

## AAR: Ligneuville Halt (CH HP8)

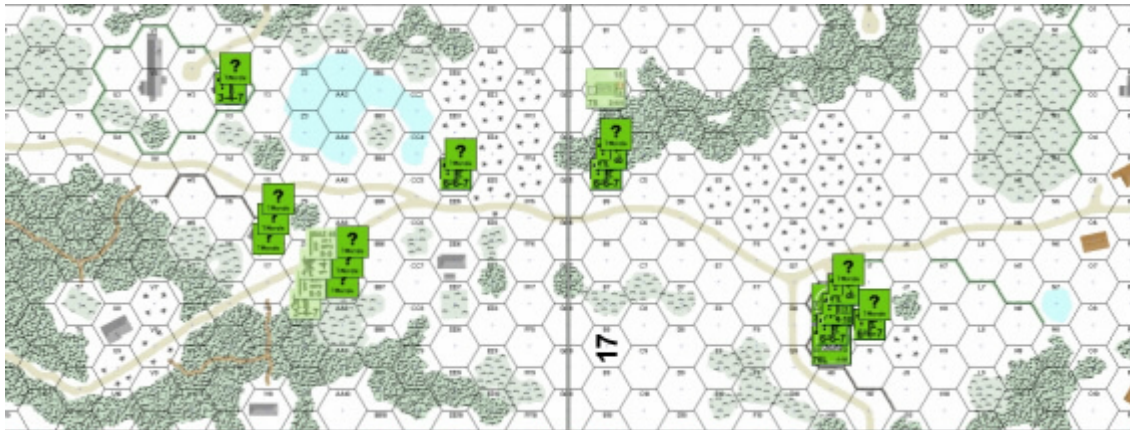
German player: Josep Maria Mainez (Almogaver266)

American player: Jesús Pié Batlle (Jesuspiebatlle)

Date completed: December 12, 2004

The scenario: Ligneuville Halt portrays a small action that takes place in the opening stages of The Battle of the Bulge, when Kampfgruppe Peiper was advancing towards the Ambleve River and meets a delaying force from CCB of the 9<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. It's a typical delaying scenario with a numerical and quality superior force that try to cross the battlefield (two half boards) and exit through the opposite edge (16EVP) in a short span of time (5.5 game turns). This was the first time that both players "fight" this scenario.

American setup and initial strategy (Jesús Pié): At first sight the German force, with 6-5-8 SS squads, a 9-2 leader, a Hero, 2 Panthers and 1 PzIVF2, looks impressive, mainly since my AT assets need very low rolls in order to penetrate the Panther's frontal armor. With this in mind my overall strategy was aimed at maximize the best weapon that US forces get in this scenario, the ability of deceiving using the 6 OB given dummies and the SSR given possibility of HIP a squad equivalent force with any SMC/SW stacked in the same location and a vehicle. I would search for a side or rear shoots at the Txema's "Big Cats". The resultant setup was as follows:



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The objective was to create three defensive lines: The first, mainly a dummy line with a HS at 42X2, two 3 dummies stacks at 42Y6 and 42AA7 and a HIP stack with the hero and a HS, both with a bazooka, have the mission of delay the German at the entry points, and, after that, to convince Txema that my main line was not here and, with a little luck, be bypassed leaving the HIP group at the rear of the Germans AFV. The second line was formed with a single squad at 42DD4, with orders to hold as long as possible, and then withdraw to the 8-1 leader position, that was backing him with another squad at 17B4. So I was (mistakenly) convinced that the German main thrust came from the roads, I put the Sherman Tank at 17B2 with orders to remain hidden as long as possible and maintain Txema guessing about it. Finally the main strongpoint, with the remaining units, was seated near the 17I8 house, with the AFV's hull down along the wall that surrounds it. The orders of this group: stop the enemy or die in place.

German initial strategy (Josep Maria Mainez): My perspective of this scenario is that I must be fast...but at the same time be cautious due to the HIP units. A fast march, with my infantry mounted, through the main roads towards the South, seems logical but may be very dangerous, especially for the unarmored vehicles and the riders, so I choose to advance on foot after enter mounted in turn one; a calculated risk if one see the VC, but I think that the Panthers could gain quickly armor superiority dueling the American Armor and, using the HMG and the Sdkfz 251/10 (on the West) and the PzKpw IV F2 (on the East) to support the Infantry units and put smoke screens on hazardous point of pass for my infantry, the attack would go well.

