

<title>THE DEVILS' DROP</title>

<h2>THE DEVILS' DROP</h2>

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<b>The Primosole Bridge south of Catania, Sicily, 13-14 July 1943:</b>

The bridge over the Simeto River was necessary for a quick resolution to the 8th Army's campaign across the island of Sicily. It fell to the British 1st Airborne Brigade to take the

Primosole bridge, with the 3rd Commando to take the smaller bridge at the Ponte dei Malati a few miles south. As the brigade's planes neared the Sicilian coast they ran into serious trouble. Allied warships of the invasion fleet, which had been bombed t

hat very night, opened up on the hapless air fleet. The ensuing confusion wreaked havoc on the planned paratroops and only a small force under Colonel Pearson managed to land and assemble in the assigned drop zone. The Germans had been alerted to a poten

tial Allied paratroop and had airlifted and paratrooped elements of the 3rd Regiment, 1st Fallschirmjaeger Division to the Catania aerodrome the day before the Allied offensive began. The Germans, under Captain Schmidt of the 1st MG Battalion, quickly dep

loyed south of the bridge in preparation for an attack.<p>

<b>AFTERMATH:</b> Captain Schmidt had set his defenses directly along the path of the Allied air attack. During the course of the paratroop, several gliders were shot down by a well-sited machinegun fire from the Johnny positions. Nonetheless, a small gr

oup of 250 Red Devils easily captured the bridge from its Italian defenders. In the morning, the Fallschirmjaegers counterattacked. The fighting was intense with bitter hand-to-hand melees in the farmhouses and vineyards of the surrounding countryside.

As the pressure mounted, the British were forced to withdraw to positions southwest of the bridge. The battered British paras would have to wait for reinforcements.

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<b>VICTORY CONDITIONS:</b> To win the British player must capture the bridge intact <b>or</b> capture buildings 17W3 and 17P4. Any other result is a German victory.<p>

<b>MAPBOARDS</b><br>

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|        13|
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<p><b>TURN RECORD CHART</b><br>

German sets up first.<br>

British move first.<br>

The game is up to 8 turns long (use Platoon Leader).

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<b>British Forces available the night of 13/14 July</b><br>

<i>1st Parachute Brigade enter via paradrop [NB: only 2-3 companies actually landed at or near the bridge]</i> <b>[ELR 5] {SAN 4}</b><p> 10x6-4-8, 6x3-4-8, 10-2, 9-1, 2x8-0, 3xLMG, 2xMMG, 2xDC, SFCP<p>

<i>Reinforcements enter turn 3 or 4 via glider:</i><p>

6x2-2-8, 2x57L ATG, 2x20L AA, 2x76 MRT, 6xJeep

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<b>Axis Forces available the night of 13/14 July</b><br>

<i>Elements of an Italian Security Battalion</i><b>[ELR 0] {SAN 4}</b><p> 9x3-3-6, 8-0, 7-0, 6+1, 2xLMG, HMG, 3xtrucks, 4x1-5-7, 5x1S Foxholes<p>

<i>Elements of the MG Battalion, 1st Fallschirmjaeger Division, set up south of the bridge </i><b>[ELR 5]</b><p>

5x5-4-8, 2x2-2-8, 9-2, 9-1, 8-0, 2xHMG, 75 RCL, 81 MRT, 6xWire, 7x1S Foxholes, 4xSangars

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<b>DEVIL'S DROP INITIAL SSR:</b><br><ol>

<li>EC are moderate with a mild breeze from the north. The scenario takes place at night during a half moon. NVR is 4.<br>

<li>Prior to the German setup, the British player may pick the location of a two hex-wide ford across the Simeto within 10 hexes of the bridge.<br>

<li>The British player must record the drop hexes and glider landing hexes prior to the Axis player's set up.<br>

<li>The British player can designate 2 squad equivalents as combat engineers/sappers.<br>

<li>The river is deep with a slow current. Islands do not exist. Orchard hexes represent olive groves, wheatfields are vineyards. A one lane vehicular stone bridge is located in hexes 704-709.<br>

</ol><i>See below for scenario source and design information.</i>

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<h2>THE CAMPAIGN GAME - DEVIL'S DROP AND THE PRIMOSOLE BRIDGE</h2>

**The Primosole Bridge south of Catania, Sicily, 15 July 1943:** The evening of 14 July, the Durham Light Infantry Regiments, 50th Division approached the bridge to link up with the paratroopers. The 50th Division was loathe to counterattack on such

sort notice, and so laagered for the night. In the morning the 8th DLI supported by squadrons of the 44th Royal Tank Regiment attempted a coup de main on the bridge. They were bloodily repulsed by the German paras. The British commanders were consideri

ng another daylight charge, when Lt. Colonel Pearson suggested a flanking maneuver across a hidden ford. The night of the 16th saw the 8th DLI successfully cross the river and attack the bridge from two sides. As dawn lifted, the British tanks rolled in

to action. Undaunted and reinforced by their Signals Company and Pioneer Battalion, the German Fallschirmjaegers fought savagely using every means at their disposal. The fighting was fiercest in the vineyards surrounding the old farmhouses.

