

Historical context

After its successful breakthrough at the Belfort gap, the General Béthouart's 1st Army Corps finally managed to rush into the plain of Alsace after an hard resistance from the German XIXth Army, liberating Mulhouse on November 21st. However, the Germans organized a strong resistance line north of the city, blocking the offensive towards Ensisheim and Colmar. In this context, operations were launched in the right flank of the Germans, in the forest of La Hardt, with the objective of capturing the bridge of Chalampé on the Rhine — one of the last still held by the Germans —, and thus dangerously threatening their supplies.

Operations in La Hardt occurred from November 28th to December 3rd. On this date, after intense fighting, the French managed to occupy two strategically important positions in the forest, namely, the hamlet Grünhütte and Point 232, both at the crossroads of important roads. These positions constituted a fragile bridgehead beyond the Huningue canal. General Wiese, of the XIXth German Army, sought to eradicate this threat and pull back the French behind the canal. On the morning of December 3rd, the German artillery thus destroyed the main bridge over the canal, named *Pont du Bouc*, « Bridge of the Goat ». Three attacks were launched, supported by the heavy tank hunters Jagdpanther of the 654. schwere Panzerjäger-Abteilung (the only unit equipped solely with this tank): one at Pont du Bouc, another at Grünhütte, and the last one at Point 232.

The layer 32 of the map depicts the attack towards Pont du Bouc.



The layer 64 depicts the two others attacks, where the French built a poonton bridge over the canal to enable the tanks of the RCCC (*Régiment Colonial de Chasseurs de Chars*, « Colonial Tank Hunter Regiment ») and of the 5^e RCA (*Régiment de Chasseurs d'Afrique*, « Africa's Hunters Regiment »), plus the mechanized infantry of the 1^{er} BZP (*Bataillon de Zouaves Portés*, « Motorized Zouaves Battalion »), crossing the canal and assist the forces involved in the bridgehead to retreat behind the canal.



The layer 16 simply depicts the fights that occurred for the control of Grünhütte.

