



**Hannu et Gembloux 1940**  
**The Clash of French and German Armor in Belgium**

A micro-armor scenario with statistics and scenario rules for the Armored Fist, available from WarGameVault

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## The Battles of Hannut and Gembloux

When the Germans invaded the West in 1940, they went into to battle with a sophisticated plan well tuned to the biases and blind spots of the opposing high command. To distract from the mobile units of Army Group B advancing through the Ardennes and pin the Allied forces in Belgium, a secondary effort, in itself formidable, was launched by Army Group A along the expect “Schlieffen Plan” lines.



The Allied Dyle Plan sent the best French forces north into Belgium and Holland. Here, in the open country between Brussels and Namur, was the one place that the French fought the sort of battle they had planned for and expected.

The battle took place in two stages. The first, around Hannut, 12-14 May 1940, was a true armored meeting engagement, as large as the war would see until the Russian campaign. The Germans recovered their losses quickly and moved on to attack against the French line at Gembloux-Ernage-Perbais on 14-15 May.

Indeed it could be said that the German Army's true secret weapons in 1940 were radios and armor recovery vehicles.

The French Army held against all comers, by the end of the 15th it was clear that it had been outflanked, and that the battle would be won or lost in the deadly gap between the French 1st Army and Sedan.

The accompanying scenarios are designed to present a tabletop sized piece of the larger actions and present the problems that faced the historical commanders, be they Prioux or Hoepfner.

The first, *Clash at Hannut*, is a meeting engagement during the first collision of the French armored cavalry and the 4th Panzer Division. Several engagements occurred at this stage of the battle between Hannut and the Meuse river.

The second, the *Embankment at Ernage*, recreates a piece of the set piece battle between the 3rd and 4th Panzer Divisions and the dug in forces of the 1re Division Marocaine.

## Terrain Notes

On both maps the countryside is quite flat. Towns are a mix of wood and stone buildings, mostly small, with abundant foliage. Fields provide no concealment to infantry or vehicles.

Areas marked as woods are Light Woods.

The stream on the Hannut map can be forded by men and vehicles, though bog rolls will be required for mud.

The Brussels-Namur Railroad on the Ernage map is the railroad is below ground level, with steep banks. Any elements moving along the railroad are only visible to elements directly on the embankment. Descending or ascending costs and entire turn's movement. Infantry making this move are exposed, and vehicles have a Bog DR 12.

The tops of the embankment do not block Line of Sight. If infantry or a vehicle is immediately behind the embankment it gains the intervening terrain bonus against enemy fire. Infantry can also choose to be out of LOS across the embankment, but if they do so they can't see across the embankment either.

There are three crossing points: a tunnel at the north, and two bridges. The French may choose to place barricades on the bridges and in the tunnel. Barricades can be removed by a turn of movement by engineers, or pushed aside by a tank, using an entire turn's movement with Bog DR 10.

## Further Reading

Jeffrey A. Gunsburg (1992) The Battle of the Belgian Plain, 12-14 May 1940: The First Great Tank Battle, *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Apr., 1992), pp. 207-244 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1985797> Accessed: 09-11-2017

Jeffery A. Gunsburg (2000) The Battle of Gembloux, 14-15 May 1940: The "Blitzkrieg" Checked, *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (Jan., 2000), pp. 97-140 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/120789> Accessed: 09-11-2017

