

IRON MOUNTAIN

by J. Richard Jarvinen

"Well, sir, what do you think?"

Captain Emory R. Hanson, Third Army, Paneurope, slowly lowered his field glasses from the small plume of dust rapidly approaching his transport column.

"Yeah, lieutenant, it looks like one of ours. Probably Jacobs, judging from the direction."

"But he's not supposed to report for another half-hour. And besides, wouldn't he call if there were trouble?"

"Yes, he would. If he could." Captain Hanson had reason to worry. He was solely responsible for delivering ten truckloads of sodium nitrate to Launch Site B, high on Iron Mountain. Four armored vehicles, three GEVs and five squads of powered infantry ought to be adequate protection, but. . .

"Lieutenant!" snapped Captain Hanson. "I want you to inform all drivers that they are to proceed at maximum possible speed. Now!"

The lieutenant hesitated, as if to say something, but apparently thought better of his impulse. "Yes, sir," he said, and ran quickly down the caravan to issue the order. Hanson raised his glasses again and peered over the windscreen of his jeep, studying the unexpected and unidentified vehicle. The roar of the giant diesels reverberated through the air as the 4-ton trucks began their arduous climb up the mountain road.

Five minutes later, Hanson was still standing in his jeep when one of his GEVs drew up close and shut down its power, falling to the earth with a cry of tearing metal, rather than settling slowly as air-cushioned vehicles normally stop. The door literally flew open and Corporal Jeffrey Jacobs stumbled out, his left arm hanging bloody and useless at his side.

"Sir," he panted, "an Ogre! It almost got us! Blew our radio out on the first shot. It was all we could do to get away. Simpson's dead, Meyer's hurt, but not badly. . ."

"Easy, son," the captain interrupted. "Just tell me what I want to know. How far back is it and what direction is it headed?"

The corporal paused to catch his breath. When he did speak, it was in gasps and he kept wiping his brow with his good arm. "We spotted it about 40 clicks back, just before it saw us. We exchanged a couple of shots and then we took off. It must still be following us, but our radar went out with our radio." Jacobs eyed the remains of the antenna that had flown proudly atop his vehicle. He turned back, half smiling. "I think we got a couple of hits on its treads."

"Good work, corporal. Did you recognize the type?"

"No, sir, not exactly, but from the size, it must have been a Mark III. It was kinda hard to judge at our distance and we ran pretty fast."

"All right, corporal, you're dismissed. Catch up with the van. The last wagon should have some medical equipment to take care of that arm."

"Yes, sir," said Jacobs and went running back into his GEV, which started almost immediately. Lifting clumsily from the ground, it slowly accelerated up the road in pursuit of the convoy.

Hanson sat down, wiping his hand over his mouth, a habit most people recognized in him as a sign of extreme anxiety. His driver, Sergeant Wiles, looked at him speculatively. "Well, do you think we can outrun it?"

Hanson paused before responding. "I don't know. I hope to hell we can. Catch up with the trucks. I've got some figuring to do," As the jeep started off, Hanson reached into a compartment and grabbed a map and pocket calculator. He began to figure.

When they reached the rear of the convoy, Lieutenant Bourcher was waiting in his own jeep.

"Did you find out what it was?"

Hanson frowned at his question. "It's an Ogre, lieutenant, and it's coming straight at us." The lieutenant paled, while Hanson continued. "Here's what I want you to do. Up ahead there's a large turnout. I want all the lead tanks and GEVs to pull over and let the main convoy pass. Then they are to pull in after the last truck and be ready for action from the rear. And Lieutenant, I want this information radioed. Now!" The lieutenant jumped up, barked a "yessir," and ran off.

"OK, sergeant, let's go. I want to be at the front of this convoy ASAP." Sergeant Wiles put the jeep into gear, jammed down the pedal and they raced off, gravel and rubber scattering behind them. Captain Hanson looked at his watch and then went back to work on his calculator.

The lieutenant had now joined Captain Hanson in his jeep as it raced along in, front of the convoy. Anxiously he looked up.

"Do you think we can outrun it?" he asked.

"No, lieutenant, I do not."

The lieutenant bit his lip. "Then, I guess we'll. . ." his voice cracked slightly as he spoke, "we'll have to fight it."

"Yes, we will. But I'll tell you what we're going to do, just in case we suddenly have a new commander." Hanson looked hard at the lieutenant, who returned his gaze with determination, if not with confidence, fully aware of who was second in command. "Now, here's a map of the roads leading up Iron Mountain." Hanson sketched briefly on a small pad.