The Attack will have two axis:

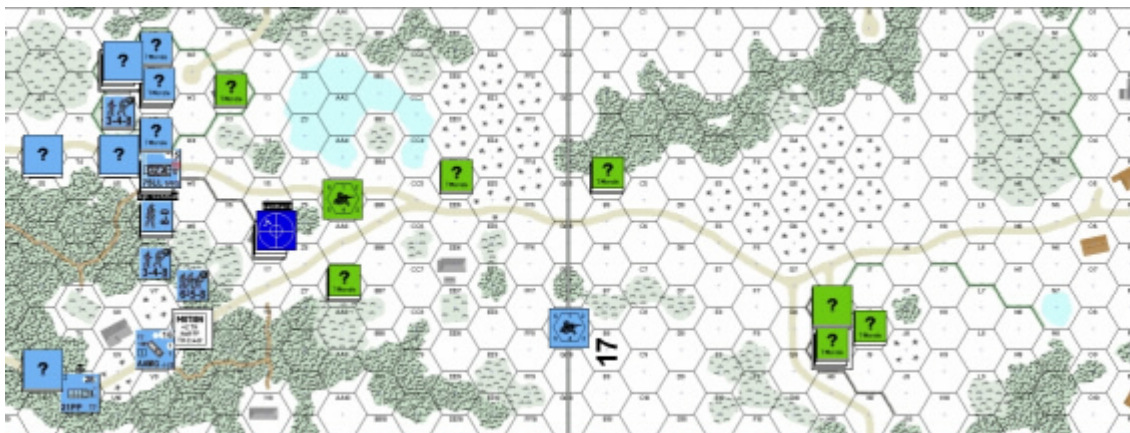
First, in the Eastern sector, with the bulk of my Armor (The two Panthers and the PzKpw IV F2, all with riders) along the 42S3-CC5 road and between 42S0-42S3 hexes, towards the 42Y1 building as a first objective, with orders to deactivate any possible unit in building 42X2. This movement on the East was the main mobile force, and as I see in the American set up, there was a possibility to outflank the Americans if I was capable to take (in a lapse of two or three turns) the 17B2-B3 mass woods, after broke or eliminate the units in 42DD4 and (using sD, Smoke shells and even VBM freeze) cover any attack from the units in 17B5; thus, a group of a 9-2 SMC, three 6-5-8 squads and a 3-4-8 HS (9 VP) could march on the Eastern edge towards 17I1-I2.

Second, On the Central-West sector, the attack, with the two Sdkfz 251 supporting, would progress on the 42A8-CC5 road, with the deactivation of Y6 and AA7 as its first objectives, but with orders to protect the right flank of the advancing Panthers, search and destroy any HIP unit (I suppose, mistakenly, that the HIP American AFV was in this sector...), and advance to the main American walled stronghold of 17H7-H8. The Panthers would cover any possible attack of the American Armor against these troops.

If the Eastern operation will goes well and I outflank Jesus, exiting 9 VP of Infantry, and be able to exit the two Panthers (and even a Sdkfz 251/1 or the PzKpw IV F2) on the central sector, I hope to win and the goal of the Meuse and Antwerp will be more close....

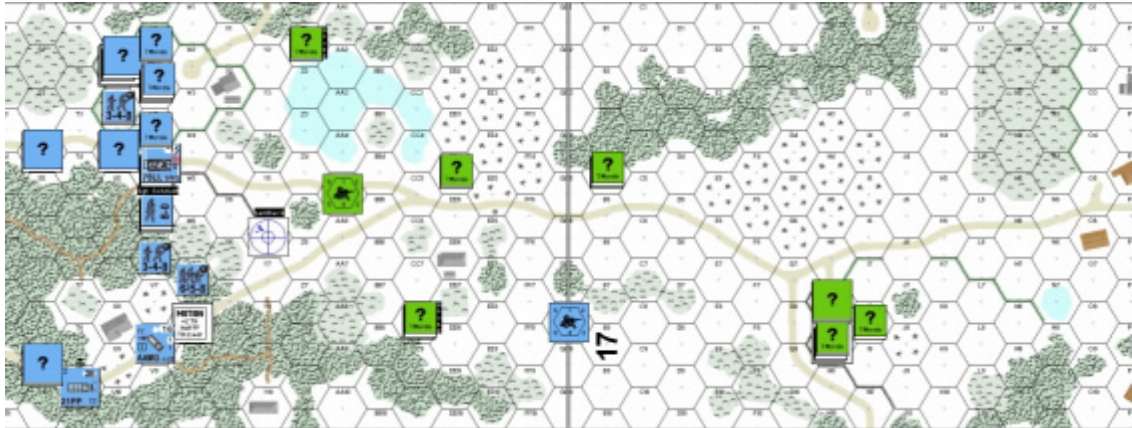
German Turn 1:

