After Action Report
A Micro Melee Scenario

This AAR covers a game played on 22 March 2014 of the Micro Melee Boot Camp “Final Exercise” scenario entitled “Into the Fray at Briey.” Ben and Roger played the American forces, Stan the Germans, and Steve GM’d. To win, the Americans need to capture one of two designated buildings at the crossroads; failure to do so results in a German victory.

“Into the Fray at Briey” – Briey, France; 7 September 1944

Setting: Major General McLain, commander of the US 90th Infantry Division, has ordered the 357th Infantry Regiment to initiate the advance on Thionville northeast of Metz by capturing the mining town of Briey. The mission is given to the 2nd Battalion, which attacks directly eastward along the main highway from Etain. Meanwhile, the German 559th Volksgrenadier (VG) Division, formed during the summer of 1944 with a cadre of Eastern Front veterans, is rushed in to fill a gap in the line north of Metz. Major General von Mehler deploys units west of Thionville to stop the anticipated US advance. The battalion at Briey pushes two platoons across the narrow Woigot River to defend the main crossroads leading into the west side of the town. This AAR covers the US attack by a US company supported by a platoon of tanks, a section of TDs, and OBA along and north of the highway to capture the crossroads.
German Defensive Set-Up: Given the shorter effective ranges of the majority of the Sturmgewher-44 armed VG squads, Stan opted for a defense centered on the stone buildings around the crossroads. The 1st Platoon occupied the buildings on the north side of the highway and the 2nd Platoon the buildings south of it. The MG-42 MMG team attached to 1st Platoon set up in foxholes in the orchard north of the crossroads to cover the fields to the west and woods to the north and a 2nd Platoon squad dug in at the easternmost orchard south of the highway in hopes of ambushing any US AFVs that advanced that far with panzerfausts. Foxhole positions were placed among the crossroads buildings as fall-back positions should the buildings become untenable. The PaK-40 ATG deployed on the high ground in the NE corner of the board with good line of sight of the highway. One pre-registered 8.0cm mortar Target Reference Point (TRP) was placed on the highway even with the farm between the two orchards and a second TRP half way between the hedge line and northern woods at the approximate center of the woods. A two-vehicle Jagdpanzer section of Hetzers would become available as reinforcements beginning sometime during Turn 2. All German start positions were marked on a copy of the map and held off board until they were spotted, at which time they were placed on the board.
The American Plan: Roger and Ben decided on a two pronged attack that would, hopefully, converge on the crossroads from the west and the north. The US 1st Platoon and Company HQ with attached M1917 HMG teams would advance eastward south of the highway through the orchards and farm with the support of the tanks and TDs. The 2nd and 3rd Platoons, each with an attached Weapons Platoon M1919 MMG team, would advance in succession along the north edge of the board to clear the woods and farm and then turn south to the crossroads. The Weapons Platoon HQ and three 60mm mortar teams would advance to and set up in the vicinity of the farm in the NW corner of the board to provide support to both groups as needed. Two of the four Shermans would enter during Turn 1 along the highway and the remaining Shermans and two M-10 TDs would be held off board to see how the situation developed. The 105mm howitzer preparatory barrage was called in as a line target type along the dirt road leading north from the crossroads to the north board edge.

105mm Prep Fire: The map-plotted blind 18-round 105mm HE barrage landed along the road in a widely dispersed pattern. The American players left the room after all the hit locations were determined and returned when the damage and casualty results were resolved, but remained unaware of the results until the end of the game. Four rounds hitting near the orchard wiped out the German 1st Platoon MMG team dug in there and one round that landed near the crossroads suppressed the German Company HQ. One errant round hit an unoccupied objective building, but failed to bring it down or cause a fire. Fortunately for the Germans, the HQ, the only stand on the board that could call and direct the German off-board mortar fire, recovered from its suppression quickly. The Germans came through the potentially devastating barrage in good shape.
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The Game Begins: The US 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 3\textsuperscript{rd}, and Weapons Platoons set up on the board in the woods and fields north of the highway and west of the western dirt road. At the start of Turn 1 2\textsuperscript{nd} Platoon double timed across the dirt road toward the hedges west of the northern woods, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Platoon moved up to the road edge to provide over-watch, and Weapons Platoon began moving through the woods toward the farm. South of the highway, 1\textsuperscript{st} Platoon, followed closely by the Company HQ and HMG teams, entered from the west board edge and double-timed across the field toward the western orchard. The Germans held their fire and identified the moving US squads and teams.

First Blood: As soon as US 1\textsuperscript{st} Platoon reached and cleared the orchard and 2\textsuperscript{nd} Platoon entered the northern woods unscathed, Sherman No. 2, followed by Sherman No. 1, entered along the highway. As they reached the first bend, the German ATG scored turret and lower hull hits on No. 2 Sherman, brewing it up. The Veteran crew of No. 1 Sherman rolled past their burning comrade, but failed in their attempts to identify the source of fire. Realizing they had run ahead of their infantry support, Sherman No. 1 halted on the road near the farm. Guessing the rounds came from the high ground to the NE, the tank fired a couple of smoke rounds at the suspected location. Before the smoke screen developed fully, the hidden German ATG fired several rounds at Sherman No. 1 and scored a hit that failed to penetrate, but which caused internal spall. The crew passed morale despite a casualty and stayed in the fight. The German 2\textsuperscript{nd} Platoon squad in the eastern orchard decided to hold off on its panzerfaust ambush fearing the range was still too great to guarantee success.
Continuing US Advance: While the tank-ATG duel occurred, the US 2nd Platoon continued its steady advance eastward through the woods. The 3rd Platoon crossed the dirt road to the hedge as soon as 2nd Platoon disappeared into the woods. Weapons Platoon reached the farm and began to set up the mortars. Observing the threat developing at the US-occupied farm, a German 1st Platoon squad tried a long-range small arms attack on one of the US mortar teams, but failed to inflict casualties or suppress it. South of the highway, the US 1st Platoon exited the orchard and moved south to skirt the farm complex, using the farm's high walls as cover to try to approach the eastern orchard near its southern edge. While the two US HMG teams set up their guns in the western orchard to cover the highway to the east and the field to the NE the Company HQ called in to check the availability of the Battalion’s 81mm mortars and to call up the TDs.

