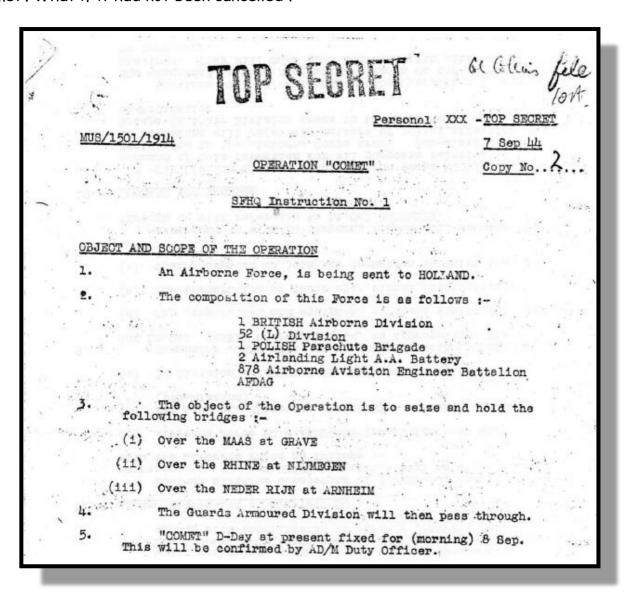
Operation 'Comet' 8th September, 1944 Nijmegen-Grave, Holland

1_{st} British Airborne & XX Corps versus German local defence units and 10_{th} SS Panzer Division

A Rapid Fire scenario by Mark Piper

Background

Ever since the formation of the First Allied Airborne Army, in August 1944, Eisenhower had been searching for both a target and a suitable opportunity to employ the force. To that end a series of bold and imaginative airborne plans, calling for large-scale mass attacks deep behind the enemy's lines, were developed. As the speeding ground armies advanced each proposed airborne operation was cancelled. The last of these, before Operation 'Market', was Operation 'Comet'. What if it had not been cancelled?



Original plan for Operation 'Comet' - dated 7th September, 1944 Cornelius Ryan Collection - Ohio University Library Initially Montgomery proposed siezing a crossing near the town of Wesel, just over the Dutch-German border, however heavy AA defences forced a change. The site chosen was further west in Holland: the Lower Rhine Bridge at Arnhem. By the 7_{th} September, Operation 'Comet', employing the British 1_{st} Airborne Division and the Polish Airborne Brigade, was in readiness. Bad weather and concerns about ever-increasing German opposition, forced yet another postponement.

Both divisions of the German II SS Panzer Corps, who had been conducting a series of rearguard actions against US forces in the Somme, was ordered on the 5th September to withdraw towards the Mass-Scheldt canal though Venlo and Eindhoven. Inevitably, the 1st British Airborne Division and the 9th & 10th SS Panzer Divisions may have clashed on the 8th September. This scenario assumes that the remnants of the 9th SS Panzer Division would have been in action against British forces south of the Grave Bridge and that a Kampfgruppe based around the 10th SS Reconnaissance Battalion would have fought against the 1st British Airborne Brigade at Arnhem. Also it is assumed that a break in the weather and other favourable factors would have allowed the operation to go ahead as planned. This makes for an interesting 'what-if' scenario but with as much of a historical basis as possible.

Sources

- Rapid Fire Operation Market Garden Supplement Colin Rumford
- British & German VG and Aircraft Charts www.rapid-fire-uk.com/freedownloads
- Operation 'Comet' plans and messages 8th-12th September, 1944 (changed to 'Market'),
 Operation 'Comet' Intelligence Summary #2, 7th September, 1944 Cornelius Ryan
 Collection Ohio University Library
- Market-Garden Nijmegen Tim Saunders
- Operation Market-Garden Then and Now Volume 1 Karel Margery
- Sons of the Reich II SS Panzer Corps Michael Reynolds
- A Bridge Too Far Cornelius Ryan
- It Nevers Snows in September Robert Kershaw
- Operation Market-Garden 1944 (1) The American Airborne Missions Steven Zaloga
- Operation Market-Garden 1944 (2) The British Airborne Missions Ken Ford
- Operation Market-Garden 1944 (3) The British XXX Corps Missions Ken Ford
- Arnhem 1944 Martin Middlebrook
- Arnhem Antony Beevor
- Force graphics Colin Rumford with modifications by Mark Piper

The Game

The game represents the British 1_{st} Airborne Division's attempts to **capture** and **hold** the Grave-Nijmegen road. It is played across an $8' \times 6'$ table. We suggest a maximum of 16 moves.

