

WEIRD WORLD WAR II WALKER-PANZERMECH ACTION

# PANZERMECHS AT DAWN

It's now 1947. D-Day has gone ahead and the fight for France has been hard. However, rift-tech has changed the face of WWII. Genetic modification has seen the introduction of super-soldiers, living corpses, and were-creatures onto the battlefield. Shermans and Tigers now advance alongside walking machines of all varieties, able to reach areas previously inaccessible to their tracked predecessors. Both sides vie for technological advantage and fighting intensifies on all fronts.

By Ben Moorhouse



In NW Europe, both sides are stuck in an attritional conflict across the river and over the German-French border. Both sides have emerged from what has been the worst winter in living memory, rivalling even conditions on the Eastern Front. Spring comes late and, combined with the long winter, allows for an extensive period of rearmament and reorganisation for both sides. As the last of the snow melts from frontline positions, tanks are already on the move. The screech of tracks is muffled by the steady thud of giant metal feet on the road surface as the walkers join the advance.

On 13 March 1947, General Patch, commanding the combined US and French Seventh Army, is the first to move. The Allies attempt to advance and crush the remaining Wehrmacht elements on the western side of the Rhine near Karlsruhe. By this stage of the war, rift-tech is becoming increasingly common across

The Panzermech 'Donner' crawls easily over the rubble to take up a new firing position.

Illustration by Jon Cave from *Konflikt '47*.  
Weird World War II Wargames Rules. © Osprey Publishing [www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com)



Spinne Panzermechs advance through the ruins past the remains of earlier battles.

all frontline locations, especially the density of armoured walker support available to the infantry divisions. Although walker-versus-walker combat has been seen before, it is still fairly rare for these machines to go into action without their tracked counterparts nearby, although there are exceptions to this. One particular action during Patch's advance provides us with a good example and is the basis for this article.

### US VI CORPS ATTACK

On 16 March 1947, US forces bombarded the village of Kesseldorf, a border village location next to a bend in the Sauer River, believed to be the centre of mass of German operations in the area and the headquarters of a Panzergrenadier regiment. The next morning the US attack on the position commenced with an assault by the US 42nd Infantry Division. Lead elements were supported by M8 Grizzly medium assault walkers, which were very much the walker 'Shermans' of the time, armed with a 75 mm gun and .50 cal HMG, best suited to supporting a tricky advance through rough

terrain and a rubble-strewn objective. The US combined arms force successfully broke through German lines, creating a 4 km-wide gap in the German defensive line. The village of Kesseldorf fell to the 42nd Division who could now threaten Rhine crossings at Seltz and Beinheim. The fall of Kesseldorf saw the first walker-on-walker action of the battle, where a platoon of four M8 Grizzly walkers encountered a German Zeus heavy Panzermech accompanied by two Spinne light Panzermechs. This was the Zeus Panzermech Donner, commanded by the experienced Oberleutnant Erhart Fellner. The heavy walker formed the centre of a hunter-killer (*Jäger-Mörder*) grouping. This was a new tactic pioneered by the Germans in 1947, taking advantage of a walker's increased mobility as well as improved rift-tech communications equipment that enabled better voice hand-off of targets and

coordination between vehicles. The Spinne Panzermechs, scuttling around on six spider-like legs, acted as the eyes and ears of the heavy-hitting Zeus (armed with a high-velocity 88 mm gun that could destroy almost any Allied armour with relative ease). Use of the Spinne scouts prevented the Zeus from overexposing itself and allowed speedy target acquisition and faster engagement times than its adversaries.

The engagement began at 0750hrs with the lead Spinne stumbling across the US Grizzly platoon as they emerged from a nearby wood line.

Their 75 mm guns quickly dispatched the light walker, initially mistaking it for a lone scout.

This mistake was to be corrected shortly afterwards, when the lead walker took a direct hit from a high-velocity armour-piercing round, penetrating the front hull through into the main crew com-





Fancy an alternate scenario? Pitch a Soviet Mastadon walker against several German light panzermechs.

partment, detonating the 75 mm high-explosive ammunition. Faced with an unknown assailant, the remaining walkers of the Grizzly platoon scattered to make best use of the cover provided by the ruins of what was left of Kesseldorf's urban interface. For the next hour a game of cat and mouse was played around the rubble-choked streets of the village. Erhart, with the foresight provided by his satelliting Spinne-mech, was largely able to keep his hulking Zeus out of reach of the M8 crews. Several hits were scored, but the 75 mm rounds were unable to penetrate the front glacis of the heavy Panzermech. In an attempt to close with the Zeus to bring their close-combat fists into use, the Grizzly crews made a concerted push forwards through the streets. However, Donner was yet again one step ahead and lay in ambush, taking the right leg off the lead Grizzly with her first shot, forcing the crew to abandon the vehicle. The remainder of the Grizzly platoon, now at 50% combat effectiveness, withdrew from the field.

Despite his initial success, Erhart was eventually forced off his position by a combined force of infantry and

US Coyote light walkers. Losing his final Spinne to a cleverly concealed bazooka team, the Zeus was left exposed to infantry attack in the close terrain of the village. Erhart returned to the main German lines defending the Rhine crossings near Seltz. His Zeus successfully stalled the US advance further throughout the day, but was eventually immobilised by US jet fighter-bombers and abandoned by its crew. The walker was captured by advancing US troops on 18 March and shipped back into France for rift-tech analysis.

### WARGAMING THE ACTION

The scenario lends itself well to a walker-only action on the tabletop where players can test the German hunter-killer tactics against a numerically superior Allied force. Play lengthwise on a board with plenty of terrain (such as a mixture of wooded areas and ruined buildings), with each side deploying from the short board edge. This would suit the action well and provide cover for the walkers but should still maintain some decent fields of fire.

#### US order of battle

- Command M8 Grizzly walker
- 4x M8 Grizzly walkers

#### German order of battle

- Zeus Panzermech Donner
- 4x Spinne light Panzermechs

**Both forces equate to 1000 points.**

The hunter-killer tactics used so well by Donner could be replicated by awarding the Zeus a bonus to-hit modifier if a Spinne also has line of sight to the target (I'd suggest a reroll if the Zeus shot misses). To enhance this and add extra challenge to the game, a mechanic could also be added to simulate the oversight and forethought that the Spinne assistants gave the German commander. This could be allowing the Zeus a double move to enhance its mobility and enable it to break cover, fire, and subsequently withdraw. If using a Bolt Action style of activation (such as in the *Konflikt 47* rule-set) then the Zeus could benefit from having two orders dice rather than just the normal one.

#### Options

Add in some 500 points of infantry platoons to make the action even more interesting. Alternatively, the scenario could involve a Soviet Mastadon heavy walker blocking the advance of a Falcon infantry and Locust walkers.

Finally it's worth noting that the scenario isn't limited to the vehicles in the narrative, and any walker equivalents – light, medium, or heavy – could be used to replicate the action, be they from *Konflikt 47*, *Dust*, *Secret of the Third Reich*, or elsewhere. Swap the Zeus for a Konigluther heavy panzer walker or a Tiger Mecha. *Weird WWII* is only limited by your imagination! Enjoy! **WS&S**