Alistair Horne *To Lose a Battle* Boston Little, Brown, and Company 1969

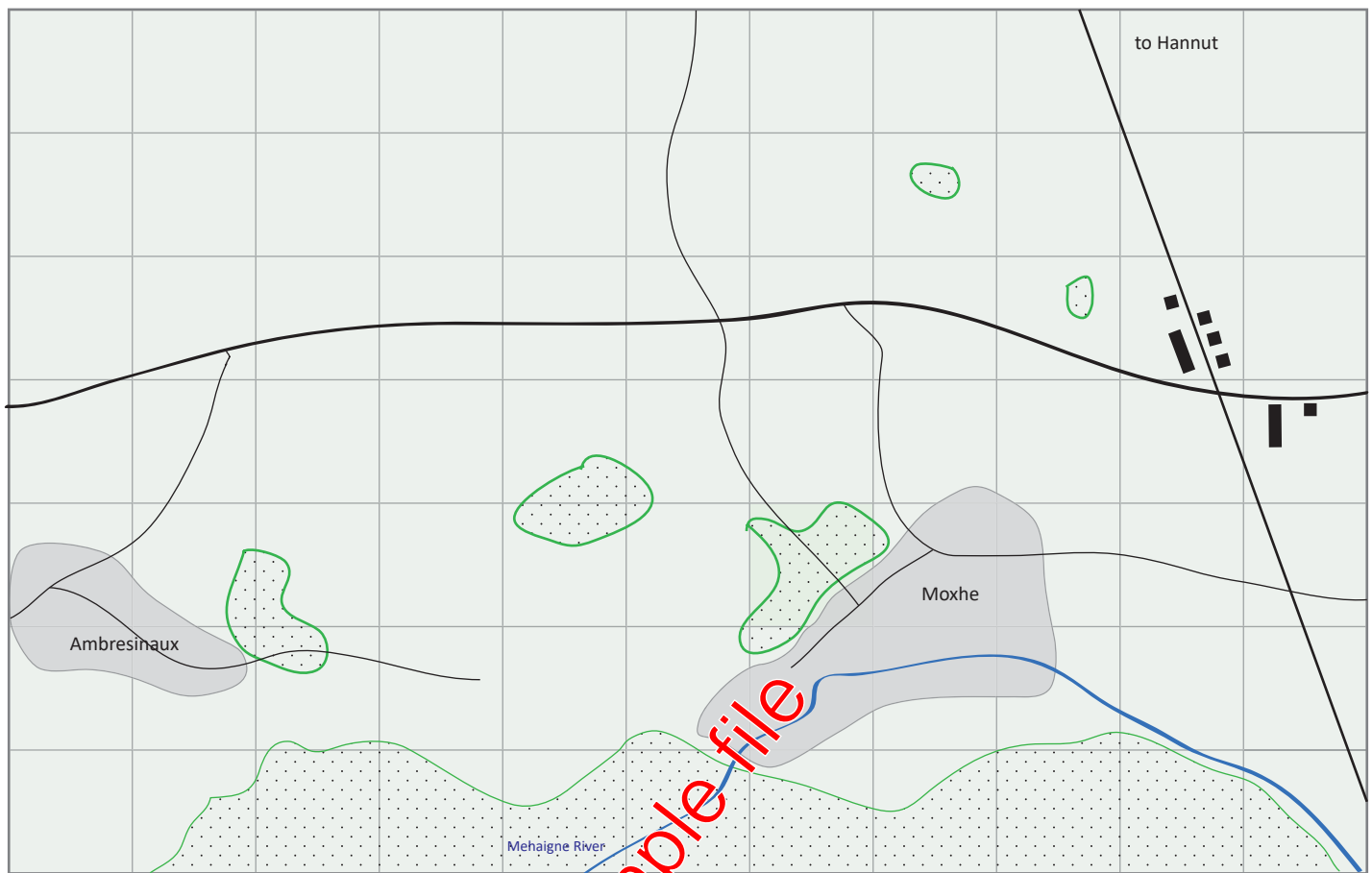
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Map Source: Department of History, United States Military Academy

"Panzers à Ernage le 15 mai 1940" — Unknown

## Clash at Hannut



500m

Mostly level ground, with low rolling hills and open fields. Southern edge of play area has villages and light woods. Villages are mix of wooden and stone houses with abundant foliage.

- Both sides should record the starting locations of their reconnaissance units before placing them on the table. If hidden placement is used, do not place any unit that is concealed in woods or town.
- Germans move first

## Victory Conditions

The winner is the side that meets all victory conditions. If neither has done so, the engagement is a draw.

French:

- Occupy the battlefield at the end of combat, AND
- Do not allow German vehicles to exit to the west, AND
- Do not lose more than 1/3 of tanks engaged

German:

- Occupy the battlefield at the end of combat, AND
- Do not lose more than 1/2 of tanks engaged