Orders

German: **Defend** and **hold** the Grave-Nijmegen Road. **Prevent** British armour from exiting via the Nijmegen Road Bridge.

British: Capture and hold the Grave-Nijmegen Road. Allow British armour to exit via the Nijmegen Road Bridge.

Victory Conditions

Germans to Win: Germans have at least 16 dismounted infantry and 2 AFVs within 12" of the Grave-Nijmegen Road AND less than 3 British AFVs have exited off the Nijmegen Road Bridge at the end of 16 moves.

British to Win: Less than 16 dismounted German infantry figures and 2 German AFVs within 12" of the Grave-Nijmegen road AND at least 3 British AFVs exit via the Nijmegen Road Bridge at the end of 16 moves.

Draw: Any other result is a draw

British and German reinforcements and artillery rules

No unit entering the table may advance more than 6" (infantry) or 12" (vehicles) during their first turn. In some cases, this will mean that a unit may not be able to fully deploy on their first turn of arrival, particularly for those entering via a road.

If any friendly elements are within 6" of an enemy element targeted by artillery, roll an additional D6. On a 5 or 6 carry out the attack against the nearest friendly element.

British Deployment, rules and reinforcements

Mark each landing zone (LZ) and drop zone (DZ) with either a pathfinder team or a single glider model respectively. These markers do not provide cover or block LOS. It is suggested that the "plastic fire grid method" is used for each Paratroop element (rule 17.7) and the "Glider Landings method" (rules 17.8 & 17.9) for all $1_{\rm st}$ Air Landed Brigade, $1_{\rm st}$ Airlanded Light Regiment, $2_{\rm nd}$ Airlanding AT battery, $4_{\rm th}$ Parachute Brigade HQ and $1_{\rm st}$ Airborne Division HQ.

Paratroop and Glider Infantry Morale rule (rule 17.10) applies rules and they are never considered isolated for morale purposes.

Other British forces start off table and arrive from the Grave Road Bridge as indicated.

A Typhoon is available on Day 2 (from move 10 - after the 2_{nd} airborne lift). On a roll of a 4-6 a Typhoon is available this turn. On a 5 or 6 shift to the nearest friendly target and carry out the Typhoon attack with the armament chosen, then remove from the table. British artillery is off-board.

The British player moves first.

German Deployment, rules and reinforcements

German on-board forces set-up first as indicated. German infantry not in buildings and guns start dug-in.

Rule 13.1 (German LMGs +1 modifier to each D6 roll) applies to 10_{th} S5 infantry elements only including HQ and support weapon teams firing as small arms groups. Reinforcements arrive along the eastern edge (G1-G1) of the table as indicated. German artillery is off-board.

The German player moves second.

Terrain

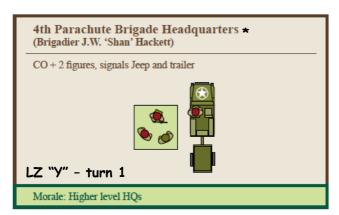
- All buildings start intact and can hold a maximum of 11 figures each.
- *Elevations* do not affect movement.
- Woods are classed as open (provide light cover and maximum 1" visibility).
- Observation the high Ground of the Groesbeek Heights may be used as an OP by either side (see rule 2.8).