Well, I have take without problems the 42T3 building and built a good FG to threat X2. The next move is towards the Y1-DD1 mass woods...I would not be in X2...A lot of FP is just to start to rain over it. In the western pincer, I prefer be carefully with both Sdkfz 251, maybe there is a bazooka in AA7, or even HIP in Z7, Z5 or X6. The halftracks are 10 valuable VP that I will advance when the Americans become more weakened. Also, there would be a BAZ in the Y6 building, but firing a BAZ from Y6 is a very risky situation for its manning infantry, so I don't think that Jesús take that high risk with his outposts units. In the next turn, the Squad in W7 goes to Y8 to search the HIP units. After accomplished its transport mission, the Panthers will move to firing positions...but carefully, I am sure that the HIP AFV is the M10 and its deadly APCR.



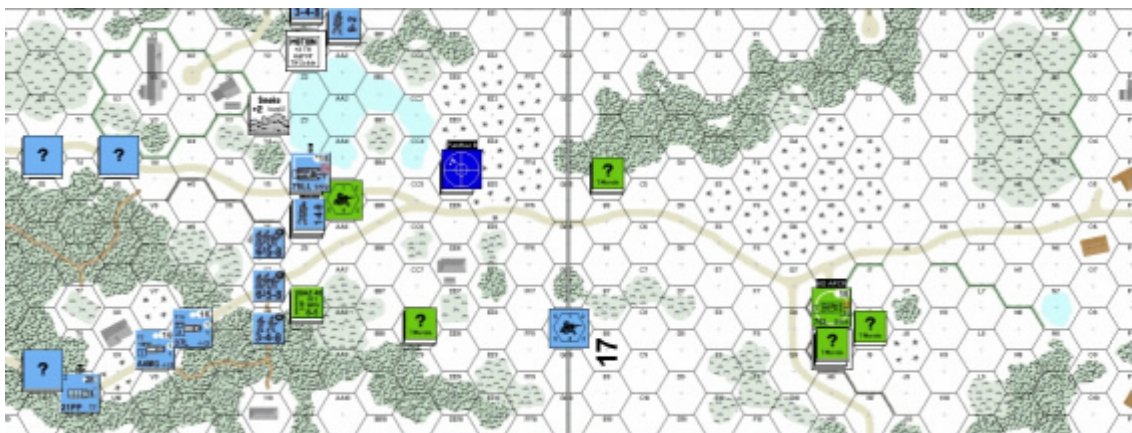
#### American Turn 1:

Well, it seems that the bulk of the German forces are advancing through the east portion of the map, and my HS at X2 was at the wrong place at the wrong time, so I try to extricate those poor boys carefully moving to Z1 in order to maintain concealment. At the west I was expecting a faster and more careless advance, and now I begin to worry about my HIP stack. Luckily, at the centre things happen as I was planned, and Josep Maria was stopped firing at the dummy stack in Y6 without success. I don't need to redeploy more troops just now.



