

# HochalpenKorp 'Ludendorff'

A 1946 Storm of Eagles© for C-P Models

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*Abruptly the German Gebirgsjager who were defending this stretch of the river bank rose from their cunningly concealed trenches on both sides of the bridge and attacked the British paratroopers, screaming, high on schnapps, petavin and rage, finally able to loosen their pent up tension and fear!*

## Introduction

The bitter war in the Balkans and the Karpathien mountains called for more specialist Neu-Heer mountain warfare trained units, expert light mountain infantry, fit and able to fight over the roughest terrain.

One such unit's formed during the summer of 1945 was HochalpenKorp "Ludendorff", (or high alpine Corp Ludendorff)

## Beginnings

Oberst i.G. Schramm fully recovered from wounds received in Finland received orders to report to Gebirgs-Truppenbauplatz Mittenwald in southern Germany on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 1945 to take command of a new mountain warfare unit.

This tough slightly built Austrian officer had orders to build, train and lead a new unit for action on the Ost Fronten. The cadre for this unit would come from the reserve training unit of the disbanded Waffen SS 'Prinz Eugen' Division and a new draft from the Reservieren Armees.

His orders from the 26<sup>th</sup> GebirgsArmees, (Ostmark) were to have all the infantry units fully operational in eight weeks! Tracked units would be assembled in Bohemia and transferred when ready at a later date.

Oberst i.G. Schramm arrived at Gebirgs-Truppenbauplatz Mittenwald on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1945 and began training preparations immediately. Most of the 4, 000 infantry cadre had already arrived and were already being trained by the camp staff, overseen by his staff officer Major Zusst.

The men transferred from the dissolved SS Gebirgs Division had already received eight months training at Mittenwald, far from their native home in the Hungarian Banat region; the new recruits from the Reservieren Armees had been in uniform for some 6 months too, most serving in the 444<sup>th</sup> ReservierenGruppen. These were not raw troops, but un-tested soldiers. They needed

only to begin training as a unit and trained to climb and fight in the toughest terrain!

By the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 1946 the support units had arrived in the camp, the men for the 'Ludendorff' Feldgendarme zug came from the Linz Gendarmerie and the wheeled transport unit had assembled from a disbanded SpeerKorp unit.

Major Zusst took personal charge of a new sub unit within the Korp, he gathered together a 200 man unit for high altitude reconnaissance missions, the 'Ludendorff' Hochgebirgsjager Batallione a unit that would be at the forefront of every battle, equipped with the new stummelwerfer and extra MG42v MMG's, they would be the eyes and ears of the Korp.

The transport group busied itself with gathering together a unit of pack mules, always in short supply; they had to send men as far away as the French border to buy the necessary mules from Spanish black marketers.

During the next few weeks Oberst i.G. Schramm galvanised his staff in to action, field craft and gunnery practice went hand in hand with unit exercises.

All troops trained round the clock, learning how to climb using ropes and manoeuvre during night time.

Quickly the 'Korp' toughened up as it prepared to enter the hardest battlefield in Europe. Armbands with the Korp legend sewn on them were issued, but none were sewn to the field brown uniforms, this would only be allowed once the unit had survived its baptism of fire!

## The HochalpenKorp 'Ludendorff'

KsTn45-401/6

HQ Stab  
Feldgendarme zug  
Map zug

1<sup>st</sup> Bavarian Jager Brigaden  
2<sup>nd</sup> Wurttemberg Jager Brigaden  
3<sup>rd</sup> Stiermark Jager Brigaden  
'Ludendorff' Kavallerie Waffengruppe  
'Ludendorff' Alpenjager Artillerie Brigaden  
'Ludendorff' Alpenjager Pi- Waffengruppe  
'Ludendorff' Alpen- Nachrichten Kommando  
'Ludendorff' Sanitat's Waffengruppe  
'Ludendorff' Transport Zug

'Ludendorff' Hochgebirgsjager Batallione  
'Ludendorff' Alpen Pz-Jg Waffengruppe  
'Ludendorff' Ersatz Batallione  
'Ludendorff' SPG Sturm (*added Sept 1946*)  
Alarmheiten Batallione 'Karlovac' (*added Sept. 1946*).

*Each Brigaden was composed of three Waffengruppe and support units as per Neu-Heer Infantry Brigades.*

### **Commitment to the Front**

The new mountain warfare Honorific 'Korp' finished training and received 'march' orders on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July 1946.

Oberst i.G. Schramm was to transport by road his unit to Trieste via Linz and report to the HQ of the 75<sup>th</sup> ReservierenKorp before continuing on to the HQ of 102<sup>nd</sup> ReservierenKorp 'Dalmatian' at Split.

