

Assault on Lucherberg December 1944



What to Expect

This is a campaign about fighting with infantry in adverse conditions. I tried to make the campaign and the battles so close to reality as possible – so be prepared to be frustrated:

- Reinforcements will not arrive as expected.
- Visibility will be bad, making the use of artillery difficult.
- Losses have to be kept at a minimum since there are no replacements for the whole campaign.
- Ammunition can run short.
- Sometimes you will have ample artillery, sometimes artillery will be concentrated somewhere else.
- And the enemy will defend every inch of his territory!
- Most of the fighting will happen at night.

The tasks are very different too:

- You have to take three independent targets in a night attack – in kind of coup de main.
- You have to slowly push out the enemy from the village as reinforcements arrive piecemeal and losses have to be kept at a minimum.
- You have to relieve a bled out unit under fire with minimal losses.
- You have to push back enemy counter-attacks – sometimes only with artillery, sometimes with just a few G.I.s handling bazookas and rifles and sometimes your tanks and tank destroyers will fight some of the best German armour.
- And your enemy is difficult to assess – sometimes you will face quickly trained outfits consisting of Luftwaffe and Marine personnel – sometimes you will face veteran units hardened during the long years on the Eastern front.

There are also dull moments – although I kept them short - a mission seems to be achieved, but then the unexpected happens.

**104th Infantry Division (Timberwolves)**

2nd Bn / 415th Infantry Regiment
 3rd Bn / 415th Infantry Regiment
 C / 750th Tank Bn
 Elements B / 692nd Tank Destroyer Bn (M-10)
 Regimental Cannon Company / 415th Infantry Regiment
 385th Field Artillery Battalion (105mm Howitzer)
 386th Field Artillery Battalion (105mm Howitzer)
 929th Field Artillery Battalion (105mm Howitzer)
 387th Field Artillery Battalion (155mm Howitzer)
 87 Chmcl Bn (4.2 in mortar)
 188th FA Bn (155mm How)
 87th Armd FA Bn (105mm)
 268th FA Bn (8" Gun)
 555th AA Bn

versus**3. Fallschirmjäger Division**

II./Fallschirmjäger Regiment 8
 III./Fallschirmjäger Regiment 8
 3./Fallschirmjäger Aufklärungs Abteilung 3
 Teile Fallschirmjäger Panzerjäger Abteilung 3
 13. /Fallschirmjäger Regiment 8 (150mm Nebelwerfer)
 14./ Fallschirmjäger Regiment 8 (Pzj)
 15./ Fallschirmjäger Regiment 8 (Pio)
 I. /Fallschirmjäger Artillerie Regiment 3 (105mm leFH 18)
 II. /Fallschirmjäger Artillerie Regiment 3 (105mm leFH 18)
 III. /Fallschirmjäger Artillerie Regiment 3 (150mm sFH 18)
 Fallschirm-Granatwerfer-Bataillon 3 (120mm Gw 42)

**246. Volks-Grenadier Division¹**

II./ Grenadier-Regiment 404
 III./ Grenadier-Regiment 404
 I./Artillerie-Regiment 246 (75mm)
 II./Artillerie-Regiment 246 (105mm)
 IV./Artillerie-Regiment 246 (150mm)

**Teile s Pz Abt (Fkl) 301 (Tiger I)^{2 3}****Teile s Pz Jg Abt 519 (Jagdpantther)**

¹ The patch used is the one for the 246. Infanterie Division, the predecessor of the 246. Volks-Grenadier Division.

² My primary source (A.R. Vannoy & J. Karamales „Against the Panzers“) talks about King Tigers. The only unit equipped with King Tigers in the wider area is the s.Pz.Abt. 506 but they were definitely not deployed. There are German documents showing that the s.Pz.Abt. (Fkl) 301 equipped with Tiger I was subordinated to the 246. Volksgrenadier Division and there are loss reports about Tiger I's stuck in the mud in the area of Pier a village next to Lucherberg.

