

## Turnbull: A Micro Melee Scenario

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### Turnbull

#### Historical Background

Amid the chaos that characterized the airborne operations on the morning of 6 June 1944, Lieutenant Turner B. Turnbull and 41 men of 3<sup>rd</sup> Rifle Platoon Company D were dispatched by Colonel Benjamin H. Vandervoort to take up blocking positions just north of Neuville Au Plain in anticipation of a German counter-attack at Ste. Mère-Eglise. Turnbull strategically placed his heavy weapons and made sure his men were spaced out behind a massive hedgerow. Later, Colonel Vandervoort delivered two 57mm anti-tank guns, which Turnbull sited to fire down the main road.

Little more than twenty-minutes passed when the platoon spotted a group of U.S. paratroopers escorting German POWs waving orange signal flags. The prisoners were walking along the road toward them in a column of twos, casually singing and whistling. Realizing it was a ruse, Turnbull's men unleashed a hail of fire. However, they severely underestimated the enemy strength, which was actually in excess of 190 men. As the morning wore on, Turnbull's platoon was reduced by accurate German mortar and small arms fire. Supported by the Panzerjäger Abteilung 191 with at least one self-propelled gun and several obsolescent tanks, a German flanking maneuver threatened to encircle the platoon. Consequently, Turnbull and his men were

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forced to withdraw. In spite of this, they managed to slow the German advance toward Ste. Mère-Eglise, which provided a measure of tactical relief.<sup>1</sup>

### Left Flank Situation

During the actual event, one rifle squad commanded by Turnbull's assistant, Lieutenant Isaac Michaelman, was positioned to the left of the road. Under Michaelman, the squad advanced through an orchard and deployed within the barns near a farmhouse. He believed they could remain hidden and strike the enemy flank as it came abreast. However, by the time Michaelman's squad was in place, the Germans had almost drawn even.

Along with Private Joseph C. Hudy, Lieutenant Michaelman moved to the loft of one of the barns for observation. That left Sergeant Robert Niland with four other men and a machine gun at ground level. Unfortunately, before Michaelman's squad could execute their plan, the two squads behind the big hedge on the right of the road opened fire.<sup>2</sup>

### Company D, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 505<sup>th</sup> PIR, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division

- 1x Rifle Squad (Lt. Isaac Michaelman): TQR 4 (d4 rifle grenades)
- 1x M1919 LMG: TQR 3
- 1x Bazooka Team: TQR 3
- 1x M1 (57mm) ATG: TQR 3

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 1058<sup>th</sup> Grenadier Regiment, 91<sup>st</sup> Luftlande Division

- 1x Platoon HQ: TQR 3
- 3x Rifle Squad: TQR 2, 3, 4
- 2x StuG III Ausf. G: TQR 2 & 3 (turn 2/north road)

### Set-up

Michaelman's squad begins the game in the orchard (no closer than 12" to the barns). The entire team must move to the barns without delay and defend them for two turns. They may not begin the withdrawal to Neuville Au Plain until turn three. Two German squads enter from the northern road on turn one. The third (flanking) squad and HQ unit enter from the west side within 24" of the northern most edge of the board on turn three. Withhold this information from the U.S. players.

### Left Flank Victory Conditions

The U.S. wins by holding the barn for two full turns and escaping the envelopment. This is accomplished if at least one stand manages to reach Neuville Au Plain. However, they may not begin their withdrawal, or progress south of the barns until the first chit of turn three. The German wins by capturing the barn by the end of turn two, or by preventing the escape of Lt. Michaelman's men. There is no turn limit and play will continue until the victory conditions are met, or it is obviously unattainable.

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<sup>1</sup>SLA Marshall, Night Drop: (Atlantic Monthly Press, Little Brown and Company, 1962): 31–39

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

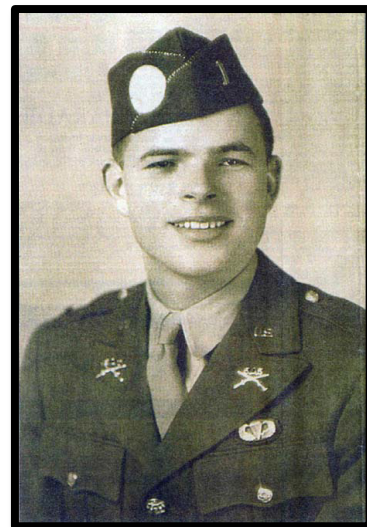
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### Right Flank Situation

The Germans are wasting no time and losing no men trying to work the road. There is convenient cover on both sides of it. Confronting Turnbull's position, within a few yards of where the German column has been stopped, there is a large wood which runs obliquely southeastward until it comes almost even with the hedge covering Turnbull's men. This they have made their main avenue of advance, but as they poke forward through the forest toward the American flank, they also send out a small outflanking party far over on the left, which stays beyond reach of the American machine guns. The pincers in this broad envelopment move forward together. While the mortars beat at the platoon, the infantry maneuver threatens to bag the survivors whole.



