

## Red Banner

A quarterly fanzine for the Advanced Squad Leader (ASL) board game  
By the DC Conscripts ASL Club



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DC Conscripts ASL Ladder

## Commissar's Call: Happy New Year



Comrades, as we look ahead to a new year, let's recall how Germany prepared for its new year at the close of 1944. Himmler spawned "new" divisions by adding under age, under trained recruits to the scaffold of older divisions staffed by wounded veterans whose convalescence had been cut short. He equipped them with the latest infantry weapons like the Panzerschreck and Sturmgewehr, but reduced the usual compliment of artillery and larger anti-tank guns. So, Germany looked to the new year with the hope that these newly raised "volksgrenadier" (VG) divisions would make a difference on the battlefield.

The sad consequences of this desperate effort to stave off defeat are well known; what's forgotten is how those volksgrenadier's actually fought. To be sure, they were not elite; but many were motivated and some actually equipped well enough to pose a real threat in combat. So, in this issue of Red Banner we examine the under rated volksgrenadier.

ASL often lowballs the VG by representing them as 4-4-7s with an ELR of 2 or 3. While that is often correct, I do believe there are missed opportunities for them to "shine" as 5-4-8s with an ELR of 3. This issue's scenario "*Overlooked*" offers an example of better VG in action. And, you can do some background reading via our featured article "*Die Volksgrenadiere*" to prepare.

## Conscripts' Chatter: Reminders



Thanks to Andy Goldin for some timely reminders.

Our website shell ([www.dc-conscripts.org](http://www.dc-conscripts.org)) is now up. Content coming soon!

Try to attend MMP's Winter Offensive, 11-14 January 2018.

<http://www.multimanpublishing.com/Conventions/WinterOffensive2018/tabid/118/Default.aspx>

And, don't forget our own "Human Wave" tournament, 8-10 June 2018.  
<https://humanwaveconscripts.com/about/>

**New Article:** Die Volksgrenadiere

Hobbyists may want to visit the "Project 1944" website to read about that year on the Western Front. The site offers several informative articles and plenty of reenactment pictures. Our review shall focus on their Volksgrenadier (VG) article available at this link.

<http://www.project1944.be/Volksgrenadiere/VGD.html>

This straight forward history of the Peoples' infantry divisions contains a wealth of detail. Let's focus on the sections dealing with armament since that relates directly to how these troops are portrayed in ASL in general and this issue of Red Banner in particular.

*From the organization point of view, the significance of the Volksgrenadier-Division lies in its decrease of personnel and increase of automatic weapons (submachine guns). The three Grenadier Regiments each of two Battalions and a separate Fuselier company that stood under direct command of the Division staff formed the infantry component of a Volksgrenadier-Division. The biggest difference could be found in the Companies, containing one Rifle Platoon and two Machine Pistol Platoons ("Sturmzug") armed with the Sturmgewehr 44. The platoon contained the Platoon Headquarters and three squads with 9 men each. Panzerschreck (bazooka) and Panzerfaust weapons replaced all antitank guns in the infantry regiments.*

Like other sources, this article gives one cause to bump up the firepower of VG squads. Further reading finds more support.

*The Maschinenpistole 44 or MP44 was to become the trademark weapon of the new Volksgrenadier-Divisions and many of the newly formed units appear to have been equipped with it. The MP44 was a gas-operated weapon that fired a shortened 7.92 x 33 mm "Kurz" cartridge that retained the hitting power of the longer infantry cartridge at close range, but lacked the accuracy at ranges of 500 meters and more. It had a maximum effective range of 400 meters in the single-shot mode and 150 meters in full-automatic mode.*

The caveat (as usual) is that the VG were under equipped. No doubt frontline units never received their nominal allotment of weapons. But, they did get some. How many will never be known and "never enough" is the refrain of every veteran. Still, it's interesting to take a closer look at some of these details. Here's a telling excerpt from our article.

*Shortages had also an effect on the equipment, leather had been replaced more and more by substitute materials like canvas or pressed cardboard.*

Imagine wearing a canvas harness with cardboard ammo pouches in the snowy wet Adrennes Forest.

## OVERLOOKED

### ASL Scenario DCRB 4

**Kesternich, Germany, 15 December 1944:** After taking Kesternich from elements of the 272nd Volksgrenadier division, the U.S. 310th infantry regiment shifted to defense. But, the command assumed that a counter attack from the nearby Tiefenbach Ravine was out of the question owing to its steep sides and dense undergrowth. So, when the anticipated counter attack took shape, the Americans defended their front well without realizing the threat to their rear via the ravine.

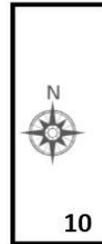


**Board Configuration**

**Victory Conditions:** At game end, the side that controls the greater number of building hexes on or within three hexes of 10Y5 wins.

**Turn Record:** Americans Set Up First, Germans Move First

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
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#### Order of Battle:

German: elements of Volksgrenadier regiment 981: ELR 3, SAN 2

Set up in gully hexes on or south of hex row I.