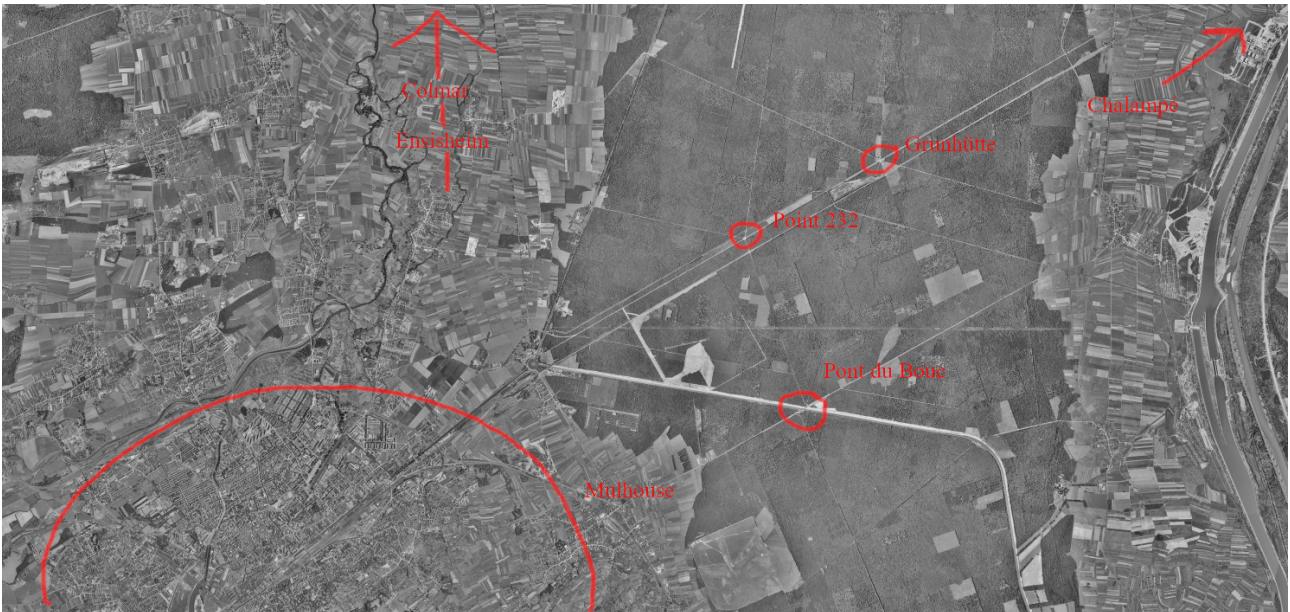


By the end of the day on December 3rd, the French managed to retreat their forces behind the canal and hold it. It was one of the deadliest fights of the liberation of France, with 1500 casualties for the Germans, 1300 for the French (respectively, 1000 and 400 on December 3rd alone). The Hünig

canal then marked the south border of the Colmar pocket until its reduction in February 1945.

Global design

First, let's take a look at this aerial view from 1961, available on the very useful site of the IGN (National Institute of Geographic and Forestry Information).

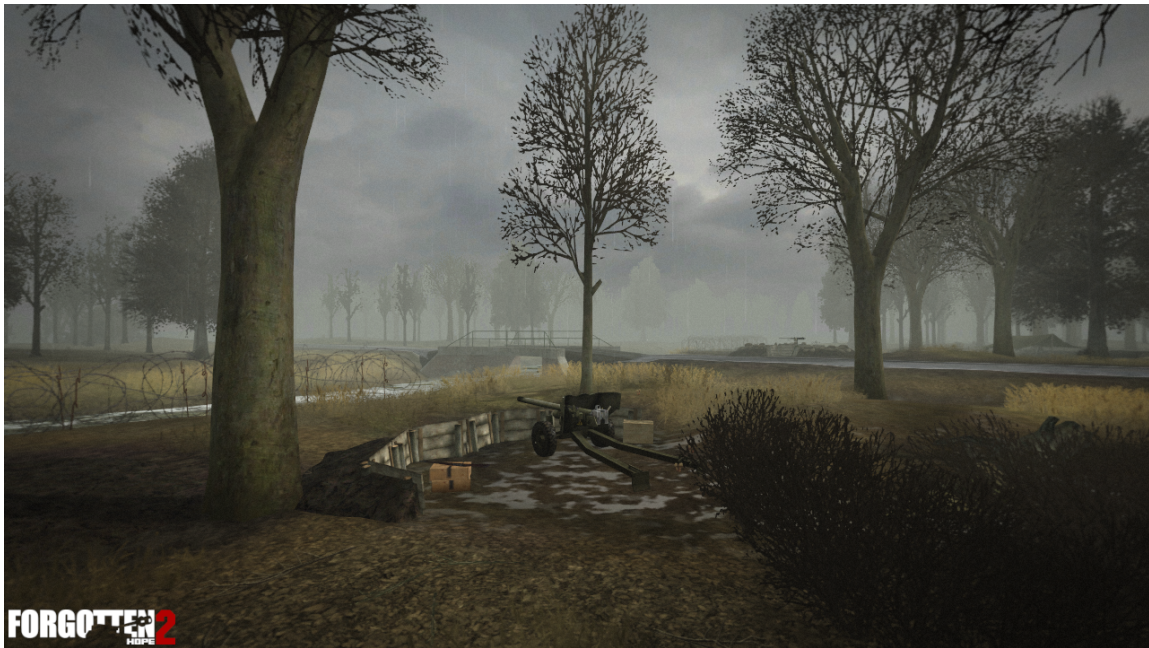


Nowadays it has changed quite a lot since a huge car factory was built just in the area of Point 232.

However, you can see the three main strong points, plus the village of Chalampé to the North/East and Mulhouse to the South/West. And, of course, the Rhine to the East. Speaking of rivers, the area of the fight is cut by two canals, the canal of Huningue, of course, and the canal of the sewer of Mulhouse, passing just south of Point 232 and Grünhütte. In the game, this obstacle is marked by two flags, **Point 232** and **Mulhouse Sewer Canal**.