German OBA Retribution: As the US 2nd Platoon reached the center of the north woods opposite the German northern TRP the VG Company HQ requested a North-South line target type barrage of HE centered on the point. Within 10 seconds the rounds began to fall on the woods and the field immediately south of it and the platoon HQ, one squad, the bazooka team, and attached MMG team were put out of action for the remainder of the game. The 3rd Platoon, which had now also entered the woods, were too far west to be affected by the mortar attack and the two lead 2nd Platoon squads survived unscathed.

Temperature Rises for German 1st Platoon: When the German ATG fire ceased presumably due to the smoke screen, Sherman No. 1 turned its attention to the crossroads building north of the highway from which enemy fire had been observed and began pumping 75mm HE rounds at it. The US 60mm mortars
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also got in the action and began lobbing mortar rounds at the building. At the request of the US 1st Platoon, which was nearing the eastern orchard, one mortar team dropped several smoke rounds in the field east of the orchard to help screen the platoon’s movement from possible observers in the buildings at the SW corner of the crossroads. As their building began to sustain significant damage, several units of the German 1st Platoon decided it was time to vacate it and relocate to their fallback positions. Miraculously, they made it to their foxholes without suffering serious casualties from all the US HE fire.

The Eastern Orchard: The US 1st Platoon moved up to the western wall of the eastern orchard while the smoke screen in the field to the east thickened and the two M-10 TDs rolled across the field to their rear. Sherman No. 1’s bow machine gunner began to sweep the north wall of the orchard, which unknowingly prevented the German 2nd Platoon squad dug in there from firing a volley of panzerfausts at the tank. Within point-blank range of the German squad, the leading US squad spotted the enemy and opened fire causing a casualty and suppression. Unable to return fire, the German squad went as deep in their holes as possible and the rest of US 1st Platoon closed up to the wall and poured fire into the enemy position.
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**Second German Mortar Barrage:** Realizing the German position in the eastern orchard was under attack, the VG Company HQ requested a second line target type mortar barrage of HE along the highway centered on the southern German TRP, and within 10 seconds the rounds began to fall. Unfortunately most of the rounds fell at the eastern end of the line and failed to cause casualties among the US 1st Platoon squads or damage Sherman No. 1 in the middle of the road. Two rounds did land near the German squad in the orchard inflicting several more casualties to that besieged unit.

![Surviving US 2nd Platoon Squads to Northern Farm Complex](image)

**The Northern Advance:** The two surviving US 2nd Platoon squads shook off the loss of their comrades and reached the eastern edge of the north woods. When the first German mortar barrage lifted, the 3rd Platoon renewed its advance through the woods and closed up to the 2nd Platoon squads observing the farm across the road. Failing to detect an enemy presence, the two 2nd Platoon squads rushed across the road up to the farm wall under the cover of 3rd Platoon, which was coming on line along the woods' edge. The smoke screen in front of the PaK-40 position was thinning and the gun crew re-acquired Sherman No. 1 stopped in the road and prepared to fire.

![M-10 TDs Enter To Support US 1st Platoon Advance](image)  
![Hetzers Arrive To Bolster German Defense](image)
Armored Reinforcements: Near the end of Turn 2 both sides committed their off-board armored assets. Sherman No. 4 rumbled down the highway and took up a covering position off the road near the western orchard’s NW corner. Sherman No. 3 followed at a distance. The two German Hetzers entered along the dirt road at the SE corner of the board and advanced toward the crossroads using the buildings as cover.

Climax: The lead Hetzer reached the intersection and prepared to pivot to engage Sherman No. 1. Before the pivot could be completed though Sherman No. 1 spotted the threat through the 60mm mortar explosions along the road between them and fired. This lucky shot hit the half concealed Hetzer in the flank and destroyed it. In the next instant Sherman No. 1 was hit in the flank by the PaK-40 on the hill and although the round failed to penetrate, spall was caused and the crew decided discretion was the better part of valor and bailed out. The US Company HQ succeeded in registering the battalion’s 81mm mortars on the hill occupied by the ATG and called for point target type barrage. Meanwhile, the German Company HQ noticed the US occupation of the farm north of the crossroads and in one Action Phase registered an 8.0cm mortar point target type barrage on the farm and north woods edge.

The game ended at this point as time ran out and before the mortar fire missions began to fall. At this point the game could have still gone either way. The US 81mm mortars likely would knock out the ATG on the hill and the German mortar attack likely would cause heavy casualties among the US 2nd and 3rd Platoons, possibly breaking the northern pincer. Despite losing the MMG team in the northern orchard,
the loss of one Hetzer, and the likely losses of the squad suppressed in the eastern orchard and the ATG on the hill, both German platoons in the crossroads settlement remained in pretty good shape and the US infantry would have to go in and dig them out.