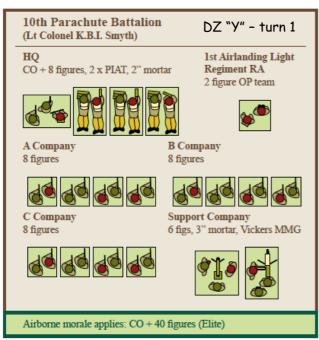


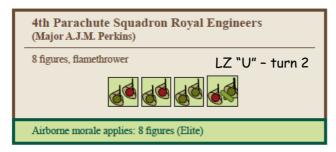
British Parachute troops advance form DZ "Y" towards the suburbs of Nijmegen, defended by Kampfgruppe Henke.

British - Day 1 (moves 1-8) - 1st Lift

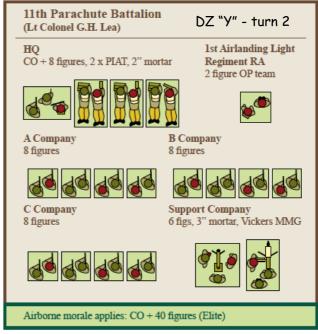
4th Parachute Brigade

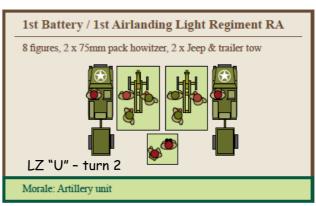


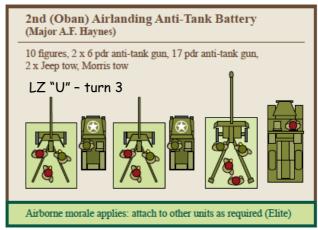


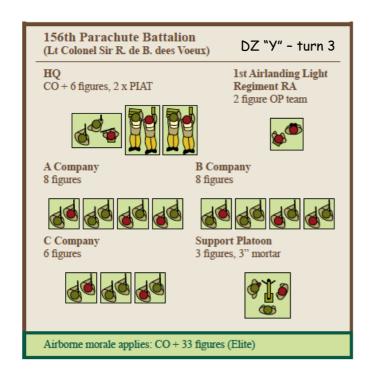


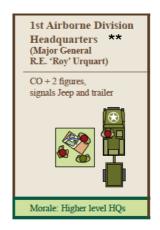
* higher order HQ for 4th Parachute Brigade Group units only





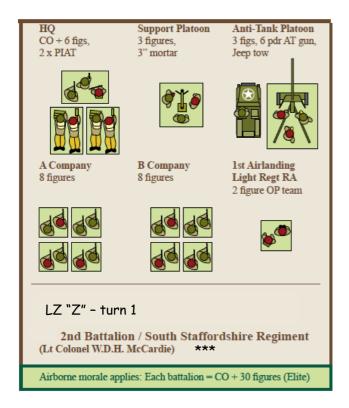


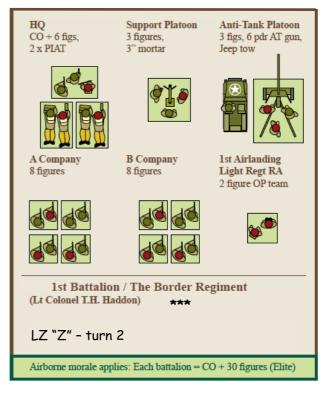




LZ "U" - turn 3
** higher level HQ for all airborne
forces

1st Airlanding Brigade



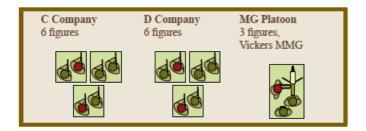


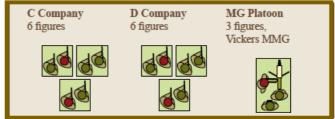
*** less 2 x companies "Coup de main" each landed at A & B by glider with parachute attached - turn 1

Glider-borne 'Coup de main' Bridge Forces

Group A - 2nd Battalion / South Staffordshire Regiment - 15 figures (no morale test required)

Group B - 1st Battalion / The Border Regiment - 15 figures (no morale test required)