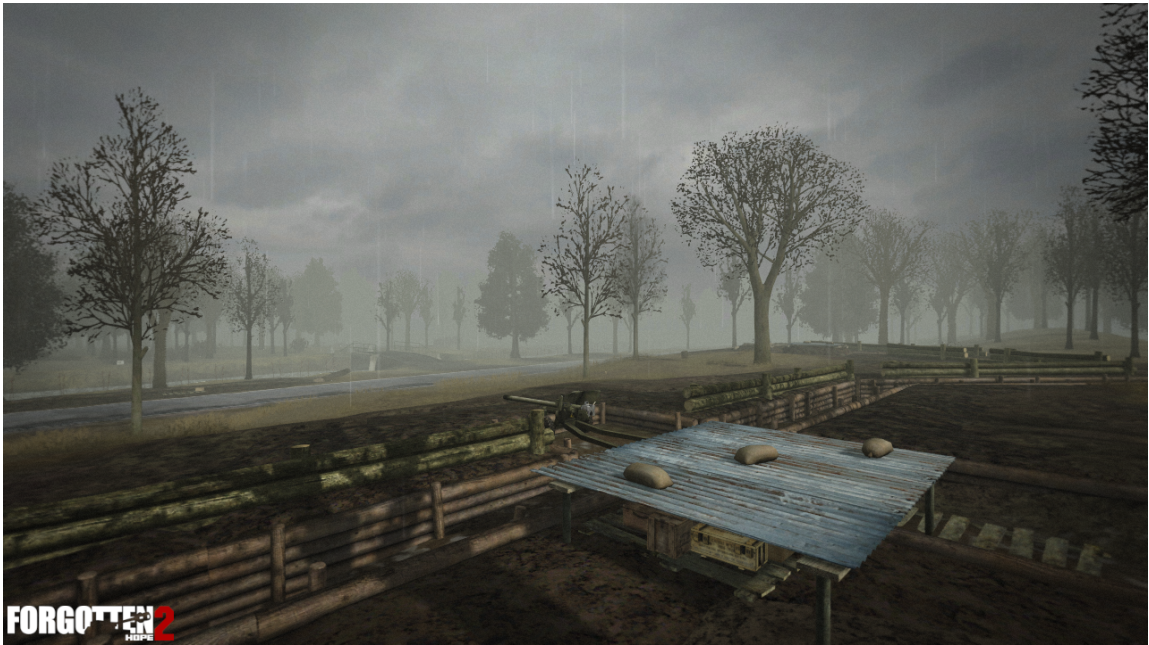
Point 232



Mulhouse Sewer Canal

But there are some other bridges the Germans can take, but still defended by the French...





North of these two flags is the Grünhütte area, a small hamlet with a train station heavily fortified with trenches.





These three flags form the first sector of the map on layer 64. Once captured, the three next flags open, **Allée Centrale**, **Allée de la Fontaine** and **Zimmerplan**.



Allée Centrale



Allée de la Fontaine



Zimmerplan

The two first flags just show light defensive positions right in the middle of the two main alleys towards Pont du Bouc. Zimmerplan is a defensive position just ahead the bridge. To make the enemy bleed, both teams would need to hold two of these three flags.

Allée Centrale flag is designed around the wreck of a M4A2, the *Rochefort*, which is a reference to a real photo taken from the battle.



As you may have seen in the aerial view, the area is a big forest with some clearings. These clears are represented in game by clear-cuts, thus assuming there was this kind of exploitation by this time (there are no longer such big clearings nowadays).