The 'Korp' arrived in split at the end of August 1946. Along the way the unit took part in numerous anti-partisan sweeps along the Croatian coastline, tiresome, dirty work that many officers in the 'Korp' wished they did not have to participate in.

The commander of the 102<sup>nd</sup> ReservierenKorp had new orders for the 'Ludendorff': Ten days assisting the 617<sup>th</sup> ReservierenGruppen in an anti-bandit operation north of Split, then the whole unit was to report to the 24<sup>th</sup> FeldArmee's 21<sup>st</sup> Gebirgs Korp at Sarajevo for front line assignment.

### **Bloodbath at Sarajevo**

General Karl Memmen's 21<sup>st</sup> GebirgsKorp had just replaced the battered German forces that had survived the allies operation 'Sandringham', (launched during June 1946) which aimed to capture the city.

His mountain Korp consisted of the 328<sup>th</sup> FeldGruppen and a miscellaneous collection of smaller units, which now included the 'Ludendorff' GebirgsKorp.

The Balkan front had for too long been the poor mans front, but now with the arrival of Field Marshall Rommel as commander of HG Sud-Ost a determined effort was now being under taken to strengthen the Bosnian front against further allied incursion.

Their recalcitrant Croatian allies were expected to raise more combat units for front line service, even if this meant absorbing their men in to the Neu-Heer proper!

The 350-man 'Karlovac' Police Battalion composed of Croatian police auxiliaries was taken on to the 'Korp' strength during September 1946 as the Alarmheiten

Battalion 'Karlovac' as part of this drive to commit more Croatian men to the war effort.

The 'Korp' took its place in the defensive line east of Sarajevo and got used to static mountain warfare.

Daily patrols and the odd skirmish made for the typical day in the trenches. The allies still recovering from the bloody summer offensive limited themselves to air raids and the occasional trench raid. Artillery bombardments straddled the fortifications hourly, with no apparent routine or pattern.

But spies reporting to the *Abwehr*, (Army intelligence dept) built a picture of a strengthening allied force massing for a renewed attack on the city and all soldiers in the 21<sup>st</sup> GebirgsKorp knew it wouldn't be long before they attempted to storm the city again?

### **Calm before the storm**

Oberst I.G. Schramm spent the first weeks of September 1946 trying to get hold of some armour for his unit.

Finally after appealing directly to FM Rommel himself (on one of his famous inspection tours of the front), he received a Zug of Italian assault guns, to which he 'scrounged' a handful of Maresal SPG's from the 'Von Pannwitz' KossakenKorp, (in exchange for some horses he had 'procured' from a farm near Zadar a few weeks before).

Using some of the SPG from his own Pz-Jg Waffengruppe Schramm could form an SPG Sturm, which he placed under the command of recently promoted Oberleutnant Harmer.

*The sky grew darker and darker, as if nature herself wished to blot out the terrible events taking place in the Bosnian valley, the whole front reverberated with the sound of artillery bursts resonating, bouncing off each peak, fading till replaced by the sound of the next barrage.*

### **Operation 'Agamemnon'**

The allied summer offensive to capture the town of Foca and force the river Drina position, (Heinrich line) had failed, but the German Bridgehead had been forced back on to the outskirts of the battered town a few Km from the river crossings.

Since the end of the offensive the German's had begun to dig an extensive line of new positions west of the river, bringing in a veritable army of labourers from the *Speerkorp* to construct the bunkers and trenches along the Jaherina and Treskavica mountain ranges, these would be needed if Sarajevo was to be held by the 21<sup>st</sup> GebirgKorp.

The British Expeditionary Force Aegean (B.E.F.A) was renamed the 5<sup>th</sup> Army in early September, (based in the Serbian town of Uzice) when it was re-enforced with more troops from Italy.

They immediately put forward a new plan to capture Foca using the forces at their disposal. The 78<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and 8<sup>th</sup> Indian Division would go in again, supported by the 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division and 82<sup>nd</sup> Guards Brigade. The full weight of the Bulgarian 4<sup>th</sup> Army would be in reserve to exploit any breaches in the enemy line.

These experienced British forces had already had two cracks at the Heinrich line and had failed to breach its defences.

When brought back up to strength their experience and knowledge should give them the edge over the newer inexperienced German formations defending the town.

### **Breakthrough!**

Operation 'Agamemnon' began in an inauspiciously during an autumn rain storm on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 1946. The 38<sup>th</sup> Rifle Brigade supported by the 82<sup>nd</sup> Guards took two days to batter their way in to Foca and capture the river crossings.

The German 328<sup>th</sup> FeldGruppen was routed in the fighting and only the immediate injection of the weakened 279<sup>th</sup> FeldGruppen stabilised the situation temporarily.