1 X 9-2, 2 X 8-0

9 X 5-4-8

3 X LMG

American: company F, 310th infantry regiment: ELR 4, SAN 2

Set up at ground level in building hexes on or within three hexes of 10Y5

1 X 8-1, 1 X 6+1

9 X 5-4-6, 2 X MMG

#### Special Rules:

1. EC are wet with ground snow. The Germans have winter camouflage (E3.712).
2. Treat all road and trail hexes on or south of row I as gully (B19) whose course conforms to the road/trail depiction.
3. To simulate surprise, there is no American player turn in game turn one; skip it. At the conclusion of the first German player turn, proceed immediately to the German player turn of game turn two and proceed normally there after.

**Aftermath:** Volksgrenadiers followed the Tiefenbach to within 500 yards of Kesternich undetected and attacked at 1500 hours. They quickly crossed the intervening open ground to infiltrate the town. Startled Americans later described “gray figures all about firing burp guns (probably Sturmgewehr 44 assault rifles) and throwing grenades.” The Americans fought back house-to-house, but steadily gave ground. Only 52 men of company F made it back to friendly lines. The Germans captured about 300 prisoners from the 310th regiment and secured Kersternich by midnight.

### **After Action Report: J63 Silesian Interlude**

Our game play demonstrated the value of playing through your pain to the very last dice roll. Luck is a fickle mistress and likes to switch sides.

David's German main force of three Panthers and several squads surged forward into the leafless orchards of board 38. He simultaneously advanced one infantry platoon along the wood to his right. Another with a Panzer IVJ in the lead swung through the wood line on his left to approach my Russian hill position on board 18.

My hilltop T-34/85 spied a juicy flank shot at a Panther in the orchards below. But, I rolled boxcars to break my gun and fumble the opportunity of a lifetime. To make matters worse, my IS-2's mighty 122 mm gun at the head of the orchard in the valley below flubbed its one shot. A couple of decent small arms attacks did take out a few German half squads.

But, things got worse during my turn. My 34/85 failed to repair its main gun. The IS-2 missed again! Three Panthers fired back to kill it. And then, that scrawny Panzer IVJ scored a critical hit against my 34/85 that turned the hill top into a funeral pyre. Again, my Russian infantry nibbled at the German advance, but "Jerry" fired back at my foxholes to break my best leader, two squads, and their MMG.

I felt like quitting. There I was in the second turn of an infantry-armor scenario with no armor. The Germans hadn't lost a single tank, although one Panther had a busted main gun. All I had left to "threaten" them was a puny 45mm anti-tank gun. But, I did not want to deny David the sweet taste of victory. So, I soldiered on.

Then the dice changed. One of David's Panthers drove deep into my position, to corner the broken 8-1, squads, and MMG, and so ended its move adjacent to my HIP 45mm anti-tank gun. That side shot worked. The Panther brewed up and flaming metal rained all around. Then, some tertiary small arms attack triggered the Russian sniper! It found the German kill stack and eliminated the 9-1. Both of his escorting 5-4-8 squads then failed their leader loss morale checks. Off they ran to the rear with two LMGs. Two German tanks exited to secure the necessary exit VP while one stayed behind with what infantry remained to secure the board 38 village. My two SU-100s entered, one on the left and one of the right, to put the one remaining Panther in a cross fire. It pivoted for defensive fire but missed. Then my CE SU-100 fired and hit. David and I both gasped when we realized that the Russian 100L had a kill number of 27! Bye, bye Panther. The other SU-100 later fired on a building hex occupied by a German half squad and scored a critical hit. Not only did that half squad vanish, but the building rumbled and caught fire.

The end game saw about six German squads trying to traverse a few open ground hexes to overtake about six Russian squads flanked by SU-100s guarding the village. So, the scenario ended with the Russians still controlling two of the four critical buildings for the win.

Current Ladder as of 3 January 2018

DC Conscripts ASL Ladder

<b>Name</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Standing</b>
Josef Stalin	Generalíissimus Sovétskogo Soyúza	0
Stephen Frum	Generál-Polkóvnik	1
Bill Stoppel	Generál-Leytenánt	2
Craig Stark	Generál-Majór	3
John Stadick	Polkóvnik	4
John Gorkowski	Podpolkóvnik	5
James Montgomery	Majór	6
Andy Goldin	Kapitán	7
Paul Washington	Stárshiy Leytenánt	8
Gary Fortenberry	Leytenánt	9
Jim Mehl	Mládshiy Leytenánt	10
Eric Groo	Stárshiy-Práporshchik	11
Brian Scully	Práporshchik	12
Jason Sadler	Starshiná	13
Jan Spoor	Stárshiy Serzhánt	14
David Garvin	Serzhant	15
Matthew Chambers	Mládshiy Serzhánt	16
Douglas Bush	Efréytor	17
Peter Courtney	Ryadovóy	18