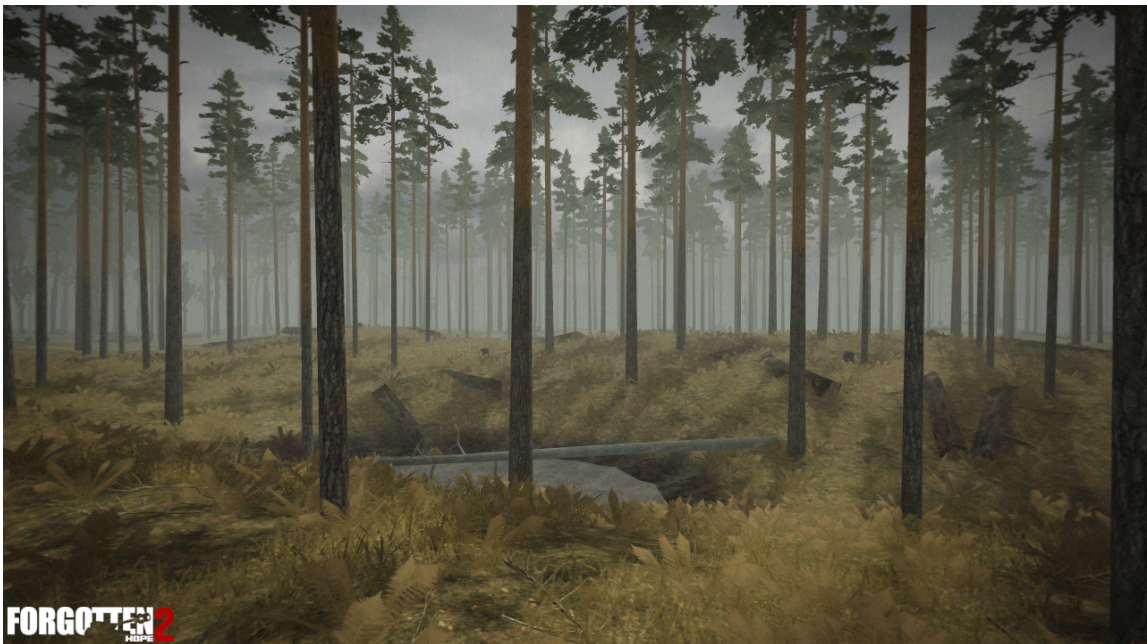


For this reason, I decided to split the forested parts into three distinctives areas. Firstly, a grown deciduous one; La Hardt forest is mostly populated by hornbeams nowadays. And since I assumed there were clear-cuts, I also made some areas of young-grown trees, impenetrables for tanks.





The third kind of area is populated with Scots pines; there are still some nowadays, and, according to the after-action report of the 5^e RCA, they had to cross pine-populated areas to reach Point 232 — which was a good opportunity to give a distinctive design for both of the alleys: Allée Centrale with mostly deciduous trees, and Allée de la Fontaine with mostly Scots pines.



In addition to these two main alleys, the forest is cut by several tracks forming rectangular areas inside the forest. During the battle, these tracks were key points to hold to fill them with tanks or antitanks guns and forbid the passage on the main alleys or other forest paths.



Right to the south, there is, of course, the Pont du Bouc area. The bridge was entirely destroyed after the war (people had to cross the canal on a wooden bridge during a long time in the 50s!) and we don't have any record of it. The only thing we know is that the bridge was built during the reign of Napoléon Ist, so Cpt. Bocquier and Guinho made a huge bridge inspired by pictures of other similar bridges of that time, since we didn't have anything to cover a such tall bridge.

