

Final Combat AAR – Husky Jump

Background/Character Campaign Concept

This is a pseudo-RPG/Skirmish game campaign using the *Final Combat* rule-set in which each player generates and controls two US paratrooper characters possessing unique attributes and skills. Characters will gain experience points for accomplishing the unit's missions and succeeding in individual tasks/actions in each engagement, which will lead to elevated troop-quality (TQ) levels, promotion, and decorations if they survive. If/when a character dies or receives a "million-dollar wound," the owning player will generate a new character "replacement" who joins the campaign at the Professional TQ level with zero experience points. Characters lightly wounded in an engagement will miss a number of follow-on engagements commensurate with the severity of their wounds.

The GM controls the "enemy" forces throughout and any US non-player characters (NPC's) on the US side until the US NPC's come within command range of a US player's character, at which time the US player takes control of them within guidelines provided by the GM. None of the engagements represent actual recorded historical actions or people; rather they are fictional, historically plausible skirmishes of the type that occurred. The GM has developed a storyline and series of six chronological engagements that will carry the characters and their platoon through the 505th PIR's experience on Sicily – from the first US regimental-sized combat jump of the war to its stand-down from combat operations on 23 July following the capture of Trapani on the island's western coast.

Final Combat Character Campaign Engagement No. 1 – Husky Jump



Hilltop Farm Complex From Southwest

Intro

Following is the GM's account of the parachute landing and first engagement of a fictitious US 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) infantry platoon's 18-man 'Stick' on Sicily during the very early morning hours of 10 July 1943. The account is based on the actions taken by player-controlled paratrooper characters during the game. Additional AAR's will recount the Stick's and Platoon's exploits and progress on Sicily as the *Final Combat* character campaign unfolds. The engagements will be conducted in 15mm scale to allow for greater tactical maneuvering room on a 4' x 6' terrain board.

Cast of Characters (*Owning player's name in parentheses*)

- **Staff Sergeant "Stretch" Armstrong** – Squad Leader, 2nd Squad (**Jeff**)
- **PFC George Kettle** – Machine-Gunner, 2nd Squad (**Peter**)
- **Pvt. Kurt Greenberg** – Asst. Machine-Gunner, 2nd Squad (**Peter**)
- **PFC Willie Bowles** – Rifleman, 2nd Squad (**Ben**)
- **Pvt. "Red" Smith** – Rifleman, 2nd Squad (**Rich**)
- **PFC Joe Willie** – Rifleman, 2nd Squad (**Jeff**)
- **PFC "Stunty" Robbins** – Runner, Platoon HQs (**Rich**)
- **Pvt. Martin Gamble** – Mortar-man, Platoon Mortar Section (**Ben**)

US NPC's: Platoon Sergeant, Platoon Runner, 2 x Mortar Section Mortar-men, 2nd Squad Assistant Squad Leader, 2nd Squad Assistant Machine-Gunner, 4 x 2nd Squad Riflemen

Enemy Situation

Receiving the full alert order late in the evening of the 9th, Italian Machine Gun Company H attached to the 18th Coastal Brigade deployed from its barracks in Grammichele to forward defensive positions covering the avenues of approach from the beaches between the ports of Gela and Scoglitti. An infantry squad and a machine gun platoon section commander were dispatched as the advance party to a position covering a secondary road intersection midway between the Biscari and Ponte Olivo Airfields. The infantry squad set up in a log bunker, two foxholes, and a nearby small house on rising ground north of the east-west road. The machine gun section commander established his command post in the farm office on the south side of the large hilltop farm complex near a mobile 20mm AA gun.



Road Intersection and Farm Complex From the West

The Jump

The company's formation broke up among the clouds and the darkness as it reached the southern coast of Sicily. Within a few minutes the C-47 crew realized they were too far east and turned west, dropping to an altitude of about 600 feet. After observing landmarks they believed to be near Objective Y, and beginning to receive AA fire, the crew turned on the green light and released the six weapon and supply bundles. The Second Stick, comprising the Platoon's 12-man 2nd Squad, half of the Platoon's 60mm Mortar Section, and the Platoon Sergeant (PSG) and two Platoon HQs runners, exited the aircraft quickly and smoothly. At 600 feet there was only enough time for the main parachutes to open, get a quick bearing, and pick landing spots. All 18 main chutes opened and none of the paratroopers could miss the automatic fire chasing the just-exited C-47 – thankfully the gunner remained focused on the aircraft. The paratroopers landed relatively close together within a 250 x 175 yard area, but the darkness reduced visibility to no more than 25 yards. Armstrong landed 75 yards north of the AA position near a stone wall at the base of the low hill. Kettle and Greenberg landed within 15 yards of each other in a stone-wall-enclosed vineyard 60 yards southwest of the AA gun. Unknown to them, Gamble came down 40 yards southwest of them outside the vineyard and near the edge of a north-south road. Bowles and Willie landed within 20 yards of each other just west of the road from Gamble on the edge of a wheat field. Smith came down in the wheat field within 10 yards of a supply bundle. Robbins landed 125 yards north of the AA position all by himself in a large wheat field, but practically on top of another supply bundle. No one suffered a serious landing injury and marking the location of the continuing AA fire at the crest of a low hill near some farm buildings, the paratroopers freed themselves of their harnesses and began assembling and loading their Garand rifles and loading their Carbines and Thompsons.