³ Eventually Pz Kp (Fkl.) 319 with StuG III, but probably 2. or 3./s.Pz.Jg.Abt. 519

Summary

The **104th Infantry Division** was the first U.S. Army division to actively train for night-time operations as the norm. It was the first military unit to develop written procedures for fighting at night and fighting on the European continent at night, its soldiers were issued hand grenades and bayonets (with no ammunition for their rifles) and told to attack the enemy⁴. 104th Division soldiers were instructed that anyone firing a weapon was an enemy and should be attacked. Using these methods, the 104th Division was successful over 195 days of continuous combat – never once giving ground to the enemy.

It was one of the few U.S. units which saw fighting throughout all of December, first in the offensive against the Rur and then defending the sector actively. It lost 4'209 WIA and 726 KIA in these 31 days and had 2'069 non battle casualties making this 60% of all its battle losses during the war and 47% of its total losses.

At 1245 on November 16, 1944 1st and 9th U.S. Armies attacked in “**Operation Queen**” after a heavy bomber attack with 1'204 heavy bombers and 339 fighter bombers on Hamich, Hürtgen and Gey. At the same time 647 British bombers attacked Düren, Jülich and Heinsberg. The ground attack was opened by an 80 minutes artillery barrage with more than 700 guns. But the ground attack progresses only slowly. Despite the destruction and interruption of the targets in the German rear area the defenders resisted stubbornly in their entrenched positions and often launched counter offensives. In addition bad weather brought flooding, deep mud and denied air support. At the same time the attacks in the area of the Hürtgenwald started.

The 104th Infantry Division attacked as part of VII Corps from the Aachen area making slow progress against stiff German resistance with relentless counter attacks. After taking Stolberg and Eschweiler the division took Inden on December 2 after heavy fighting. It took the division 16 days for a distance of roughly 20 kilometers. Now the task of the 104th Infantry division was to cross the Inde river and push to the Rur (Roer) river, the last significant obstacle west of the Rhine river and Cologne. In parallel the 1st Infantry Division is assaulting German positions south of the autobahn.



In this campaign you will lead the reinforced 415th Infantry Regiment on its mission to take Lucherberg against elements of the 3. Fallschirmjäger Division and elements of the 246. Volks-Grenadier Division. You will lead your units through seven historical encounters usually involving reinforced company to reinforced battalion sized forces. The focus here is on night- and dawn/dusk-fighting involving armour and artillery on both sides. Conditions are difficult: the weather is bad, visibility often poor and the ground is mud. It is a real infantry environment.

⁴ A.R. Vannoy & J. Karamales „Against the Panzers“. I haven't seen the actual orders – so it's probably more a kind of a legend.

Introduction⁵

The Normandy invasion is six months in the past. After the German defences crumbled in August and the dash across France and Belgium has ended 3 months ago. Progress since has been slow – just 5 days ago significant shipping into Antwerp has started. Up to now just Marseille was the only major port in the hands of the Allies. Operation “Market Garden” had not brought the expected breakthrough to the Ruhr industrial area.

After the battle for Aachen the Allied High Command planned a large offensive (Operation QUEEN) in the area of the 9th U.S. Army together with the 1st U.S. Army and parts of the British Second Army against the Rur River, intending to establish bridgeheads at Linnich, Jülich and Düren. The eventual target was to reach the Rhine and establish bridgeheads at Krefeld and Düsseldorf to secure further advances inside Germany after the winter.

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The 104th Infantry Division pushed as part of VII Corps from the Aachen area making slow progress against stiff German resistance with relentless counter attacks. After taking Stolberg and Eschweiler the division took Inden on December 2 after heavy fighting. It took the division 16 days for a distance of roughly 20 kilometers.