#### German Turn 2:

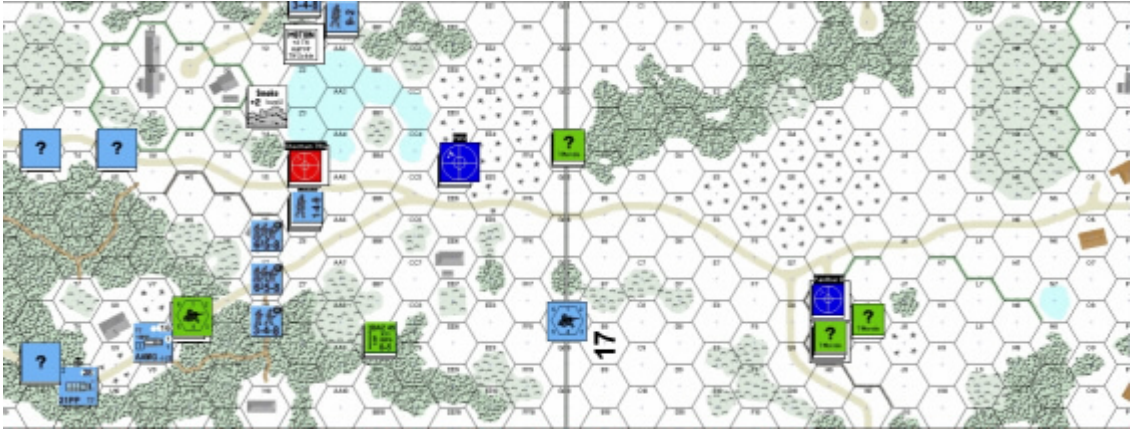
Well, I am very proud of my SS guys, in the eastern pincer they had been able to advance, hunt and destroy the American opposition, meanwhile the PzKpw IV F2 is moving to a position that will cover with its valuable Smoke future advances of the infantry/armor, but with caution....this is not the sands of El Alamein and the F2 is outmanned at this stage of the war. In the west, my guys had marked a goal, a great goal to Jesus: very successful search had discovered a special Tank-hunter HS-Hero Team...that quickly becomes a HS team because the hero is mortally wounded; also I can take 42Y6 and 42Z5, and the threat to 42DD4 is about to begin; the western Panther will begin the duel with the walled American AFVs...a hard task but not impossible. Seems that I have surprised Jesus with the axis of advance in two directions rather than a unique axis. Although I have not much time, the advance has a good timing...I hope to create a lot of havoc in the following DFPh.





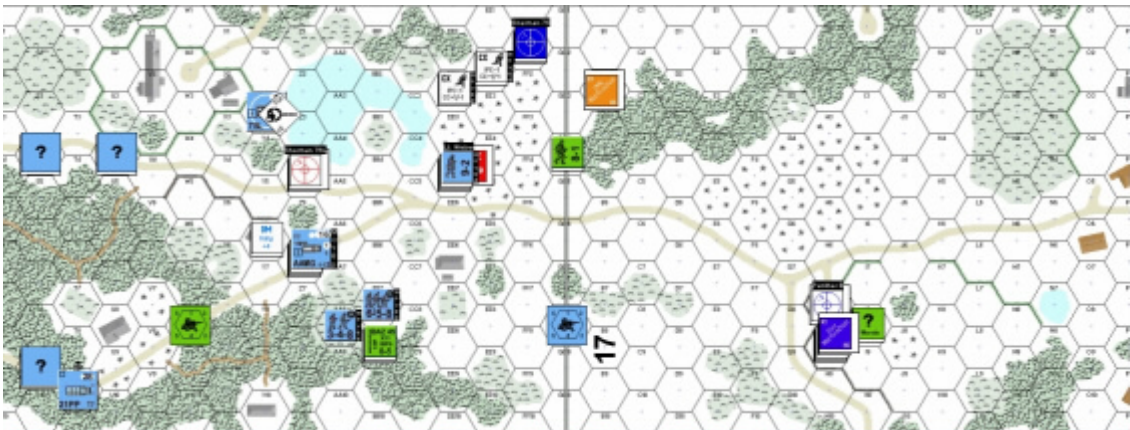
### American Turn 2:

I'm beginning to worry about the German thrust. At the east they hunt my lonely HS, in the centre they finally discover my bluff at 42Y6 and, the worst thing, Josep Maria seek and find my AT stack and the Hero die in combat. Now my first line is almost bypassed, and the Germans were aiming at the 17DD4 stronghold. To aid my brave boys in this spot, my Sherman at 17H7 begins a gun duel with the Panther at 42Z4, missing an APCR shot but hopping to resist the mighty AFV with his HD status. I think that my HIP Sherman will become the truly key in this new defensive line, with the goal to stop the German east thrust, and I send my 8-1 leader group to aid him.