**AFTERMATH:** The fighting was intense with both sides taking heavy casualties. At one point the British were surprised when a captured Sherman tank drove up and fired a quick succession of shots then drove off. British tank thrusts were stopped co

ld by hidden 88s and reinforcing elements of the Panzer Regiment Herman Goering. Intense artillery barrages stopped the German counterattacks from progressing and renewed attacks by the 6th and 9th DLI put new vigor in the British attack. Close range ta

nk blasts were finally too much for the resolute Germans and they started to withdraw on the evening of 17 July. The British plan for a quick drive on Messina had failed. The price was high, over 800 soldiers lay dead in the vineyards and farmhouses sur

rounding the bridge.

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**Use the forces of "THE DEVILS' DROP" to begin the scenario. Use the "PLATOON LEADER" rules from "CRITICAL HIT."**

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Scenario	Date	Attacker	Conditions	Moon	Hist
1	Night 7/14/43	British	Clear, Dry, N, m	4	-1
2	AM 7/14/43	German	Clear, Dry, N, m	NA	-1
3	AM 7/15/43	Dual	Clear, Dry, . . .	NA	0
4	Night 7/16/43	British	Part. Cloudy, Dry, . . .		+1

5	AM 7/16/43	British	Fog, Mod., ...	NA	0
6	AM 7/17/43	British	Clear, Dry, ...	NA	-1

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**CAMPAIGN SSR:**

- <li>Captured equipment was well used by both sides. Any captured equipment will be available in following CG turns on a dr >2 unless malfunctioned. <br>
- <li>In Scenario 2 the British suffer ammo shortage.<br>
- <li>In Scenario 6 the German player can purchase a Truck Bomb that is equivalent to a normal-size Goliath-like ordance.

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**British Reinforcement Groups**

ID	Type	# squads	Date	CPP	Turn	Max	Notes
I1	6-4-8	5	14 am	5	1	2	lrw
I2	4-5-7	4	14 night	4	2	16	lrw
I3	4-4-7	4	15 am	3	2	16	lrw
I4	HMG Squad	1	15 night				cr
I5	MMG Squad	1	15 night				cr
I6	Lt. MTR Sect	2	15 night	2	1	8	cr
A1	Sherman V(a)	2	15 am	5	2	12	r
A2	Priest (a)	1	15 pm	7	2	8	r
O1	75 OBA (HE,S)		15 am	3	1	8	o
O2	88 OBA (HE,S,IR)		15 am	4	1	8	o
O3	105 OBA (HE,S,IR)		15 am	5	1	4	o
O4	200 (NOBA) (HE,S)		14 am	5	1	1	w
M1	10 FPP		14 am	1	3	6	
M2	SAN Increase				1	2	11
M3	Attack Chit				2	1	6

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**German Reinforcement Groups**

ID	Type	# squads	Date	CPP	Turn	Max	#	Notes
I1	5-4-8	3	14 am	5	2	7		lrw
I2	8-3-8	3	15 am	5	2	10		elrw
I3	4-6-7	3	14 am	4	1	4		lrw
I4	4-4-7	3	14 am	3	1	4		lrw
I5	MMG Squad	1	14 am	2	3	16		cr
I6	HMG Squad	1	14 am	2	3	16		cr
I7	HW MTR Sect	1	14 am	2	3	16		cr
A1	PSW232	2	14 pm	3	1	1		r
A2	PzA II	1	14 pm	3	1	1		r
A3	PzKwIIIL	2	16 am	4	2	4		r
A4	PsKwIVF2	1	16 am	5	2	4		r
A5	StuH 42	1	16 am	6	1	1		r
A6	Captured Sherman	1	15 am	2	1	1		rx
A7	Truck bomb	1	17 am	1	1	1		r
O1	88 OBA (HE,S)		14 pm	3	1	2		o
O2	105 OBA (HE,S)		15 am	4	1	1		o