Quickly the allies brought up fresh troops and began an assault on Brod a few Km south of Foca in the second line of defence, air sorties by the squadron of new De Havilland DH120 Vampire kept the Neu-Luftwaffe away from the battlefield.

Meanwhile the Bulgarian's launched a fresh attack on Gorazde deepening the crisis for the 12<sup>th</sup> GebirgsArmee.

The next day the 78<sup>th</sup> Division began an assault on Ustikolina a few miles north of Foca, (on the road to Gorazde). Slowly but surely 12<sup>th</sup> GebirgsArmee's flank was being turned, fresh troops were needed urgently!

Lacking air cover the 279<sup>th</sup> FeldGruppen folded after three days intense bombardment and attack, losses on both sides were high, but importantly the allies were through the Heinrich line and the 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division was advancing westward on Sarajevo.

### **Battle for Dobra Polije**

The HQ of the 'Ludendorff' GebirgsKorp in Sarajevo was alerted on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 1946 and within 3 hours had begun to march SE toward Foca.

Their first casualties were from the air, the allied jet fighters strafed the roads

making day movement impossible. After 24 hours Oberst Schramm received the order to halt and dig in at Dobra Polije, after receiving news that the front ahead of them had collapsed!

The town of Dobra Polije lay on the main road between Sarajevo and Foca at the foot of the Treskavica mountain range, (highest point 2088m). Here the road branches south taking the traveller to Mostar.

A couple of Kilometres south of the town lays a bridge crossing a fast flowing river, a perfect defensive position!

*Their eyes filled with horror and disgust,  
Major Zusst staggered to his feet and watched  
numbly as the rest of his men did the same,  
rising out of their foxholes where they had  
hidden during the last enemy attack, unable to  
speak, tears rolling down their cheeks they  
surveyed the destruction on the bridge, the  
carpet of shredded enemy bodies, wearing  
their distinctive maroon berets.*

### **Crisis for the Ludendorff**

The advance elements of the 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division slowly made their way toward Sarajevo, taking Ockavlie on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1946. A spirited defence of the town by elements of the 907<sup>th</sup> StuG Brigade and the worsening weather conditions had slowed the allied advance.

In an effort to regain their momentum the Allies decide to attempt an airborne drop on the bridge at Dobra Polije, hoping to capture it and prevent the Germans from organising a defence of the crossing.

The elite 4<sup>th</sup> Paratrooper group would fly in on the dawn of the 24<sup>th</sup>, capture and hold the bridge till the 5<sup>th</sup> Indian Brigade linked up with them.

The 'Ludendorff' had not been idle in the last 24 hours. The 16<sup>th</sup> *SpeerKorp* Bataillon had been brought up to strengthen the '*Heinrich Stellung*' 3<sup>rd</sup> and final line of defences, the 'Korp' had been re-enforced by the 4<sup>th</sup> *Kuban Kossack* Regiment and a Sturm of StuGs from the 907<sup>th</sup> StuG Brigade.

There was nothing more to give, Heersgruppe *Sud-Ost* reserves were all committed, until the Croatian Government sent more men to the front.

As the defences around Dobra Polije took shape, Oberst i.G. Schramm turned his attention to the bridge south of his positions.

He decided against asking Korp HQ for permission to destroy the bridge, knowing it would be refused, (it'd be needed for a future counter-attack) and instead decided to send a body of troops to the bridge to destroy it,

knowing this would greatly increase his chances of holding the mountain road position.

### **Operation 'Cleethorpes'**

The 480 men of the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion Parachute Regiment boarded their Dakota transport planes during dusk on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 1946. Major A. Boustead prayed silently to himself as he boarded the plane that his men would get through OK, this was going to a sticky operation!

Oberst i.G. Schramm decided to send a small mixed fighting group led by Major Zusst to the bridge, destroy it if possible, if not, defend it for as long as possible, buy his men time to dig in and prepare better defences at Dobra Polije.

Schramm gave Zusst the 1<sup>st</sup> Sturm/*Hochgebirgsjäger* Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sturm the Greek *Gebirgsjäger* Waffengruppe and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Zug SPG Sturm, (just arrived from Mostar).

Kampfgruppe Zusst arrived at the bridge at 22.00 hours on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1946 during a particularly hard rain storm.

Within minutes his pioneers reported that they could not destroy the bridge with the explosives they had with them. The bridge would have to be defended!

To the east the sky was alight with the flashes of artillery fire, the rumbling of explosions gently rolled down the valley toward them, Zusst knew the enemy was coming and coming soon!

He ordered his mountain troops to barricade the peasants house on the south side of the bridge, the turncoat Greek soldiers would dig trenches on the north side, the three Maresal SPGs that had managed to navigate the mountain road from Sarajevo, to remain on the north bank, their accompanying Sdkfz 603 '*fuchs*' was ordered to recon south to Brod and find out where the enemy point was?

