

Scenario 4: On the Road to Gravelines

With the benefit of hindsight, it seems incredible that the British defending Calais had little idea that by early in the morning on 24th May 1940 they had been surrounded by German troops of the 1st and 10th Panzer divisions.

But they had been, and didn't realise: and Brigadier Nicholson, commanding, was still trying to follow a confused mixture of orders from the British GHQ in France, from army command in Britain, and from the French, technically still in charge of the Allied forces. One of his orders was to get rations and other supplies unloaded in Calais through to Dunkirk as soon as possible.

Earlier that night, in preparation for the convoy, two British forces had been sent out to patrol the Gravelines road. The first, carriers under 2/Lt Tony Rolt learnt from locals that German tanks were in the area, but withdrew before seeing anything more than 1st Panzer Division's bonfires. The second, tanks under Major Bill Reeves (already encountered in a previous scenario), had driven along the road as far as Le Beau Marais, where they had had to manoeuvre around a roadblock. Once past this, they had found themselves actually driving through 1st Panzer's forward elements, halted for the night.

Incredibly, the Germans did not realise that the three tanks driving through their lines were British, and Major Reeves and his men were able to push on to Marck. There they removed explosive charges protecting the bridge over the canal (attaching them to the two hook of one tank and dragging them off the bridge!) and then drove on to Gravelines itself. Unfortunately they were not able to make radio contact with Calais to warn the convoy of what awaited them.

Thus at 5am in the morning on 24th May 1940, a force under Major Arthur "Boy" Hamilton-Russell consisting of men taken from a mix of all companies of 1st Rifle Brigade and C Squadron RTR passed through the Dunkirk Gate and set out along the road that went through Gravelines.

The convoy got as far as Le Beau Marais, where it ran into the same roadblock by-passed by Major Reeves. The Germans were soon alerted (the convoy being much larger than a patrol of tanks) and fighting broke out. Around 10.30am, Major Hamilton-Russell realised that it was going to be impossible to break through, and ordered the convoy to return to Calais.

Running the Game

The scenario begins as the Germans are alerted at the roadblock. This makes it an encounter game with nearly all troops already deployed on the table.

The scenario uses slightly scaled down forces to make it playable. If the full action is required, then make each section a platoon and each platoon a company, and give the British five tanks, not three.

Deployment

Deployment details appear under the individual player briefing sheets.

The British tanks and German Recon force should be placed on the table. All other forces appear as Blinds until spotted.

Victory Conditions

The British win by getting six or more trucks off the table to Gravelines.

Terrain

The Calais-Gravelines road is just about dead straight.

Apart from the roads and immediate environs of buildings, the field should be considered too rough to allow easy movement for trucks. Any trucks not on a road therefore move at only 1d6.

The Roadblock

The roadblock is a formidable obstacle. It should be considered to have 40 points of strength. This strength can be reduced through the use of initiative dice: subtract the total shown on the dice rolled by a unit from the roadblock's remaining strength e.g. an infantry section or a tank has 3d6 initiative, it uses all to assault the roadblock; 12 is the total rolled; the roadblock now has a strength of $40-12=28$.

Note that the British tanks have no HE.

Game	German	British
Tea Break	Big Man x 3	Big Man x 3
	Company HQ	Platoon x 2
	Platoon x 2	Tanks
	Recon	Carriers
	Rapid Deployment	Convoy Vehicles
		Rally
	Big Man x 1	Vehicle Breakdown
	Panzers x 1	Dynamic Commander
	Platoon x 1	