"The numbers are the distances in kilometers from one intersection to the next. We're at point X and are trying to reach B, the secondary launch site. The small, curvy line is the old post road.



It's been unused for several years. Going up, you'll see we have two possible destinations. Regardless of our destination, the Ogre, with his superior speed, will be able to catch up. Our only advantage, and I emphasize only, is the Ogre doesn't know to which site we're headed. It turns out that if we're going to A, we should take the old road, and if we're going to B, we should take the new one. At least, that's what we should do if we want to prevent the Ogre from getting in front of us, which it could do if it took the opposite route from us. Which is exactly why we're going to take the old road."

"But I thought you just said that if we take the old road to get to site B, the Ogre could head us off by taking the new one. Wouldn't that be stupid? Ahh . . . excuse me, sir."

"That's all right, lieutenant. Yes, that would be stupid. And the Ogre knows we're not stupid. I hope. Therefore it will assume we're headed to site A, and thus follow us up the post road. It would lose more time by taking the new one if that's where we're headed."

"Just what does this buy us, Captain?" the lieutenant asked, with more than a trace of disapproval.

"About ten minutes, lieutenant. About ten minutes."

"And if the Ogre guesses right?"

"We've lost."

The convoy had successfully negotiated the old road without mishap and was now on the section connecting the old road with the new. Captain Hanson and the lieutenant were in the lead jeep, anxiously looking ahead. The captain broke the strained silence.

"The moment of truth arrives. But with luck . . ."

The lieutenant remained silent.

At the intersection, Hanson had the jeep pull over and he stood up, waving the trucks on.

"By God, I think we did it. The Ogre should have been here three minutes ago if it had outguessed us."

The lieutenant looked up skeptically. "You're sure?" he asked.

"Unless my computations were wrong. Okay, let's go!" The last truck had just disappeared around the corner, its tires squealing

loudly in protest against the violent abuses it was forced to suffer. "I want one heavy tank, one GEV and one platoon to wait on either side of the intersection, just out of sight. They should be able to wheel around and get in a couple of good shots just as the Ogre comes around the last corner. Come on, let's move!"

Ten minutes later, Captain Hanson and the lieutenant, trailing the convoy once more, looked up suddenly as the sound of muffled explosions filled the air.

"First blood. Hand me the radio. Baldini, can you read me? What's happening?"

Baldini's voice came back over the speaker, weak but clear. "Yes, sir, we read you. Just like you said, Captain. The Ogre came tearing around the corner, not suspecting a thing. We got in a couple of good shots, but it's still coming strong. We're going in for a second attack. Over."

"Good work, Baldini."

"My God!" Baldini's voice broke in. "It's got four missiles! But it's only the size of a Mark III. It also looks like it has two —" Baldini's voice was suddenly cut off, and a few seconds later, another explosion reached their ears. Hanson looked grim.

"Come on, lieutenant. Time to set another ambush."

"Is that possible, sir? Could a Mark III have four missiles? And what else was he trying to say?"

"Could be a later version of the same model. And I'm afraid he was telling us it had two main batteries. It's going to be rougher than I thought. Get all the drivers on the radio. Tell them to push forward and ignore all their temperature and pressure gauges. There should be a small howitzer up ahead. Get someone to check on it and make sure it's manned and supplied. And keep trying to raise Baldini."

Hanson's jeep raced around the corner when Sergeant Wiles slammed on the brakes. The wheels locked, sending the jeep into a slow spin toward the guard rail. As the jeep finally stopped, its front fender nudged against the rail with a gentle bump. The lieutenant let out a deep breath, but Hanson's reaction was somewhat more dramatic.



“What the hell’s going ON!” he yelled, as he looked at one of the trucks, stopped solidly in the middle of the road. The driver of the truck got out and pointed down the road to the entire convoy, all stopped behind the lead truck. Its hood was lifted and three men were frantically trying to repair it.

“Damn it! Don’t waste time trying to fix that beast! Shove it over the side!”

“What . . . what did you say, sir?”

“You heard me! Get on the radio – no, never mind, I’ll do it. Coggins, is that you over there? Get your platoon and shove that damn truck over the side. And I mean now!”

Almost instantly a group of troopers surrounded the stalled vehicle and shoved it toward the edge. The truck balanced for a few seconds, and then sluggishly slipped down the steep cliff. Halfway down it struck a ledge with a sickening crunch, and suddenly blossomed into flames as its cargo ignited. The sound of the explosion was deafening, and heat from the blast could be felt across the ravine.