Against the twin threat, Turnbull can do nothing but hold his ground, and simply by the act of holding, slow down the advance of the enemy toward Ste. Mère-Église. The shelling continues to thin the platoon's ranks. Its own return fire has no noticeable effect except to keep the flankers far out and make them move in a wider circle. That is the way the fight wears on through the morning and early afternoon. The advance is slow but even; on both flanks, it passes on beyond the American line. Still, Turnbull sticks it out. By the time the enemy group working on the shorter bite and coming through the woods on the right is at the point of entering Neuville, the party which had moved out to the westward can, with one more bound, be across the platoon's line of retreat.<sup>3</sup>

### Setting

Part 2 of Turnbull's Platoon presents the action on the right side of the road. The bulk of the U.S. platoon is opposed by a company of German soldiers advancing on its right flank.

#### **Company D, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 505<sup>th</sup> PIR, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division**

- 1x Platoon HQ (Lt. Turnbull): TQR 5
- 2x Rifle Squad: TQR 3 & 4 (d6 rifle grenade)
- 1x M1919 LMG: TQR 3
- 2x 60mm Mortar Team: TQR 3 (each tube has 8 HE; 2 smoke)
- 1x M1 (57mm) ATG: TQR 3

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 1058<sup>th</sup> Grenadier Regiment, 91<sup>st</sup> Luftlande Division**

- 1x Company HQ: TQR 4
- 2x Platoon HQ: TQR 3
- 6x Rifle Squad: TQR 1-4
- 2x Marder III SP AT Gun: TQR 2 & 3 (turn 1/north road)
- 1x 4-tube Battery (8.0cm mortar): TQR 3; availability 75% (24 HE; 8 smoke)
- 2x TRP; fire may also be adjusted by an off board FO: TQR 2 with line of sight to Neuville Au Plain

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

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## Set-up

Turnbull's men begin the game behind the bocage in the right field. As a result of a German SP gun firing on their position, the AT gun crew begins the game identified and in a morale state of "suppressed." They may be placed in the nearest building or protected by surrounding cover. As the game begins, the ATG crew must roll a d6 TQR save to rally. If successful, they may re-crew the gun, which is loaded with APCBC. The German platoon starts the game at the northeast hedgerow and immediately begins the envelopment maneuver.

## Right Flank Victory Conditions

Turnbull's men must hold the position in the hedgerow for six turns. The German wins by eliminating all enemy resistance before the end of turn six.

## Aftermath

"Even before Michaelman's squad got back to their gate, the platoon across the road felt the pressure rise. Mortar fire, in heavy doses, fell accurately along the hedge line, and though the bank and ditch were fair protection, there had been no time to dig foxholes. They could get no line on the mortar park; the big whammy seemed to come out of nowhere. That was what got them. A self-propelled gun appeared suddenly on the scene, sharp-shooting from 500 yards. Its second round knocked off a bazooka man on the road block. Its fifth round singed the 57mm AT gun in Neuville and drove the crew to temporary cover amid the houses. In a few minutes, the crew came roaring back with two well-placed rounds, which killed the German gun.