### **The Scenario**

The Allied paratroopers will airborne assault the bridge south of Dobra Polije, dropping south of the bridge

### **Suggested Rules**

This scenario is designed to be played at a 1 to 15 scale. Rules such as Rapid Fire would be suitable for this kind of action.

### **Terrain**

A 6' by 4' board would be ideal but if space doesn't permit this a 4' by 4' board would work just as well. A road should run north-south through the centre of the table with a stone bridge in the centre.

The north bank of the river should be higher than the south. A fortified peasant's cottage should be placed on the south side on the bridge.

The Axis player may place three trench systems on the north bank. Make sure you disperse a number of trees across the table to provide some cover.

### **Neu Heer Briefing**

Date: 24/9/46

Location: A Bridge south of Dobra Polije, Bosnia.

### **Situation**

Enemy Paratroopers have landed south of the Bridge and will attempt to capture it for follow up friendly forces to advance on Sarajevo.

### **Initial Deployment:**

The armoured units must remain on the north bank, all other forces may be deployed on turn one as you see fit!

### **Victory Conditions:**

Defend the bridge for 20 moves then withdrawal northwards. Save 50% of your force to win the battle. If you prevent the enemy from capturing the bridge, you win the battle.

### **Neu-Heer Forces:**

Kampfgruppe Zusst  
1<sup>st</sup> Sturm/Hochgebirgsjäger Battalion  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sturm/Greek Gebirgsjäger Waffengruppe  
2<sup>nd</sup> Zug/'Ludendorff' SPG Sturm

### **British Briefing**

Date: 24/9/46

Location: South of a Bridge due south of Dobra Polije, Bosnia.

### **Situation**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division is advancing northwards from Brod, your Parachute Battalion is tasked with capturing the bridge south of Dobra Polije so that the advance on Sarajevo can be maintained.

### **Initial Deployment**

All forces are available on turn one. Enter the battle for the southern edge of the table.

### **Victory Conditions**

Capture the Bridge within 20 moves or destroy more than 50% of the enemy force to win the battle.

## Special Rules

All men Carry 1 grenade each.

## British Army Forces:

12<sup>th</sup> Parachute Battalion

*The German prisoners came streaming past the General car, an earth brown crocodile, shuffling eastwards, six men deep, silent, the will to fight knocked out of them.*

*“Sir, we’ve cracked the Heinrich Line sir, Old Winnie’ll be happy sir?”*

*Turning to his youthful Adjutant the General pursed his lips before replying “Yes Boris, but if they fight for every damn mountain pass like this, its going to take a long time to reach Ljubljana eh?”*

## Conclusion

The Ludendorff recon ‘fuch’ made contact with the survivors of the 907<sup>th</sup> StuG Brigade and as daylight broke on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 1946 led them slowly north to the bridge at Dobra polije.

They arrived just as the first carpet of British Paratroopers landed south of the Bridge, the result was a massacre of the first wave of British infantry, quickly the Neu-Heer mountain infantry stormed forward and overrun the British Para’s, routing the survivors.

What survived the German attack fought a rear guard action southward, leaving some 200 comrades dead and 120 captured, (some wounded) behind. Operation ‘Cleethorpes’ had been a failure.

Major Zusst had been lucky, but 12 hours later when the 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division arrived, his men began their baptism of fire. The Indian artillery battered their positions for 16 hours till Major Zusst gathered his survivors together and retreated back to Dobra Polije, (some of the Greek volunteers attempted to desert during this critical period, for which they were summarily shot when re-captured).

The ‘Ludendorff’ GebirgsKorp had bought Field Marshall Rommel time to get fresh Croatian re-enforcements to the last line of defence before Sarajevo.

The Indian 4<sup>th</sup> Division advanced on Dobra Polije and unable to deploy properly in the narrow valley and facing a determined German defence was unable to punch its way to Sarajevo.

As a harsh Balkan winter approached the allies could do nothing more but consolidate their gains and begin a relentless artillery bombardment of the Heinrich Line.

The Neu-Heer’s last action of the battle was to attempt to re-capture Gorazde, which inevitably failed.

The ‘Ludendorff’ GebirgsKorp now faced the harsh realities of winter trench warfare with all the horrors that entailed.

## Notes

The Allies have the upper hand in Bosnia, capturing Foca and Gorazde and crossing the River Drina in force improves their supply situation and puts more pressure on the Serbian capital.

Once again the German’s have demonstrated how difficult it is to attack in mountain terrain and how small forces can hold out against larger enemy forces in the claustrophobic mountain passes.

## Biography

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A Balkan Interlude: Operation ‘Gribble’ – C-P Models

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