“OK, move, move!” Hanson jumped back into his jeep and they charged off. Hanson picked up the radio again. “How’s that howitzer, OK? Good, tell them to get ready. It will only be a few minutes.”

As Hanson reached the howitzer, one of the men pointed back behind him, fear contorting his features.

“Oh, Jesus, there it is,” he cried.

Hanson turned, and for the first time in his life felt real fear. A tank, yet more than a tank, had just come around the far corner. Tactical nuclear missiles, primary and secondary batteries, antipersonnel weapons, practically invulnerable to conventional attacks, and all controlled by a computer, unfeeling, unfeeling, and able to make lightning-fast calculations. This was an Ogre, the most feared weapon of its time. Even as Hanson was turning to look, a bright flash appeared from its side, the sign of a missile being launched. Accelerating quickly, it arced high over the crevice and, locking on its target, plunged down toward the convoy. Men scattered in all directions at the screaming approach. Suddenly, one of the tanks exploded in a white flash, followed by a crimson ball of flame. Almost immediately following the first, a second explosion occurred. The following truck’s cargo had been ignited by the intense heat of the nuclear blast. Hanson could hear the cries of the wounded and dying. Stunned, the men stood appalled at the horror so quickly wreaked. Hanson was the first to move.

“Man that gun! Get those missile tanks to lock in with us! We’ve already lost too much time!” The barrel of the howitzer lowered as it tracked the moving Ogre. A GEV went up in flames as the Ogre rolled over it. Simultaneously, the howitzer and the Ogre’s big guns emitted jets of flame. Instantly the howitzer and one of the Ogre’s main batteries were destroyed, each a victim of the other’s vengeance. The lieutenant ran over to the shattered remains of the howitzer, looking for Hanson. The captain’s body lay on a rock, nearly torn in two by the explosion, one hand still desperately gripping his radio. Slowly backing from the gruesome scene, the lieutenant stared in horror. Then, turning quickly, he ran back to the jeep.

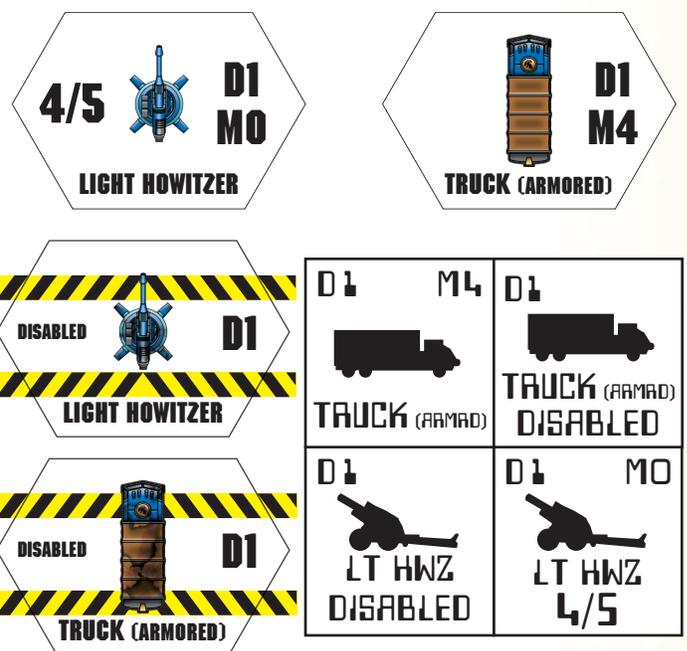
“Let’s go, sergeant. We may still get one more chance. It’s (he refused to say the word Ogre) still got two more missiles, but if we can knock out both of them, some of the trucks may get through.”

Sergeant Wiles, seemingly unperturbed by the absence of Captain Hanson, gunned the jeep forward.

In the end, five trucks did make it through safely. They were the only survivors of what is now known as the Battle of Iron Mountain. Little is known of how the lieutenant and his remaining force managed to destroy the Ogre’s remaining missiles, but by the time the Ogre broke through the pass, it lacked the firepower to accomplish its mission and was too far behind to overrun the trucks. Almost despondently, the Ogre turned and made its way back down the mountain, subject only to the sporadic and ineffective shelling of the two howitzers guarding the entrance to Launch Site B.