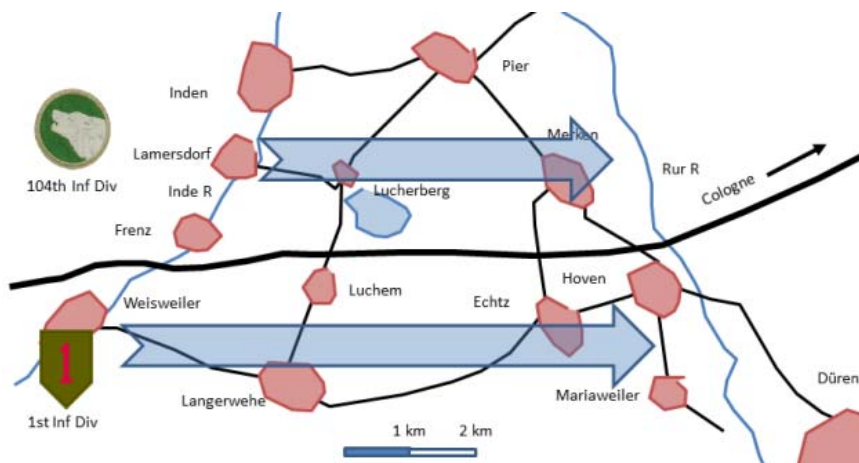
104th Infantry Division “Timberwolves”

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⁵ <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USA/USA-E-Siegfried/index.html#Index>

Mission



The Germans had set up a new defensive line east of the Inde River and destroyed all bridges crossing the river. Again, the attack has stalled. It is now the 104th Infantry Division's tasks to force the crossing of the Inde and to finally reach the Rur River some 6 kilometers to the east. In parallel the 1st Infantry Division will continue its push eastward south of the autobahn.

Terrain

The area between the Inde and the Rur north of the autobahn is dominated by the hill and the village of Lucherberg. Currently in German hands it offers excellent visibility towards the west, making Allied artillery deployment difficult. On the other hand it also offers excellent view into the German artillery concentrations east of the Rur River. It is therefore crucial to take and hold Lucherberg in order to be capable to push further east.

The village of Lucherberg is situated on hill roughly 20 to 30 meters higher than the surrounding area. The approach from the north is open and rises gently. The western approach is steep and cliff like. To the west of Lucherberg lies a strip mine with a large coal mine complex. From the southwest and the south the village is protected by the Wehe creek, a steep slag pile and more strip mines. One of these strip mines has been filled with water and forms Lucherberger Lake.

The village of Inden has been largely destroyed in the fighting in the last days. Lamersdorf and Frenz also have taken damage. All bridges over the river Inde have been destroyed. The ground is muddy after days of intermittent rain.

Enemy

The German defence is mounted by LXXXI Korps with the 3rd Fallschirmjäger Division and the 246th Volksgrenadier Division supported by eleven to twelve artillery battalions including the 403rd and the 405th Volks-Artillery Brigade east of the Rur.

The 3rd Fallschirmjäger Division fought in Normandy and was almost entirely destroyed in the Falaise pocket. The 246. Volks-Grenadier Division was formed from remnants of the 246. Infanterie Division which was almost entirely destroyed near Witebsk in August 1944. It was re-built using the forming 556. Volks-Grenadier Division and remnants of the 78. Infanterie Division. The division fought in the Aachen area and has been considerably refreshed since – some of the battalions have been reformed twice since the beginning of operation QUEEN.

Campaign (Allied = blue)

Core File



Designer's Notes

Category: Semi-historical-

Best played as: Allied vs Axis – H2H possible, but probably rather difficult for the Allies.