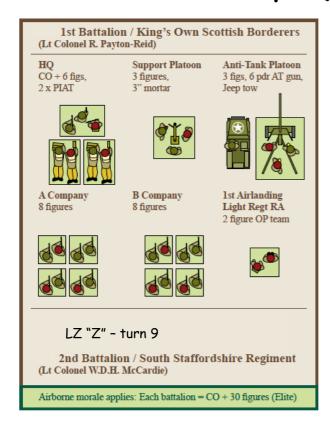




Grave Bridge Southern end @ A - Turn 1

Nijmegen Bridge Northern end @ B - Turn 1

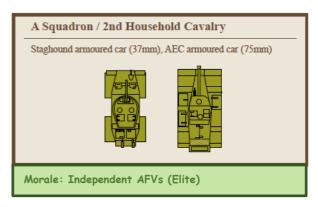
British - Day 2 (moves 9-16) - 2nd lift



All glider troops arrive as per rule 17.8 & 17.9 Roll for casualties, may move 3" and engage targets with small arms.



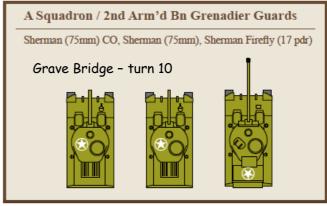
**** higher level HQ for 1st Airlanding Brigade units (including glider pilots) only

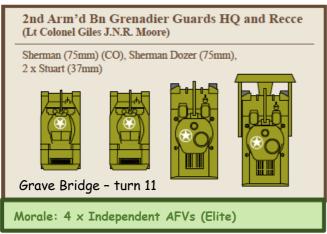


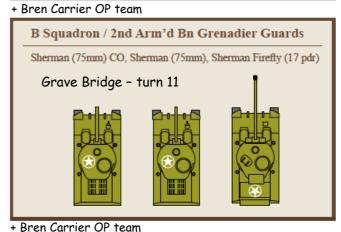
Grave Bridge - turn 9

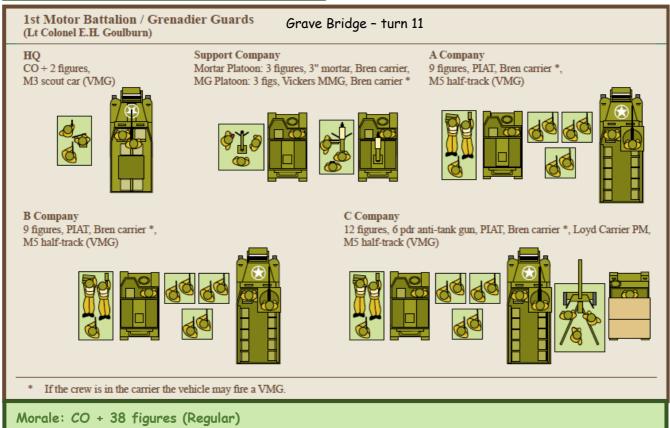
5th Guards Brigade Group



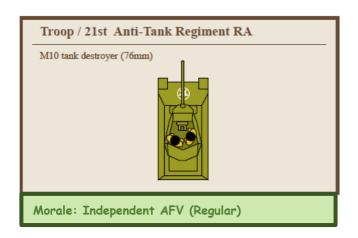






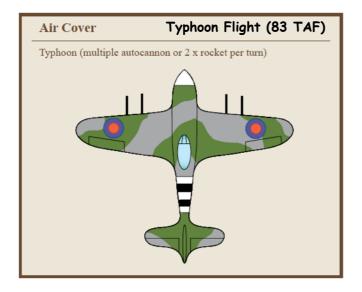


**** higher level HQ for Guards Brigade Group units only

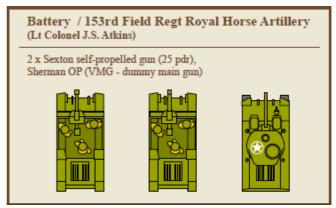


Grave Bridge - turn 12

Off-Table Support







Available from turn 10
OP from turn 9

"Under the command of General Browning, the 1st Airborne Division and the Polish Parachute Brigade were to seize the bridges over the Maas at Grave, the Waal at Nijmegen and the Rhine at Arnhem. British ground forces were to pass over and form a bridgehead"