### German Turn 3:

The things had become worse for me: during the American Turn 2, a lucky sniper dr had killed the commander of my Sdkfz 251/10, and must recall; also, the stubborn American defense of 42DD5 in my DFPh of Turn 2, force me to cover the advance on it using VBM sleaze with a Panther....but Jesus had a nasty gift for me: The HIP Sherman is in the east rather than the west as I imagine! What happens now?... A panther destroyed and my main infantry thrust blocked. On the other hand, the other panther is duelling with the walled 76L Sherman, but is hard to hit; I rely in my frontal AF but a lucky hit in the turret would cause me more problems. A bad turn for me with a lot of VP lost; Victory is possible but if I had more vehicle losses, it will be impossible.



American Turn 3:

Well, I'm really happy to have destroyed one of Josep Maria's Panthers, but I couldn't celebrate it for long time since all my efforts for stop his infantry were in vain, and the just revealed Sherman breaks the MG's... But at the center, luck came another time besides my, and the Panther-Sherman tank duel is resolved with a CH impact that set it ablaze. I couldn't believe this: in one turn, the Germans have lost both Panthers. Finally I opt for a retreat with my 8-1 leader in order form a defensive line hex grid H. At the west, having destroyed the central Panther, my tank destroyer advances in order to help the lonely HS. My goal is ride the M10 and extricate my men from the trap. In his defensive fire, Josep Maria finally destroyed my eastern Sherman with a Panzerfaust, but the job, the really difficult job, was already done.



German Turn 4:

The revealed Sherman had been destroyed, but the price had been very high....The worst of my nightmares had been real! The Panther is a great AFV, but a CH of a 76L gun is too much for it; with the second Panther destroyed, my odds to win go down dramatically, but I still have a little chance, a race towards the South edge with almost anything that have wheels, combined with the advance of the infantry on the north part of board 17; a very difficult task, but hope is the last thing to lose.





#### American Turn 4:

Things run fast now. In my first shot with the M10 I pay my anterior luck and I break the gun, and in my own rally phase I disable it. I begin to worry about the German infantry advancing in the east, so I change the M10 goal, now a mobile MG nest, and I send it in a race (with successful ESB check included) to cover the K hex grid. Also, the H8 stack is redeployed to block this thread. Finally, the HS melee in 42EE10 is resolved with my guys killing the bad ones.



#### German Turn 5:

The scenario started well for me but now is a "sauve qui peut" towards the American lines. After exiting all the trucks, it was the turn of the SdKfz 251/1...the only advantages in front of the Sherman 76L is its size and the moving DRM, but the Sherman's First fire is very accurate and the halftrack explodes....My hope is now the PzKpw IV F2. This AFV, together with the exited trucks and the 17F2 stack represent a total amount of VP that can, at the last moment, gives Victory to me. The PzKpw IV F2 moves to its last MP, but in 17J3, try to gain two MP in a ESB attempt (one for enter in 17K3 and another to place sD in order to cover the future advance of the infantry), but the ESB attempt fails and remains immobilized in J3..... This is the end, it was no matter to continue and I gave Victory to Jesus.



German Conclusion (Josep Maria Mainez).

A interesting scenario, because is difficult for both sides. May be I was mistaken and my advance, although good, had been a little slow. For the German, the speed must be over all other things in this scenario. A capital key was the HIP American AFV, located in a completely unexpected place for me. I had lost but I am very satisfied of this scenario: few turns, high mobility and a lot of fun.

American Conclusion (Jesús Pié).

I finally win the scenario, but I'm convinced that usually this is not an easy task for the American, and only really lucky dices like that's obtained in the critical phases of the game, decanted the match in my favor. The German strategy was superb, and despite all bad fortunes, his chances of win remain possible until his 5 turn. Ironically, my poor confidence in the 75 gun of my Sherman, that impulses me to hide it in the eastern woods, result in a delay of his main thrust, and the destruction of one of his best tanks. Otherwise, surely the Germans will advance to the victory unopposed. Finally, say that this is one of the scenarios that I more enjoyed. As Josep Maria said, it's fast, deathly and exciting one.