TASK FORCE BAUM

By James Leach

Format: 3-Part Limited Series

Genre: Historical War Drama / Based on True Events

Logline: When General George S. Patton learns that his son-in-law is imprisoned deep inside Germany, a young armored commander is ordered to lead a small task force behind enemy lines on an increasingly desperate rescue mission—forcing hundreds of soldiers to pay the price for one general's gamble.

Synopsis

In February 1943, during the American disaster at Kasserine Pass, **Lieutenant Colonel John Waters** and his battered soldiers are surrounded by German forces near Djebel Lessouda. Out of ammunition and with wounded men dying around him, Waters surrenders rather than sacrifice what remains of his command.

The news reaches **General George S. Patton** with particular force. Waters is not merely another captured American officer—he is Patton's son-in-law.

For more than two years, Waters endures captivity as the war moves steadily toward Germany. He survives brutal prison conditions, evacuation from Poland, and a grueling forced march before arriving at Oflag XIII-B near Hammelburg. With the Third Reich collapsing and Allied armies drawing closer, freedom finally seems possible.

But Patton is unwilling to wait.

In March 1945, **Captain Abraham Baum** is selected to lead a hastily assembled armored force deep behind German lines. Officially, the objective is to liberate American prisoners at Hammelburg. Unofficially, one prisoner matters above all others: John Waters.

Baum recognizes the danger immediately. His force is small, intelligence is incomplete, fuel is limited, and there is no dependable support once the column moves beyond American lines. Nevertheless, orders are orders.

Task Force Baum punches into Germany.

Speed and surprise initially work in its favor. The column barrels through villages and defensive positions, destroys roadblocks, crosses contested bridges, captures German soldiers and officers, and continues toward Hammelburg.

But every engagement costs Baum men, vehicles, ammunition, fuel—and time.

The Germans begin tracking the mysterious American column. Reconnaissance aircraft locate it. Defensive forces mobilize. Roads close behind it. Baum realizes that the deeper he drives, the less likely his men are to return.

Still, Hammelburg lies ahead.

When Task Force Baum finally reaches Oflag XIII-B, it discovers a catastrophic intelligence failure. Instead of the roughly three hundred prisoners Baum expected, the camp contains far more POWs than his battered force can possibly transport. The rescuers have reached their objective without the means to rescue everyone.

Waters, meanwhile, is wounded by a German soldier while attempting to help secure the camp. As German forces converge, the brief celebration of liberation collapses into confusion.

Baum must decide who can ride, who must walk, and who must remain behind.

Then the Germans counterattack.

The rescue force disintegrates under overwhelming pressure. Vehicles burn, men scatter, and wounded soldiers struggle to escape as the route back to American lines disappears. Baum himself is wounded as Task Force Baum is torn apart. Waters remains trapped at Hammelburg—the very man the mission was intended to save.

What began as a rescue has become a disaster.

Baum and Waters are left confronting the same bitter truth from opposite sides of the prison wire: hundreds of men were placed in extraordinary danger for a mission whose real objective was never fully disclosed to them.

Task Force Baum is the story of courage at the tactical level and questionable judgment at the highest levels of command—a true wartime mission in which ordinary soldiers were ordered to accomplish the nearly impossible, and paid the price when personal loyalty collided with military necessity.

LIMITED SERIES STRUCTURE

PART ONE — “THE ORDER”

Waters is captured at Kasserine and begins his long ordeal as a prisoner of war. More than two years later, as Allied forces advance into Germany, Patton learns Waters is being held at Hammelburg. Captain Abraham Baum is handed an extraordinary assignment: assemble an armored task force, penetrate German territory, liberate the camp, and return. Baum quickly realizes how little intelligence and support the mission actually has. Nevertheless, Task Force Baum crosses the line and disappears into enemy territory.

PART TWO — “CONTACT”

Baum’s column races toward Hammelburg as surprise gives way to increasingly organized German resistance. Roadblocks, bridges, ambushes, navigation problems, casualties, dwindling fuel, and lost vehicles steadily weaken the force. German commanders recognize that this is no ordinary reconnaissance mission and begin closing the corridor behind Baum. The Americans press forward despite mounting evidence that reaching Hammelburg may be easier than getting home.

PART THREE — “BREAK”

Task Force Baum reaches Hammelburg and smashes into Oflag XIII-B, where hundreds of cheering prisoners overwhelm a rescue force prepared for only a fraction of their number. Waters is wounded, Baum faces the impossible task of deciding who can leave, and German forces converge on the camp. The attempted withdrawal collapses into a desperate battle for survival. Baum is wounded, vehicles are destroyed, men scatter or are captured, and Waters remains behind. The mission intended to rescue one of Patton’s own instead leaves soldiers and POWs confronting the human cost of a general’s gamble.