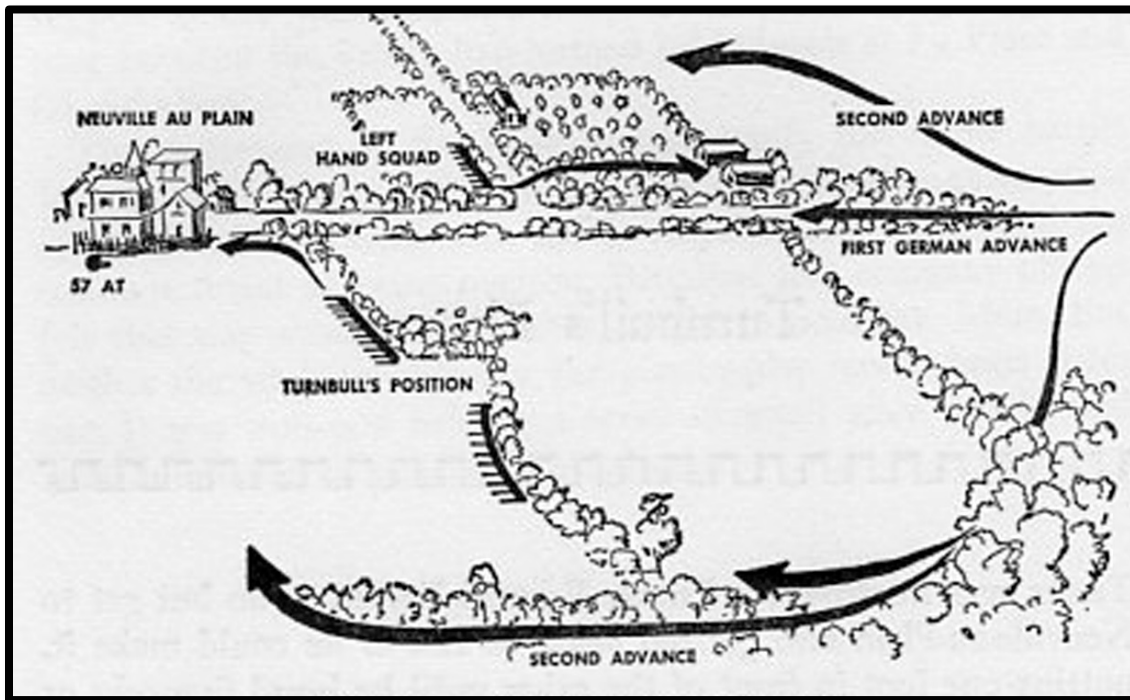
There was no answer for the enemy mortar fire. It built steadily upward, heavier in volume and increasing in accuracy. The first round which exploded into the line drew blood. Thereafter, hour by hour, casualties continued to mount."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>SLA Marshall, Night Drop: 31–39



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**Map. Turnbull**

**GM NOTES:** The "Left Flank" is difficult for the U.S. player. In essence, it is less about Michaelman's attempt to stop the German advance than it is a simulation of his attempt to avoid envelopment. In two turns, the Germans will barely make it to the orchard, but if Michaelman is delayed by even a few phases, he will be hard pressed to escape. Consider sacrificing the machine gun team by assigning them to *rearward* duty. This might provide Michaelman with enough time to beat a hasty retreat.

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Although the U.S. player begins hidden on the "Right Flank," he is advised to avoid setting up in the bocage because of the German mortar threat. Hide in the woods, nearby trees or the town until the German artillery is depleted, then dash to the hedgerow and mount a defense. The Germans should only place his TRPs once the U.S. player has finished hiding his units on the map. Use smoke to advance as quickly as possible and avoid unnecessary casualties from the U.S. 60mm mortars. Avoid a slow advance through the woods, as you will never make it to *Turnbull's Position* by turn 6.

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## D Company/505 PIR

(Company HQ: 1x Thompson SMG, 1x M1 Carbine, 6x M1 Garand)

(Platoon HQ: 1x M3A1 SMG, 4x M1 Garand)

(Rifle Squad: 1x Thompson SMG, 1x M1 Carbine, 8x M1 Garand, 1x BAR, 1x M1903\*)

(Medium Machine Gun: 1x M1917 w/ tripod, 1x Thompson SMG, 4x M1 Garand)

(Bazooka Team: 1x M9 Bazooka, 1x M1 Carbine)

\*Rifle grenade adds one fire power factor from point blank through medium range, once per phase.

### Movement: 6mm

Slow	Standard	Tactical	Double Time	Dash
3cm	6cm	4.5cm	10.5cm	18cm

### FPF

Range	Point Blank 0-15cm	Short 15.1-30cm	Medium 30.1-60cm	Long 60.1-120cm	Extreme 120.1-240cm
CO HQ	12	7	7	7	6
Platoon HQ	8	4	4	4	4
Rifle Squad	17	12	12	10	10
MMG	15	10	10	10	10
Bazooka Team	3	1	1	NA	NA

HQ Platoon TQR: 5 (Turnbull)

Damage Rating: 13

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Squad 1/3 TQR: 3

Damage Rating: 15

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Squad 2/3 TQR: 4

Damage Rating: 16

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Squad 3/3 TQR: 4 (Michaelman)

Damage Rating: 16

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MMG 2 TQR: 3

Damage Rating: 9

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MMG 3 TQR: 3

Damage Rating: 9

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Bazooka 3 TQR: 3

Damage Rating: 5

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## Ammo Consumption

60mm Mortar Team 1: HE □□□□□□□□; smoke □□

Damage Rating: 5 □□□□□□

60mm Mortar Team 2: HE □□□□□□□□; smoke □□

Damage Rating: 5 □□□□□□

Bazooka 1: HEAT □□□□□□

## M1 (57mm) ATG 1

### APCPC

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### HE

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### Smoke

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## M1 (57mm) ATG 2

### APCPC

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### HE

□□□□

### Smoke

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