The AA Gun and Farm

Armstrong collected a rifleman from his squad and one of the platoon runners who landed near him and began to approach the AA gun up the hill from the north using a stone wall as cover. En route he spotted the outline of a possible bunker about 30 yards to his right, but deemed the AA gun the more immediate threat. Armstrong continued up the hill and closed to within 15 yards of the AA gun where he made contact with his assistant squad leader (ASL) in the farm's north-side vegetable garden. Covering behind the stone wall, he told the rifleman and ASL to ready grenades.



Kettle and Greenberg Crest the Hill

Kettle and Greenberg moved cautiously eastward keeping the rows of grapevines between them and the AA Gun. They came to a stone wall blocking their way and peered over the wall into a small, apparently empty pasture. The two paratroopers heard a rifle shot followed by two pistol shots somewhere to their front. Across the pasture they spotted the flashes of three more shots at the top of the hill beyond the far wall and heard two M1911 shots in return. Three figures were silhouetted by the light of an open doorway. Bursts of Thompson fire suddenly joined the rifle and pistol shots. Not wishing to risk crossing the open pasture, Kettle and Greenberg turned left and moved northward up the hill using the wall on their right and the row of grapevines on the left for cover and concealment.



Preparing to Clear the Farm House

Hearing a firefight breakout to the southeast and observing the barrel of the AA gun on the back of a truck swing in that direction, Armstrong ordered the ASL and rifleman to throw their grenades. There were three explosions, two with accompanying flashes in and around the truck and a third dull explosion from within one of the farm buildings. Armstrong spotted Kettle and Greenberg approaching from his right and signaled them to fall in along the wall. He rose and fired a burst of submachine-gun fire at an Italian soldier fleeing the AA gun toward the farm building, followed immediately by Greenberg and Kettle firing their carbines at the fleeing man – the target fell to the ground. Armstrong shouted to the paratroopers to charge and leapt the wall, followed closely by Kettle, Greenberg, the ASL, the rifleman, and the platoon runner. Reaching the gun, the paratroopers saw someone dash into a building to their left front and counted four immobile figures in and around the gun. Armstrong ordered his men to check the immobile figures and prepare to move to the farmhouse's courtyard wall 20 yards away.



Farm Complex Secured

Kettle knelt beside a prone figure, determined the Italian was wounded but alive, and administered first aid. The gunner on the truck was dead. At the wall, Armstrong organized his force and prepared to clear the building into which the surviving gun crewman had fled. The PSG arrived with three other paratroopers and two Italian prisoners from the field south of the farm from which the small arms fight was heard. Based on information volunteered by two Italian prisoners captured by the PSG's team, it was decided to send one of the prisoners into the house to convince any Italians there to surrender. Kettle continued to administer first aid to the other wounded Italians. The Italian in the house surrendered and all the prisoners were assembled in the courtyard and placed under guard. The PSG sent the platoon runner and Greenberg to the fields east of the farm to search for supply bundles. Armstrong, the ASL, and two other paratroopers moved out to investigate the bunker he spotted on the way up the hill. As they cautiously descended the hill, they heard a shot off to the west.

The Wheatfield

Gamble rose with his carbine at the ready and spotted a couple of parachutes rustling in the breeze on the other side of a road to his left. Suddenly, tracer fire lanced out from the gradually rising hill 150 yards to his front, striking a point only 70 yards away. At the second burst of fire, Gamble dashed to his left to clear the line of fire. A third burst flew high and behind him as he reached the open ground west of the road. He dived to the ground and began crawling toward the wheat field only yards away.



Gamble Races for the Wheat Field Across the Road

Bowles, Willie, and another paratrooper landed within 20 yards of each other in the open ground between the road and the western wheat field. They paused at the edge of the wheat to orient themselves. An LMG fired a burst from a hill to the north, followed quickly by a second burst. They spotted a paratrooper running toward them from across the road to the east spurred on by a third burst of LMG fire. The paratrooper crossed the road, dived to the ground, and began crawling to the nearby wheat.

In the wheat field, Smith followed parachute lines to a supply bundle. As he knelt to open the bundle a paratrooper approached him from the opposite direction. They turned as one when the LMG fired off to their right. The wheat in that direction appeared to come alive with movement, and with weapons ready

Smith made the challenge. Bowles replied with the password. Gamble crawled into the wheat field to the whispered urgings of the paratroopers.



The automatic fire from the hill ceased and the six paratroopers took stock of the situation. Willie, the senior PFC, assumed command. Realizing that moving across the road toward the AA gun on the hill was foolhardy with the LMG ranging down its axis, Willie decided the team would move through the wheat field northward to the gradually rising hill and to eliminate the LMG first. Smith and another paratrooper opened the supply bundle to discover a bazooka and some rockets. Willie instructed Smith and the paratrooper to assemble the bazooka, retrieve some rockets, and then follow after them, and then led Gamble, Bowles, and the sixth paratrooper northward through the wheat.