THE BATTLE OF IRON MOUNTAIN

Ogre is fast, clean, and most of all, fun . . . a very enjoyable game. This prompted the story you just read, and also the scenario which is to follow. With only a few rules modifications and some new counters, you can recreate Captain Hanson’s desperate attempt to delay or damage the Ogre (which, by the way, is a Mark III-B. Try this scenario with an ordinary Mark III and see what happens. Or try it with a Mark V! Ouch!).



RULES MODIFICATIONS

[Editor’s Note: “Iron Mountain” originally appeared in the *Space Gamer* in 1977. At the time, only *Ogre* had been published; *G.E.V.* and other expansions had yet to be developed. Thus, the various rules now associated with the game relating to stacking, terrain, spillover fire, etc., did not exist. *Ogre* has evolved in a different direction than the rules offered here, but that does not detract from the enjoyability of this scenario. When playing this scenario, the rules presented here supersede any current “official” rules of *Ogre*.]

1. Units may stack. Maximum stacking limit (for movement also!) is 3 defensive factors. Thus, a Heavy Tank virtually blocks the road.

2. When any unit (except the Ogre or Infantry) enters a hex containing any non-Infantry unit, there is a cost of one additional movement point. Units that start a turn stacked in a hex still move independently. Thus, once the first unit has moved forward on the road, there may be an additional movement cost for the second or subsequent unit moving into a hex that the first unit has now occupied.

3. Trucks may only move at half speed while climbing the rough mountain road. Any Truck may attempt "accelerated" movement. On a die roll of 1, 2, or 3, the Truck may move 3 hexes instead of 2. On a die roll of 4 or 5, the Truck moves normally. On a die roll of 6, the Truck moves normally, but then "stalls." Flip the counter to the "Disabled" side. A stalled Truck may not move unless it rolls a 6 just prior to its movement phase (i.e., during the recovery phase). It may attempt to "uninstall" once per turn.

4. Any non-Truck unit may "shove" a stalled or disabled Truck one hex in any direction (except into a mountain hex) at the cost of one movement point of the shoving unit. Thus, you may shove units into turnouts or off the cliff (in which case they are immediately destroyed). Shoving units off cliffs is the only case when a unit may leave the road.

5. Mountain hexes (and hexsides!) block the line of fire for all units. This is the only case when the line of fire is blocked.

6. You will need to make some new units: ten Armored Trucks and one 4/5 Light Howitzer. Images are provided to assist in making either counters to match the *Ogre Classic Counters*, for those that wish to play "old school," or counters appropriate to *Ogre Sixth Edition*. A Light Howitzer counts as one armor unit (AU) and is worth 6 VP.

The Trucks start on hexes 0510, 0511, 0610, 0612, 0613, 0614, 0615, 0710, 0715, and 0816. The Howitzer starts in hex 1312. Note that two normal 6/8 Howitzers start on hexes 1504 and 1604.

