

## A BAPTISM OF FIRE FOR KOMPANIE SCHMALZ

# ERSATZ KOMPANIE

This scenario tells the story of the only battle ever fought by Kompanie Schmalz. Kompanie Schmalz is a fictional unit that we have created for this game within the real German army formation called Korps Feldt.

By Nick Skinner

**W**hilst Kompanie Schmalz itself never existed, it is representative of the various *Alarmabteilung* troops that were pressed into service by the German military in late 1944 and early 1945 and sent into action as part of Korps Feldt, Division von Tettau, and other ad-hoc divisions for which very little written evidence still survives. Nonetheless, their story can be told because we can tell it with a wargame.

The German Reich was divided into several military districts, or *Wehrkreise*. Of these, *Wehrkreis VI* covered most of Westphalia, an area that extended to include the Reichswald, a large, forested area that spanned the border with the Netherlands, not far from the Dutch town of Nijmegen. Prior to the allied airborne landings that took place as part of Operation

Market Garden in September 1944, *Wehrkreis VI* had placed its subordinate military training schools and other units into Korps Feldt (named after its commander, General Der Kavallerie Kurt Feldt). Korps Feldt had been tasked with organizing the defence works along the network of main rivers in north-west Germany.

The rapid advance of the allies through northern France had seen many broken German units retreating at speed through to Belgium and Holland, where transport links funnelled them towards the Maas and Waal bridges where a net of *Feldpolizei* collected them and reorganized them into fighting units. The *Waalstellung*, the defensive line running along the Waal River from Moerdijk to Nijmegen, was still forming in September 1944. As part of this line, men from just about all arms were combined into ad-hoc commands who were destined to play a hand in the fighting to come during Operation Market Garden.

At Arnhem, some of these units fought as part of Kampfgruppe von Tettau, attacking the British from the north and the west. When American airborne troops landed south of Nijmegen on 17 September 1944, Korps Feldt, slightly further south and east, was mobilized as an attacking formation tasked with pushing through the Reichswald Forest and Groesbeek Heights south-east of Nijmegen towards the landing zones of the 82nd Airborne. Here, men who



would not normally have been considered fit for active service, including men from penal battalions, training units, and the famous 'ear and stomach' battalions of wounded and unfit men entered a desperate combat with elite American paratroopers. It was a combat for which the Germans were ill prepared and ill equipped. Yet somehow, they made some initial gains, fighting prolonged and bloody battles with US paratroopers at Mook, Riethorst, and other villages along the 82nd Airborne's south-eastern flank. Sadly, given the nature of the situation surrounding the creation of these units, and the obvious fragile situation regarding the survival of written unit records for German units at this time, very few documents exist to tell the story of these men.

### ENTER KOMPANIE SCHMALZ

Our fictional (yet historically plausible) Kompanie Schmalz was a company only in name. In fact, the whole company could easily fit inside the small barn in which Leutnant Hubert



German reinforcements march to the front during Operation Market Garden.  
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The riflemen of Kompanie Schmalz advance onto the American roadblock under cover of their 'armour'.

Schmalz and his men now stood. Just twenty-four hours earlier, Schmalz had been working as a tutor attached to the non-commissioned officer school at Juelich, but following news of the enemy landings near to the Groesbeek Heights, just across the border in Holland, Schmalz had been instructed to grab ten men from the school, including a couple of NCOs, and hitch a ride in a supply truck headed to Kranenburg, where he would take over a detachment from a penal battalion to form his new command.

Having grabbed breakfast on the road, Schmalz had arrived and organized his mixed bag of men into a fighting unit, bolstering their numbers with a couple of stragglers he had picked up on the way. This problem was that some of the men now under his command had never been trained for small unit tactics and most had known the man next to them for just 24 hours. Some, he judged by looking at them, had no experience of front-line service. Their quality

was unknown. Their attitude was, for the most part, surly, and morale was uncertain. This was especially true for the 25 or so men of the penal unit who had been allocated to him. Well, he sighed, regardless of their history, what happened today would be down to him, back at the sharp end in his first taste of real combat since Norway. Their fate lay in his hands.

To give the unit some backbone, Schmalz had organized his men based around his available NCOs, mixing the penal unit with the men who had accompanied him from Juelich. In addition to his own unit NCOs (Gefreiter Lagermann and Bittermann), Schmalz had been bolstered by the arrival of a reservist policeman (Wachtmeister Koppermann), an engineer from *Wehrkreis VI* who was in transit back from leave (Obergefreiter Schillingmann), and a *Luftwaffe* NCO who just happened to be attached to the lines of communication troops at Kranenburg and who knew how to strip an MG 15 (Obergefreiter Strippermann). Around these men he created the following groups, assigning his riflemen across the NCOs and combining his machine-gun firepower into two teams that he could personally direct, but which also utilized the skills of Obergefreiter Strippermann.

- Squad 1: Gefreiter Lagermann with 8 riflemen
- Squad 2: Gefreiter Bittermann with 8 riflemen
- Squad 3: Gefreiter Koppermann with 8 riflemen
- Squad 4: Obergefreiter Schillingmann with 8 riflemen

**Weapons detachment:** Obergefreiter Strippermann

- MG Team 1: MG 15 team (2 men)
- MG team 2: MG 34 team (3 men)

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Leutnant Schmalz has gathered his troops in front of a Dutch house. The graffiti suggests his fate is ordained...

