positions as soon as the enemy’s front line defenses were breached. While there was often a plan as to when those forces should move through, that plan, like many, almost always failed at first sign of the enemy…

In a mission with the Follow Up Forces special rule, players place one or more platoons in reserve, off table, for arrival during the course of the game. Roll 3d6 At the beginning of each of the reserve player’s turns. Each roll of 5+ allows the player to bring on-table one of his reserve platoons. The order those platoons arrive must be specified before the game commences. This “march order” must be followed when bringing these reserve platoons on table.

Dusk Attack

Occasionally, a battle would rage all day and into the waning light of evening. If the battle was delayed or protracted, or simply particularly long and bloody, nightfall might not bring the usual respite, complicating and prolonging what was already probably a very long and grueling day.

Beginning on the turn indicated, at the start of the attacker’s turn, roll 1d6. On a roll of 5+ night falls. On each subsequent turn the attacker rolls an additional dice. So 2d6 on the second turn, 3d6 on the third turn, etc. Any roll of 5+ brings nightfall. Once night has fallen all Night Fighting rules are in effect for the remainder of the game.

THE ROADBLOCK

A lead attacking unit is tasked with clearing the way for follow on exploitation forces. Unfortunately for the attacker, a determined defense is set in its way, blocking the way ahead and threatening to delay the carefully prepared timeline for the offensive to follow.

This mission uses the following special rules:

Defensive Battle
Delayed Reserves
Immediate Ambush
Follow Up Forces
Prepared Positions
YOUR ORDERS

Attacker
Today is the day we renew our offensive against the hated enemy. They are weak in this sector of the front and your task should be an easy one. Clear the line of advance ahead so that follow up armored forces can leapfrog through and reach their day’s objectives on time.

Defender
The suddenness and ferocity of this morning’s enemy attack has caught you off guard. You are the forward element of your unit, initially tasked with reconnaissance but now finding yourself holding a god-forsaken piece of terrain for as long as you can, hoping that someone will soon come to your aid.

PREPARING FOR BATTLE

1. Mark the center of the table and place an objective at this location.
2. Use the Defensive Battle Special Rule to determine the attacker and defender.
3. The attacking player chooses the long table edge where their Follow Up Forces will arrive. The defending player’s Delayed Reserves will arrive along the opposite long table edge.
4. Follow Up Forces and Delayed Reserves may also enter along the short table edges, within 16” of each side’s own table corners.
5. Place a second objective 8” in from the defender’s long table edge, in the center of the table as measured from short edge to short edge.
6. The defender nominates at least half of their platoons to be held in Delayed Reserve.
7. One of the remaining defending platoons is kept off table as an Immediate Ambush.
8. All remaining defending platoons must be deployed within 12” of the defender’s long table edge.
9. The attacker must nominate at least half of their platoons to be held off table as Follow Up Forces. Any remaining platoons are deployed in the attacker’s half of the table, at least 16” from the table’s center point.
10. Both players place their Independent teams in their deployment areas, starting with the defender.

BEGINNING THE BATTLE

1. The defender’s forces begin the game in prepared positions and pinned (his vehicles are bailed out), so his troops are in foxholes and gone-to-ground.
2. Starting with the attacker, both players make Reconnaissance Deployment moves for any Recce Platoons they have on the table.
3. The defending player has the first turn.
4. Deploy the defender’s platoon being held in **Immediate Ambush** so that all its teams are within 12” of the table center point.

**ENDING THE BATTLE**

The battle ends when either:

- the attacking player starts their turn holding both of the objectives, or
- the defending player starts their tenth or later turn holding the objective closest to their side of the table, or
- the defending player starts their turn with no attacking teams within 16” of either objective.

**DECIDING WHO WON**

The attacker wins if the game ended because they started one of their turns holding both objectives. The roadblock has been eliminated and the follow up forces are well on their way to reaching their day’s objectives.

Otherwise the defender wins. The stubborn resistance of the roadblock force has seriously delayed the day’s offensive, putting in jeopardy the scheduling of the battle from its very start.

Calculate your Victory Points using the Victory Point Table in the rulebook.
BATTLE OF LANZERATH RIDGE SCENARIO

Use the following map, forces, and special rules with the Roadblock Mission above, to recreate the battle of Lanzerath Ridge. If any rule or setup instruction in the scenario section below contradicts a rule in the Roadblock Mission, the rule or setup instruction in the scenario section below takes precedence.

SCENARIO MAP

Setup the table as indicated in the map below. All terrain is considered covered in snow. All off-road movement is Very Difficult Going. The table, particularly the ridge line, should be heavily forested. Roads should be added as indicated. Roads are Rough terrain but the packed snow upon them permits fully tracked vehicles to move 10” per turn rather than 8”. The buildings in the center of the map represent the village of Lanzerath while the buildings at the top of the map represent Buchholz and the main American positions.

You can use a 6’ x 4’ table or an 8’ x 6’ table, if you have sufficient players and forces and need a little more room.
SCENARIO FORCES

Use the following forces in this scenario. Note that the Germans have more points than the Americans. This is to balance the adverse effects of winter and the limited artillery available on the German side.

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<td>I&amp;R (4 x Rifle and Jeeps)</td>
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<td>S3</td>
<td>4 x 105s (off board)</td>
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<td>S5</td>
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<td>5 x Sherman w/ 75mm</td>
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2015

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SCENARIO SPECIAL RULES

Use the following rules for this scenario.

1. The American force is the defender and the German force is the attacker.
2. Set aside the I&R Platoon (S1) as the **Immediate Ambush** platoon. It may have weapon teams from the Weapons Platoon attached to it.
3. The American combat and remaining weapons platoons start on table as per mission rules.
4. The M10s, 105s, and Sherman platoons begin the game in **Delayed Reserve**.
5. The American artillery batteries are off-board. Because of the sudden and surprise nature of the German attack, each time the American player attempts to range in with one of his artillery batteries he must pass a skill test. The American player cannot use **Time on Target** or **Hit ‘Em With Everything You’ve Got**.
6. The German SS forces of Kampfgruppe Peiper arrive as **Follow Up Forces**. The march order of this contingent is: Pumas (S4), Panzergrenadiers (C1), StuGs (S2), Panzergrenadiers (C2), Panthers (S1), King Tiger (S3).
7. A Panzergrenadier Platoon may enter the table riding tanks in an accompanying panzer platoon, if those two platoons enter the table on the same turn. Otherwise, a Panzergrenadier may enter dismounted and then mount up in a subsequent turn, or delay their arrival a turn to arrive loaded on the next armored platoon.
8. The German forces of 9.FJR setup at the beginning of the game as per mission rules.
9. The **Dusk Attack** special rule is in affect the turn the King Tiger arrives using the **Follow Up Forces** special rule.