7. Other starting units for the Paneuropean convoy are:

- Two Heavy Tanks
- Two Missile Tanks
- Three GEVs
- Five squads of Infantry

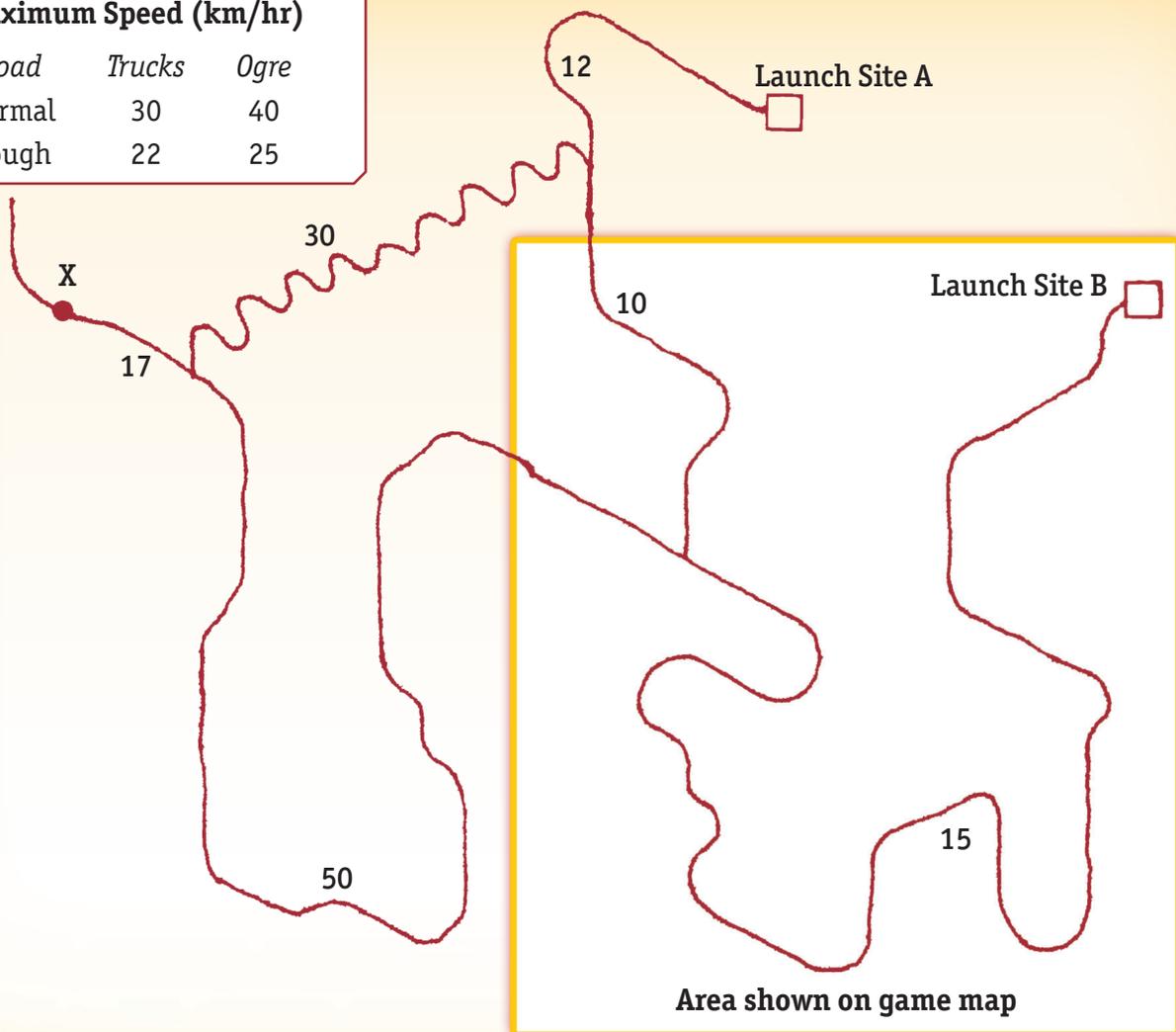
These units may be set up on any road hex, subject to stacking limitations. If using Captain Hanson's ambush, place one Heavy Tank, one GEV, and one squad of Infantry in hexes 0306 and 0407, and one Heavy Tank, one GEV, and one squad of Infantry in hexes 0708 and 0809, obeying stacking limits. The Missile Tanks, and remaining GEV and Infantry, may be placed on any other road hex (other than in the pass), subject to stacking limits.

8. When a Truck is destroyed ("X" result), any units in the same hex are immediately attacked with an attack strength of 3, and any units in adjacent hexes are attacked with an attack strength of 2. Note that a chain reaction of explosions may occur in a densely packed Truck convoy.

9. An Ogre ramming a Truck automatically destroys it, but the Ogre's treads are attacked at 1:1 odds with an attack strength of 2.

Maximum Speed (km/hr)

| Road | Trucks | Ogre |
|--------|--------|------|
| Normal | 30 | 40 |
| Rough | 22 | 25 |



Area shown on game map

10. Trucks may be attacked with antipersonnel weapons.

11. Because the narrow winding mountain road is not conducive to armored combat, only half (rounded up) of one type of the Ogre's armament may be used against any one target. Different types may be combined, however. For example, the Ogre could use half of its secondary batteries against one target, while using the remainder against another target.

12. When more than one unit is stacked in a hex, the Ogre player must specify which unit he is attacking. Other units are not affected (except in the case of Truck explosions).

13. The convoy player moves first. The Ogre arrives on hex 0501, spending one movement factor to do so. If the convoy player has

5 or more Trucks reach the Launch Site B bunker in hex 1702, he wins. If exactly 4 Trucks make it to the bunker, it is a draw. If less than 4, he loses.

14. The Ogre starts the game having lost 4 tread units to Corporal Jacob's hits.

Alternate scenarios are plentiful. For instance, start the lead Truck of the convoy on hex 0501 and the Ogre on hex 0206. (Captain Hanson guessed wrong and the Ogre guessed right. Not much of a contest, but it shows what could have happened.) Or start the convoy of Trucks five hexes closer to the Ogre, beginning in hex 0708. (Captain Hanson didn't gain his 10 minutes. Makes quite a difference!) Have fun!