Operation Market Garden - Then & Now Volume 1 Karel Margery

British Guns and Vehicles Data

G UNS			
Description	AT / HE Value	Notes	
2" mortar	HE 6 pts table 4	Minimum range 3", maximum range 18"	
3" mortar	HE 8 pts table 4	Minimum range 6", maximum range 48"	
PIAT hand held AT	AT class 2 / HE 8pts table 4	Maximum range 6"	
launcher			
6pdr anti-tank	AT 3 / HE 6 pts table 4	2 rounds AT 2 (APDS)	
75mm pack howitzer	AT 4 / HE 10 pts table 4	Maximum range IDF 72"	
17pdr anti-tank **	AT 1 / HE 8 pts table 4		
25pdr field gun	12 pts table 4	OFF TABLE	

VEHICLES				
Vehicle	Speed	Armour	Hull Weapons	Turret Weapons
Јеер	24/12	F	-	-
Humber scout car	30/15	Е	VMG	-
M3 Scout Car *	30/15	Е	VMG	-
Bren Carrier *	30/15	Е	VMG	-
M5 half-track (MG) *	30/15	Е	VMG	-
Loyd carrier PM	24/12	F	-	-
Stuart (37mm)	30/15	D	VMG	AT 4 / HE 6pts on
				table 4 (or VMG)
Staghound Armoured Car	30/15	D	VMG	AT 4 / HE 6pts table
(37mm)				4 (or VMG)
AEC armoured car	30/15	D	-	At 3 / HE 10pts table
(75mm)				4 (or VMG)
Sherman (75mm)	24/12	С	VMG	AT 3 / HE 10 pts on
				table 4 (or VMG)
Sherman Firefly	24/12	С	-	AT class 1 / no HE
(17pdr)**				(or VMG)
M10 tank destroyer	24/12	D	-	AT 2 / HE 8pts on
(76mm)				table 4

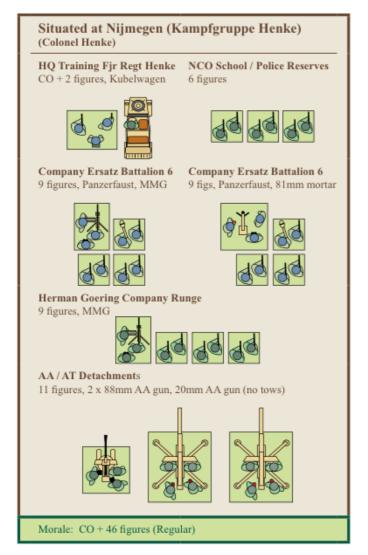
 $[\]mbox{\scriptsize \star}$ Personnel carriers can continue to fire when all passengers have dismounted.

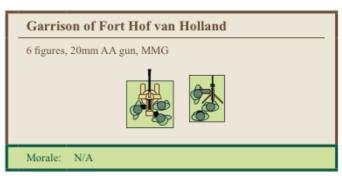
^{**} AT ranges are: short 0-12", medium 12-36", long 36-60".

A IRCRAFT		
Description	Туре	Ground Attack Armament
Hawker Typhoon ***	Superior fighter bomber	Multiple 20mm autocannon <u>OR</u> 2 x rockets per turn

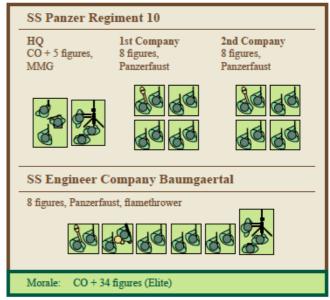
^{***} May bomb at low altitude. Treat as dive bomber, but hit for D6 throw of 5 or 6. Can be driven off by anti-aircraft fire.