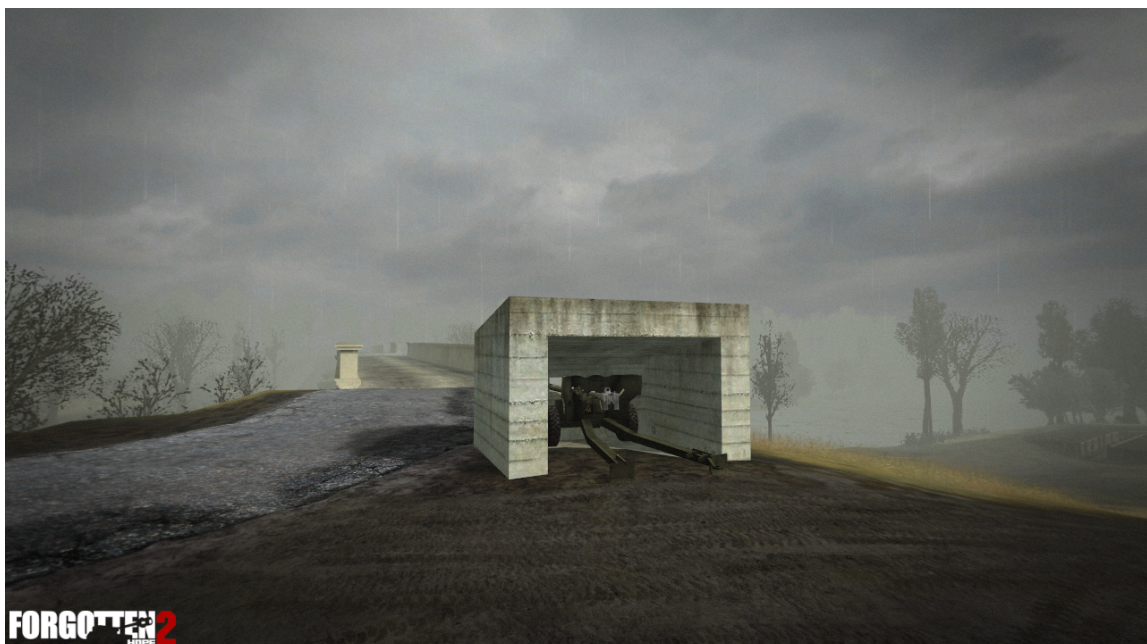


You might have noticed a small bunker in one of the screenshots above! Actually, I found out that there were several in the area, thanks to the [Wikimaginot](#) website. Some were apparently from World War I; others belonged to the Maginot Line.

Especially, there were apparently several bunkers around Pont du Bouc, but of undetermined types.



So, since we already had some generic small French bunkers made by Sputnik Fighter and Cpt. Bocquier for another project, I simply used them.



