



# The Fall of Eben Emael - Belgium 1940 (Raid)

*Chris McNab*

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In early May 1940, the fortress of Eben Emael was a potent sentinel over the Belgian-Dutch borderlands. A ferro-concrete monster built in the 1930s on the Albert Canal, the fortress covered 75 hectares on the surface, had 5km of tunnels underground and was studded with bunkers, gun turrets and casemates. Add a garrison of 1,200 men and the natural protection of 60m-high canal walls, and Eben Emael gave the impression of near-impregnability.

Yet on 10 May, in the very first hours of Hitler's campaign in Western Europe, just 78 elite airborne soldiers managed to defeat this fortress in an operation of unprecedented tactical skill. Deployed by glider onto the very top of the fortifications, they utilized elite training, fast movement and specialist explosives to destroy many of the gun positions and trap much of the garrison within the fortress. Simultaneously, three other assault detachments conducted high-risk glider operations to capture critical bridges over the Albert Canal. By the end of 11 May, following the arrival of German infantry reinforcements, Eben Emael was in German hands.

This Eben Emael RAID title tells the complete, fascinating story of this unique action. It sets the raid fully in context, explaining the development, training, skills and weaponry of Hitler's new Fallschirmjäger arm. It also describes in detail the physical structure and tactical challenges of the Eben Emael fortress, and gives a blow-by-blow account of how the operation unfolded from the first moment the German gliders lifted into the air until the last Belgian defender surrendered.

The text, including first-hand accounts of the battle, is brought to life by colour artworks, which provide clear graphic illustration of the battle site and dramatic depictions of key moments in the battle. Some 50 photographs include both powerful archive images and photographs from around the site today. All elements combined, this title forms an authoritative guide to this landmark airborne raid.

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