German - Day 1 (moves 1-8)





Within 12" of Grave Road Bridge



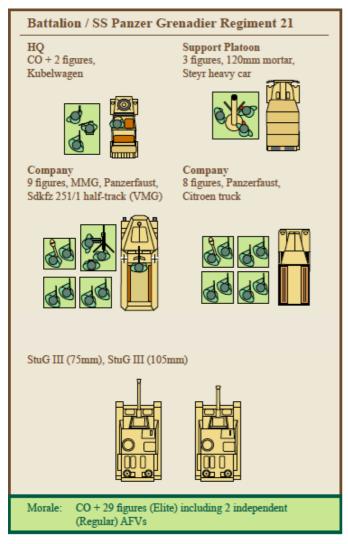
Not within 12" of Nijmegen Road Bridge

From Venlo (G1-G1) - turn 4

"... it is reported that one of the broken panzer divisions has been sent back to the area North of Arnhem to rest & refit; this might produce some 50 tanks."

Operation "Comet" - Intelligence Report
7th September 1944

Kampfgruppe "Schultze" II & III Battalions, SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment 21



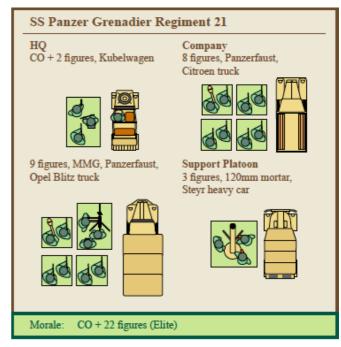
From Venlo (G1-G1) - turn 4

10th SS Battlegroup HQ

SS Brigadier Harmel

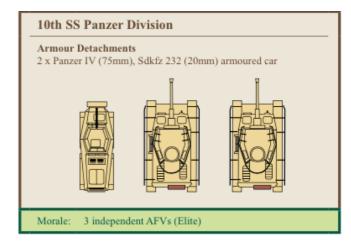


\$ higher order HQ for all 10th SS Panzer elements From Venlo (G1-G1) - turn 5

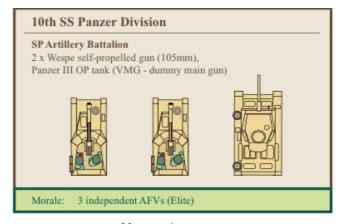


From Venlo (G1-G1) - turn 4

II Battalion, SS Panzer Regiment 10



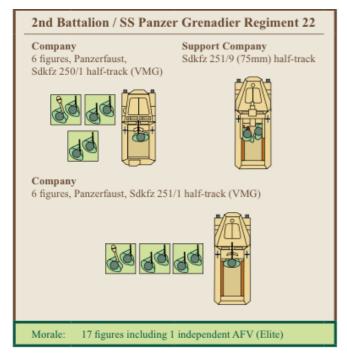
From Venlo (G1-G1) - turn 5



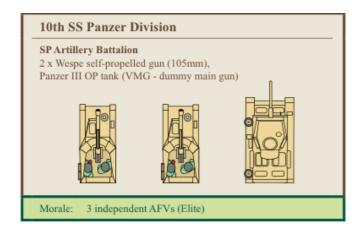
Off-board - turn 5 OP arrives - turn 4

German - Day 2 (moves 9-16)

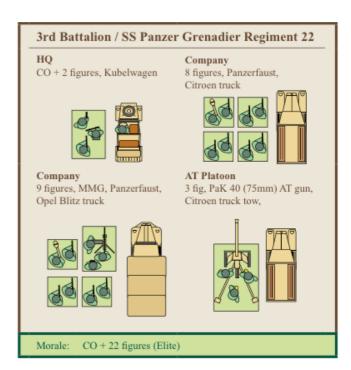
Kampfgruppe "Paetsch"