« Type Bouclier » bunker



« Type Ibis » bunker

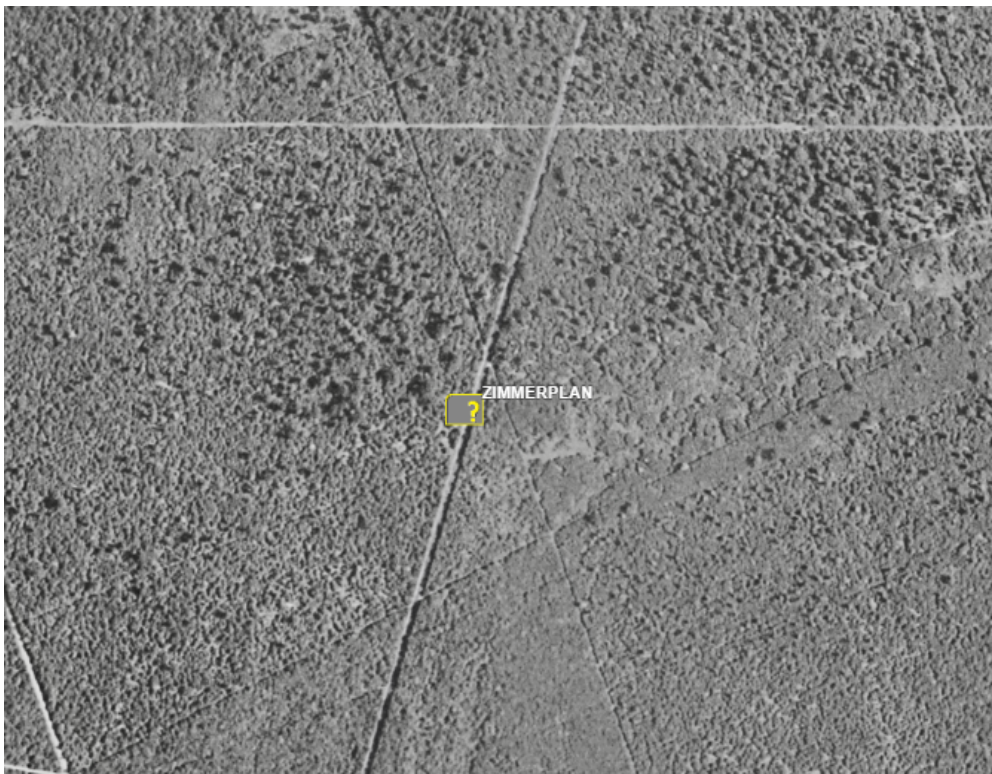


« Type Ibis » inside

Fortunately, the American antitank gun fits the French antitank bunkers, designed for their 25mm guns! And as for the Hotchkiss 1914 MG bunker, I found a photo showing French soldiers with this MG in the forest of La Hardt — a good excuse to put them inside and also to provide the French with a deployable Hotchkiss MG pickup kit!



There is also the ruin of an undetermined bunker type at Zimmerplan.

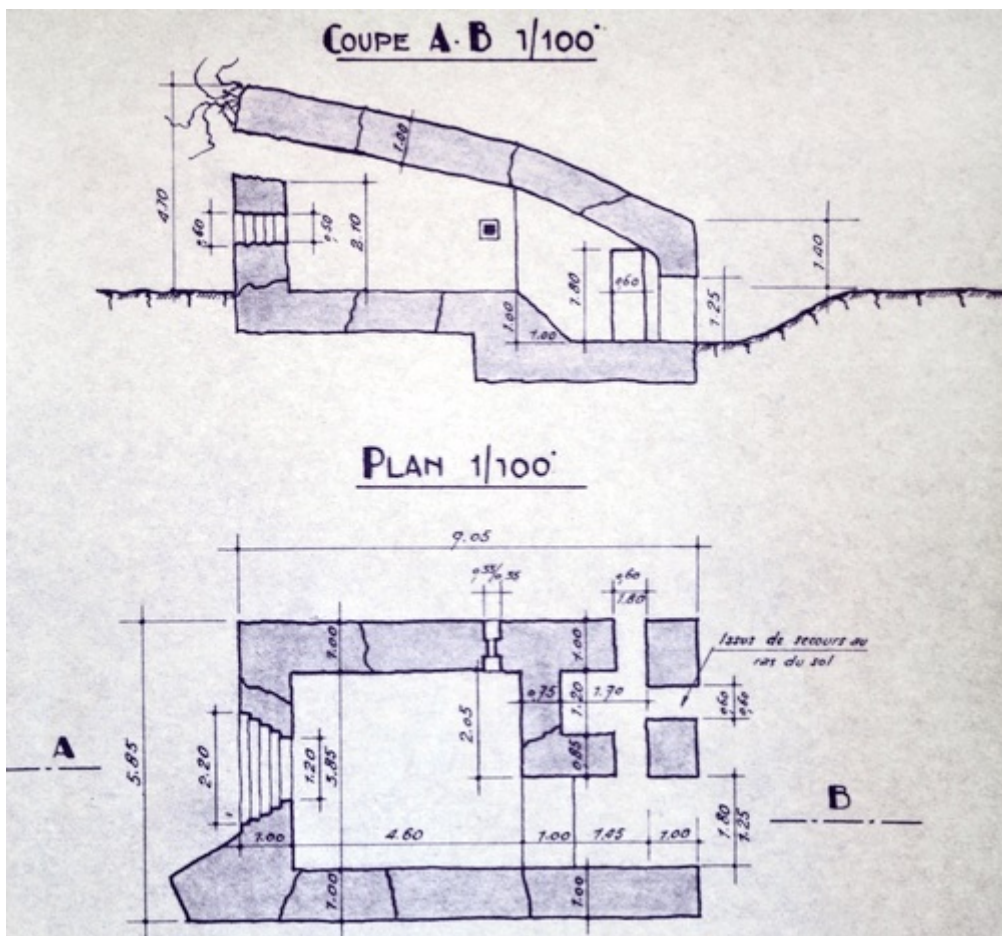




So it becomes a standard MG bunker on the map.