Mission Type: Allied Attack

Date: 2.-5. December 1944 – 7 Battles

Weather: Varies

Temperature: Cold

Wind: Varies

Ground: Muddy

Designed By: winkelried

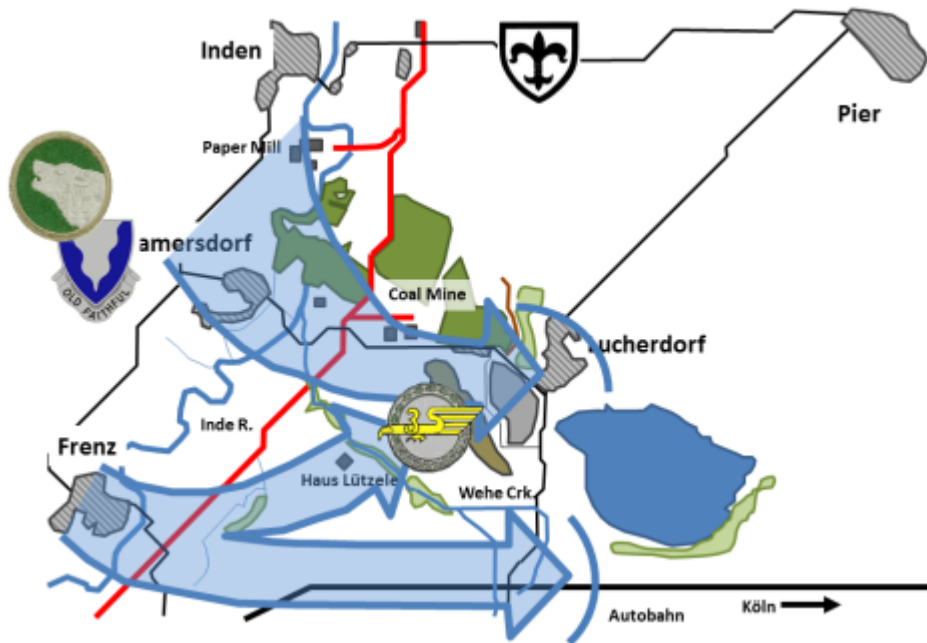
Mission Allied

Situation

After the battle for Aachen the Allied High Command planned a large offensive (Operation QUEEN) in the area of the 9th U.S. Army together with the 1st U.S. Army and parts of the British Second Army against the Rur River, intending to establish bridgeheads at Linnich, Jülich and Düren. The eventual target was to reach the Rhine and establish bridgeheads at Krefeld and Düsseldorf to secure further advances inside Germany after the winter.

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The 104th Infantry Division attacked as part of VII Corps from the Aachen area. After taking Stolberg and Eschweiler the division took Inden on December 2 after heavy fighting - 20 km in 16 days. The Germans had set up a new defensive line east of the Inde River and destroyed all bridges crossing the river. Again, the attack has stalled. It is now the 104th Infantry Division's tasks to force the crossing of the Inde and to finally reach the Rur River some 6 kilometers to the east.



Mission

- Take and hold the Goltstein mine.
- Take and hold the village of Lucherberg.
- Take Haus Lützele, establish connection with 1st Infantry Division which is advancing south of the Autobahn and deny German forces the access between Lucherberger See and the Autobahn.
- Prepare for a further push towards the Rur river in the east.

Friendly Forces

FORCE AVAILABLE (Initial Attack)

E, G and I/415 as attacking force.

H, M/415 as supporting force.

REINFORCEMENTS (Arrive throughout the campaign)

F, L, K/415 as follow-up and reserve

C/750 Tank Bn

B/692 Tank Destroyer Bn (armoured)

Enemy Forces

The Germans have pulled out the worn down 3. Panzer Grenadier Division. Fresh forces now defend the Inde River line:

The 3. Fallschirmjäger Division fought in Normandy and was almost entirely destroyed in the Falaise pocket. The division has been re-built since and elements have taken part in countering the Allied operation "Market Garden".

The 246. Volks-Grenadier Division was formed from remnants of the 246. Infanterie Division which was almost entirely destroyed near Witebsk in August 1944. The division fought in the Aachen area and has been considerably refreshed since.

In the past the enemy has used armour and air-support at discretion.

Plan

Two infantry companies will jump off at 2300 hours and take the Goltstein mine complex and secure the southern flank respectively.

One additional infantry company will jump off at 2400 hours and move through the secured Goltstein mine complex and take Lucherberg.

The two heavy companies provide support east of the Inde River.

Fire of eight artillery battalions will support the attack. Each of the infantry companies has one FO attached. In addition one FO to manage the pre-planned fires is based in Lamersdorf.

In the morning of December 3 two more infantry companies are ready to reinforce Lucherberg. One infantry company remains regimental reserve until further notice.

As soon as the Bailey bridge across the Inde is ready, heavy equipment (AT Gun platoons) and one tank company and one tank destroyer company (armoured) will cross and reinforce the infantry companies.

Notes

The campaign is based on A.R. Vannoy & J. Karamales „Against the Panzers“ and various in depth research. Except for the date, the Fallschirmjäger and the Jagdpanthers units the setting is historical.

Mapping based on 1983 and 2011 German mapping and 1934 aerial photographs.