Schmalz's one problem was Feldwebel Stoppermann, the grizzly NCO who had arrived in charge of the men from the penal battalion who had been allocated to his makeshift command. As an amputee, Stoppermann was clearly unfit for frontline service; nonetheless, it was clear from his experience and bearing that he would make a fine adjutant, corralling the other NCOs to keep them motivated and active.

Finally, Schmalz had Winkelmann, a trained marksman from his own detachment at Juelich, whom he had designated to the role of sniper.

Schmalz now turned his mind to his objective. Straightening his

back, the young Leutnant stood before his new command arranged in what might have passed for parade order. He drew a deep breath. "The Americans are protecting the drop zones with a weak line of troops," he said. "Our job is to probe through their outposts and clear a path along this road. We must maintain pressure and push the enemy back. If we can overrun his drop zones, then his supplies will not be received, and his position will be untenable."

"And what support can we expect, Herr Leutnant?" growled a surly, gaunt-faced individual from the penal battalion.

Schmalz met the man's gaze. "Engineers from the Roermond battalion will be attacking on our right flank, and behind us the men of Kampfgruppe Becker are assembling to exploit breakthroughs. We are lacking in heavy weapons, so we will not have the luxury of supporting artillery." A slight murmur came from the ranks. "But we will have tanks," he added. "We have been promised armoured support."

"Let's go."

The men turned and began filing out to the yard to the rear of the building, where the NCOs gathered them into groups ready to march forward to their destiny. No vehicles were available, so they'd have to walk to the front. Schmalz positioned himself behind his second squad, moving slowly forward along the road. He hadn't gone more than 500 yards when the sound of an engine made him turn around. An Sd.Kfz. 222 armoured car was approaching. As it drew alongside him, the vehicle commander peered down at him. "Are you Schmalz?" asked the man. "I'm Bangermann. I'm your armoured support."

### A TOUGH GAME – UMPIRE'S NOTES

This scenario pits Kompanie Schmalz against elite paratroopers, but the results are not obvious. The Americans give out plenty of firepower, but clever play from the Germans in the patrol phase might allow them to stretch the American defences. Unusually for the Germans, they are weak in terms of machine guns, especially as the Rheinmetall MG 15 is box fed and therefore (for *Chain of Command*) only fires with six dice as opposed to eight for the MG 34. What is certain, though, is that by taking on this scenario you will gain an excellent appreciation of the tactical challenges of co-ordinating a force of this nature. Will Kompanie Schmalz's only ever battle end in victory or defeat? That's for you to decide!



## THE SCENARIO

This game was designed for *Chain of Command* but could easily be adapted for other rules, such as *Bolt Action*. Notes follow at the end for both.

### Order of battle

#### Kompanie Schmalz

Kompanie Schmalz consists of four rifle squads, each with a junior leader. In addition, Schmalz has 1 x MG 34 team of three men, and a two-man team with a box-fed Rheinmetall MG 15. These teams are under the command of a junior leader. A senior leader (Schmalz himself) and a sniper complete the orbat. The presence of Feldwebel Stoppermann gives the force an adjutant, enabling Schmalz to feel more confident about co-ordinating his deployment. Despite its ragged appearance, there is enough backbone in Kompanie Schmalz to be classed as regulars.

The German force is therefore:

- 1 x senior leader (Lt Hubert Schmalz)
- 1 x sniper (Ogfr. Strippermann)
- 1 x junior leader
- 1 x MG 34 (3 men – belt fed)
- 1 x MG 15 (2 men – box fed)

Four squads, each comprising:

- 1 x junior leader with SMG
- 8 x riflemen in one team

Support for the Germans takes the form of an adjutant and a solitary Sd.Kfz. 222 armoured car commanded by a junior leader.

#### 82nd Airborne

Kompanie Schmalz is up against a reduced platoon of the 82nd Airborne. Second Lieutenant Herbert P. Lardssen (senior leader) commands two squads of parachute infantry. Each squad comprises an LMG and a rifle team. The platoon has been deployed to defend the road and prevent any enemy infiltration. Support is provided in the form of a two-man bazooka team, but unfortunately for the Americans, Big Jack Flash, the veteran platoon sergeant, was wounded by a sniper whilst checking his outposts this morning and has been taken back to the regimental aid

post. A roadblock is also available. The paratroopers count as elite.

The US force is therefore:

- 1 x senior leader (Lt Herbert Lardssen)
- 1 x bazooka team
- Roadblock

Two squads, each comprising:

- 1 x junior leader with SMG
- 1 x LMG team (3 men with 1 x .30-cal. LMG with bipod mount)
- 1 x rifle team (8 riflemen, including no more than 2 men with SMGs)

### The mission

For *Chain of Command*, this game is played as a probe scenario (but oriented left to right, not top to bottom as in the rule book), with the

US patrol markers being deployed 12" in from the right-hand table edge and the four German patrol markers beginning on the left-hand table edge. Both sides will generate three jump-off markers, and force morale should be decided by dice as usual.

For *Bolt Action*, treat the infantry as noted: green inexperienced for Kompanie Schmalz led by a veteran Lt, regular for the Sd.Kfz. 222, and elite for the Americans. The MG 15 should not get the 'Hitler's Buzzsaw' special rule and only fires four shots (Guy Bowers).

The attacker's objective is to move one team to the enemy base line. If this is achieved, then the game ends as a victory for the attacker. Any other result is a victory for the defender. **WS&S**



Lieutenant Lardssen considers his options. He's got firepower with two LMGs and a bazooka, but not many men!



The fight at the roadblock from the American point of view. Can the elite paratroopers hold off the Kompanie?