G1	75 RCL	2	14 am	1	1	10	cv
G2	105 RCL	1	14 am	3	1	6	cv
G3	75 ATG	1	14 pm	2	1	8	cv
G4	88L AA	1	14 pm	3	1	10	cv
F1	Focke Wulfe	1	14 am	4	1	1	b
M1	20 FPP		14 am	1	2	20	
M2	SAN Increase			1	2	22	

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<b>CG DRM:</b>

	British	German
Leader	0	-1
Battle Hardening	0	-1
Artillery OBA	-1	+1
CPP Replenishment	0	0
Intensity Level	MID	MID

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<b>FPP Table</b>

	FPP	Notes
Foxhole	3/2/1	
Sangar	7	
Trench	10	g
Roadblock	12	g
Wire	15	g
Fortified Building	10	
HIP	5/3/1	
"?"	1	

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g - available to Germans only.<br>

#/#/# - for foxholes, the cost per squad; for HIP, the cost per squad/HS/crew.

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<h3>Historical OB:</h3>

<b>British Forces available 13/14 July</b><br>

- <li>1st Parachute Brigade [ELR 5] <br>
- <li><li>1st Battalion - Lt. Colonel Pearson<br>
- <li><li>2nd Battalion - Lt. Colonel Frost<br>
- <li><li>3rd Battalion - Lt. Colonel Yeldham<br>
- <li><li>1st Airlanding Anti-Tank Battery<br>
- <li><li>1st Airlanding Light AA Battery<br>
- <li><li>1st Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers<br>
- <li><li>Naval Bombardment Detachments (x2) (NOBA Newfoundland) <br>
- <li><li><li><li>Detachments 21st Independent Parachute Company (Pathfinders)

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<b>Axis Forces available 13/14 July</b><br><ul>

- <li>Italian Security Battalion [ELR 0], with trucks<br>
- <li>1st Fallschirmjaeger Division [ELR 5] <br>
- <li><li>1st Fallschirmjaeger MG Battalion - Schmidt (south of bridge or as reinforcements from southern mapboard) w 2xRCL<br>
- <li><li>(2-4 pillboxes at bridge, and other prepared positions) <p>

**Reinforcements arriving am 14 July - Stangenberg**  
<ul><ul><li><li>1st Fallschirmjaeger Signals Company - Fassl am<br><li><li>Ad hoc elements various German HQ personnel am [ELR 3] <br><li><li>Mixed elements Fortress Battalion and Flak Catania (88 + 75) pm<br><li><li>Recon elements of the Panzer Regiment HG attached to Kampfgruppe Schmalz (3xAC+Nashorn?) pm<br><li><li>2-3 Focke Wulfes strafed the bridge in am<br><li><li>80 mm OBA</li></li></ul></ul><hr>

**British Forces available 15, 16, 17 July**  
<ul><li>[Withdrawal of 1st Parachute Brigade, night 14 July] <br><li>50th Infantry Division [ELR 3] <br><ul><li><li>8th Durham Light Infantry 15 July am<br><li><li>6th Durham Light Infantry 16 July am<br><li><li>9th Durham Light Infantry 16 July am<br><li><li>6 Regiments Royal Artillery (25#, 105, 5.5")<br></ul></ul><ul><li>4th Armored Brigade<br><ul><li><li>44th Royal Tank Regiment 15 July am, 16 July am<br><li><li>3rd County of London Yeomanry 17 July am<br></ul></ul>

**German Forces available 15 July**  
<ul><li>[Withdraw Signal Company; it returns pm. Allow redeployment of German forces] <br><li>1st Fallschirmjaeger Division<br><ul><li><li>1st Fallschirmjaeger Pioneer Battalion - Adolf (less 2 companies) <br><li><li>1st Fallschirmjaeger MG Battalion (+RCL) <br><li><li>1st Fallschirmjaeger Signals Company (withdraws 15 am, returns 15 pm.) <br><li><li>Mixed elements Fortress Battalion and Flak Catania (88s) <br><li><li>Captured Sherman<br><li><li>Elements Panzer Regiment Herman Goering, or Brigade HQ, HG Division(?) 16 July<br><li><li>Improvisation with Explosive-laden trucks to destroy bridge 17 July am<br></ul></ul><hr>

**Source:** D'Este, Carlo. 1988. Bitter Victory. E.P. Dutton, NY, 666 pp. (pp. 349-383, and Appendices B & H)<p>

**Scenario design:** Jeffrey Shields