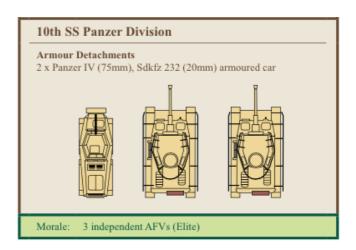
From Venlo (G1-G1) - turn 10



Off board - turn 11 OP arrives - turn 10



From Venlo (G1-G1) - turn 10



From Venlo (G1-G1) - turn 12

German Guns and Vehicles Data

G UNS			
Description	AT / HE Value	Notes	
Panzerfaust AT rocket	AT 2 / HE 6 pts table 4	Minimum range 6"	
launcher			
80mm mortar (medium)	HE 8 pts table 4	Minimum range 6", maximum range 48"	
120mm mortar (heavy)	HE 12 pts table 4	Minimum range 6", Maximum range 60"	
20mm <i>AA</i>	Autocannon 6"/16"/30" direct - 8 pts		
75mm Pak 40 AT	AT 2 / HE 10 pts table 4		
105mm howitzer	AT 3 / HE 12 pts table 4	OFF TABLE	
88mm AA *	AT 2 / HE 12 pts table 4	AT ranges 0-12", 12-36", 36-60".	
		HE bands 6 x 10"	

Vehicles				
Vehicle (Main Weapon)	Speed	Armour	Hull Weapons	Turret Weapons
Kubelwagen	30/15	۴L	-	-
Truck /heavy car	24/12	F	-	-
Sdkfz 10 HT prime mover	24/12	۴L	-	-
Sdkfz 250/1+251 / 1	30/15	Е	VMG**	-
Sdkfz 251/9 (75mm)	30/15	Е	AT 4 / HE 10 pts table 4	-
Sdkfz 232 (20mm) armoured car	30/15	Е	-	Autocannon
Panzer III OP	24/12	С	VMG	VMG
Stug III (long 75mm)	24/12	С	AT class 2 / HE 10 pts table 4 (or VMG)	-
Stug III (105mm)	24/12	С	AT class 3 / HE 12 pts table 5 (or VMG)	-
Panzer IV (long 75mm)	24/12	С	VMG	AT 2 / HE 10pts on table 4 (or VMG)

^{*} AT ranges are: short 0-12", medium 12-36", long 36-60". HE bands are: 6×10 "

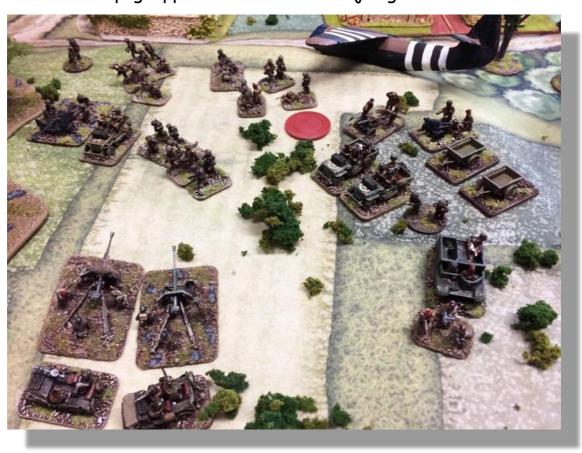
"...but the Germans, General, the Germans!"

Major-General Sosabowski (1st Polish Parachute Brigade)
Operation "Comet" planning meeting,
5th September, 1944

^{**} Personnel carriers can continue to fire when all passengers have dismounted.