Across the East-West Road

Willie halted the team at the wheat field's northern edge. The AA gun had ceased firing and no LMG fire had occurred since the initial bursts. An increasing volume of small arms fire could be heard in the direction of the AA gun on the hill. Paralleling the wheat field's north edge was another road flanked on the opposite side by a darkened house and a wall running to the west. With Smith and his colleague fast approaching with the bazooka, the four paratroopers raced across the road to the wall opposite them and peered into an olive grove. Several distant explosions spurred them over the wall.



Willie's Team Sprints Across the Road

The paratroopers detected no movement in the grove and dashed to the base of a six-foot high wall that ran north from the house. They heard a distant crescendo of small arms fire, followed by silence. Gamble and Willie scaled the wall by the house and dropped into a courtyard. Bowles dashed to a gate along the wall of the grove and looked out onto an open space between the house on his right and light woods up the hill to his left. A shot rang out and stone chipped near him. Marking the location of the flash, Bowles ducked back into the grove and moved back along the wall to where Gamble and Willie had disappeared over to the other side.

Gamble ran to the open door of the darkened house and entered. After clearing the first and second floors and finding no upstairs windows facing the wooded hill, Gamble returned to the courtyard where Willie and the other paratrooper were fixing bayonets. Bowles pulled the pin of a grenade and tossed it over the courtyard wall in the direction of the flash he had spotted. When the grenade exploded, the four paratroopers charged out the courtyard gate and up the hill. As the men ran, Smith and the other paratrooper kicked in the front door of the house and entered.

The Private War of PFC Robbins

Stunty Robbins opened the supply bundle on which he almost landed to find grenades and small arms ammunition. He heard an LMG open fire some 30 yards west of him and dived prone. Realizing the LMG was firing southward, he grabbed several grenades from the bundle, crawled to the west edge of the wheat field, and looked out on a light pine woods.

Although the LMG had fallen silent, Robbins sensed the enemy position was not far to his left front, somewhere in or on the edge of the woods. He crept into the woods, pausing regularly to listen. Hearing a muted conversation, Robbins inched toward it pulling the pin of a grenade. Robbins made out the shape of a log bunker 15 yards in front of him, but then heard several people approaching from his right along the edge of the pine woods. He quietly stepped back into the woods a couple of yards and let four Italian soldiers pass across his front to the left. As the Italians disappeared from sight Robbins heard an explosion off to his right. He stepped forward, threw the grenade at the bunker's rear opening and dived prone. Before the grenade exploded, Robbins heard yelling and shots off to the right. Realizing the first grenade had failed to enter the bunker, he pulled the pin of another, rose and dashed for the bunker. As he ran he let the spoon fly. Shots zipped past him from the left. Robbins dropped the grenade into the opening and dived to his right to put the berm between him and the shots zipping past.

Bunker Hill Secured

A wild shot marked Willie's team's objective and, firing on the run, the team closed in. Two Italian soldiers in a foxhole threw down their weapons and surrendered. A grenade exploded 30 yards to the east near the edge of the woods, followed within seconds by rifle shots. Leaving the other paratrooper to guard the prisoners, Willie, Bowles, and Gamble dashed into the tree-line and advanced east toward the explosion and rifle shots. A second, muffled explosion was heard and the team spotted Robbins lying prone next to a log bunker.



Italians in Foxhole Surrender

Robbins' second grenade landed in the bunker and exploded. He spotted paratroopers approaching from the west and signaled them to halt and take cover. They all could hear several people crashing through the woods away from them toward the east. Under the cover of Willie's team, Robbins crawled to the bunker opening and looked in to find three dead Italian soldiers.



LMG Bunker Neutralized

Armstrong's team moved down the hill along the stone wall he had followed before. At the base of the hill, they turned west keeping another stone wall between them and the bunker. As they neared the bunker explosions and rifle fire sounded from the hill rising to the north across the road. Using the noise to mask their movement, Armstrong and a rifleman slipped over the wall and crept to the bunker's entry opening covered by the ASL and platoon runner. They cooked off two grenades, dropped them in, and dived for cover. Following the explosions, Armstrong peered into an empty bunker.

Conclusion

In less than 30 minutes the paratroopers succeeded in capturing the hilltop farm complex and eliminating the Italian infantry squad on the hill north of the crossroads. Miraculously, all six platoon bundles were recovered and, less fortunately, the body of one of the mortar team members who had been machine-gunned by the LMG while trying to free himself from his parachute harness. Using a map found in the hilltop farm's office, the PSG and Armstrong determined their exact location—approximately six miles northeast of Objective Y. After distributing the weapons and ammunition from the supply bundles, determining the AA Gun truck was in operable, and tying up the prisoners and leaving them in the farm's courtyard, the 17 surviving paratroopers of the 2nd Stick moved out for Objective Y in the night.