And finally, there is the ruin of an antitank bunker at Grünhütte, known thanks to a plan.



We didn't reproduced it 1:1, but just put one of the generic bunkers we already had.



« Type 2 » bunker

There were also some Tobruks but since we unfortunately don't have any model for that, I simply didn't include them.

Equipment

We have seen that the French had some Hotchkiss 1914 in this area, which is quite uncommon, to be fair! It's time to say some words about the equipment of both teams, the choices we made accordingly to the records we could find.

Let's take a look at the French first!

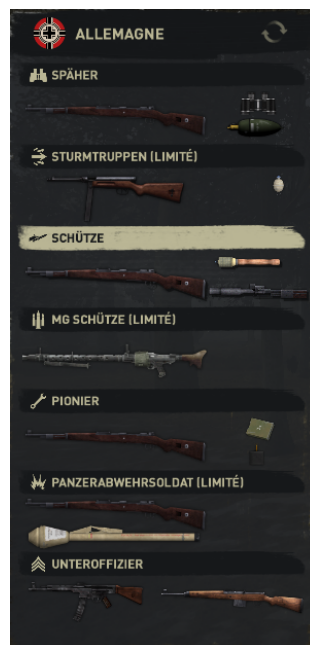


As you may notice, the main rifle used by the French is the M1917 Enfield, which was provided in important quantities by the Americans when they rearmed the French Army after the campaign in Tunisia. They also gave them M1 Carbines, Thompsons, BARs, .30 and .50cal machine guns and M1 Bazookas (the same as on Sidi Bou Zid!), but only the *Chasseurs Parachutistes* (Airborn troops) were provided with M1 Garands. For this reason, and because they really liked this rifle, the French, as opposed to the Americans, used the M1 Carbine as an assault rifle: it is represented on the map by some M1 Carbine pickup kits with hand grenades, and a similar spawnkit on the layer 16.

By the way, you may have noticed that the LMG in the spawn kits is the good old FM 24/29: the French were really reluctant to adopt the BAR, since they found their FM better; for this reason, they used their FMs as long as possible, until they have exhausted all their ammunition stock. By the end of 1944, most of the French units had already adopted the BAR, but we found in a film shot right after the liberation of Mulhouse many 24/29s in the hands of the soldiers of the 4^e DMM (*Division Marocaine de Montagne*, « Moroccan Mountain Division ») to which belonged the 1^{er} RTM (*Régiment de Tirailleurs Marocains*, « Moroccan Tirailleurs Regiment »), the main infantry unit involved in La Hardt. The 4^e DMM was actually, by this time, the last unit that was still using the 24/29, so we decided to include it in the spawn classes — but you also could find many BAR pickup kits!

And since grenade launchers were very important in French infantry doctrine, they asked the Americans for another rifle that could possibly use one, which wasn't the case for the M1917. They thus received many M1903A3 Springfields, with their grenade launchers. Many are available as pickup kits on the map.

As for the Germans, nothing very special...



...Except that Beretta Modello 38/42 (made by RedrogueXIII and Ashton), a late war version of the Italian SMG that was manufactured for the Germans during their occupation of Italy since 1943. One of the infantry unit involved in La Hardt was massively equipped with them, and with some STG-44s.

But Germans always have some *Beute* equipment. Here, there is somewhere a MAS-38 and a Bren Mk.I pickup kit! And also, a French 75mm gun (reskinned by Seth Soldier) to second the usual LeFH-18.



All this precious intel about German equipment was again found thanks to our crazy archivist, Radiosmersh!

About the vehicles, Germans only have Jagdpanthers while the French have M4A2 Shermans, M10 Tank Destroyers and Halftracks, all made (for the M4A2) or reskinned by Matt Baker.

And that's all for this devblog! I hope you appreciated it... and that you'll appreciate the map as well!

La Hire