Kampfgruppe Henke defends Nijmegen suburbs



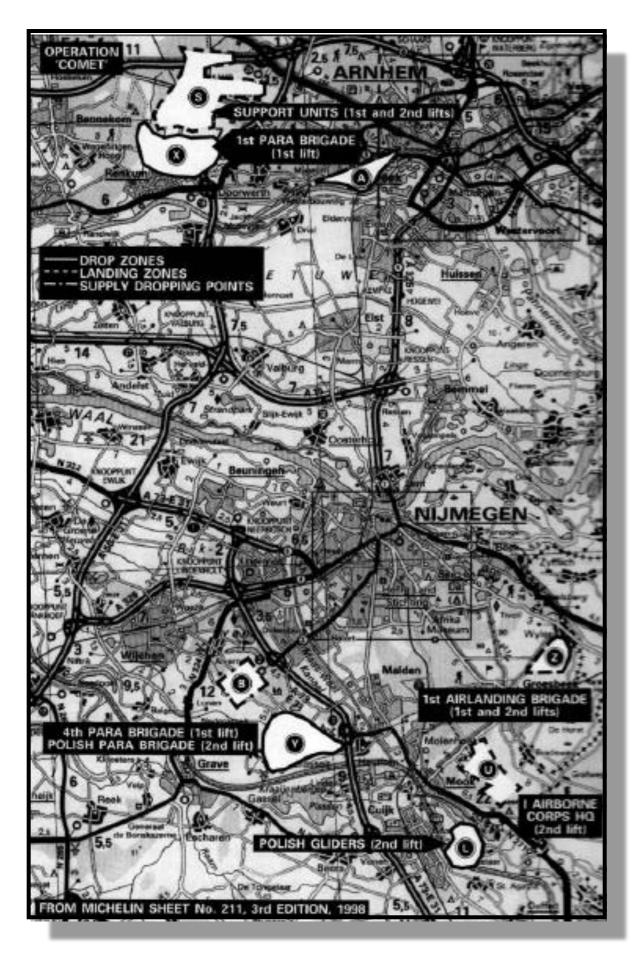
British 1_{st} Air Landed Brigade - LZ "Z"



British 1_{st} Airborne HQ - LZ "U"



British 4th Parachute Brigade- DZ "Y"



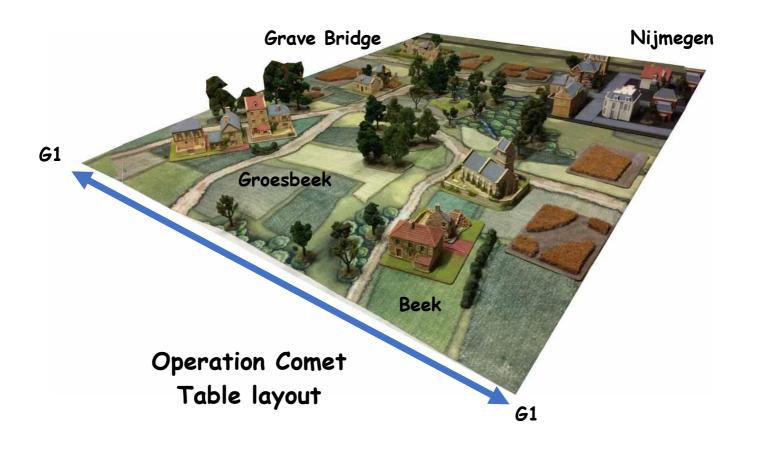
Operation "Comet" - LZs & DZs superimposed on a modern map "Operation Market Garden - Then and Now Volume 1" - Karel Margery

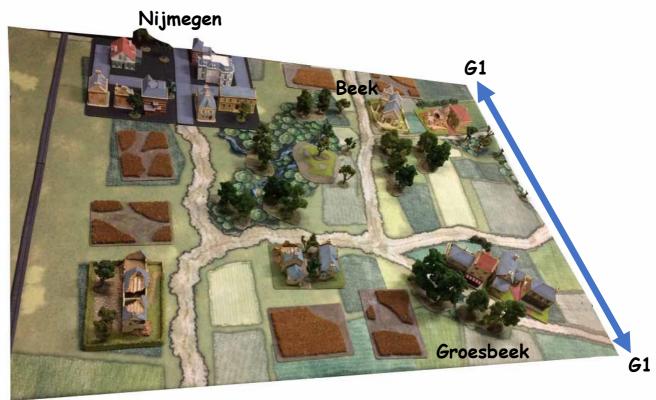


British 1st Air Landed Brigade - LZ "Z"



British 1_{st} Airborne Divisional Artillery - LZ "U"





Grave Bridge

Operation Comet: Battle Map

original map taken from Rapid Fire Operation Market Garden book with permission from the author Colin Rumford OP TITITUTE TO THE TOTAL TOTAL PROPERTY OF THE PARTY OF THE DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY OF Arnhem В The firmed and the companion of the first of Beck LZ "Z" German Border (Reichsward) To Venlo G1 G1

 $(8' \times 6')$