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Hello and welcome to this double issue of View From The Trenches. I had hoped to get back on schedule during my time off from work during the July fortnight but ended up busier than expected. It didn’t help having some PC problems which took nearly a week to get sorted out either :-(

The one problem with doing this double issue is that I have used up a lot of my reserve of articles. I’ve got a couple of pieces in the pipeline for the next issue, but after that I’ve got very little left for VFTT28, the first issue of the new millennium (other than the usual the INTENSIVE FIRE ’99 report). So if you want to see VFTT continue well into the year 2000 you’re all gonna have to help me out a bit more.

Until next time, roll low and prosper.

Pete Phillipps

This issue is dedicated to the memory of the millions killed and injured in World War Two. While we have fun and enjoy a beer playing wargames, we should never forget the suffering real war causes.

Back issue prices are:
VFTT Special Edition 98 £3.50 (overseas £5.00)
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49 Lombardy Rise
Leicester
LES OFQ
Telephone:
(0116) 212 6747
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MMP GO TO ARNHEM, TARAWA, KAKAZU RIDGE

Work on Blood Reef: Tarawa and The Third Bridge is progressing at a steady pace. Final play testing is being done on the scenarios, while the counter sheets and scenarios are being laid out and the rules are undergoing final proofs. The maps are being printed, and both modules are on schedule for a release at ASLOK.

Work is also in progress on the ASL Journal 2. The Kakazu Ridge map is done and the scenarios are being worked on. Jim Stahler has updated the old COI scenario ‘The Capture of Balta’, while Trial By Combat (GI301) and Sweep For The Boudj Toum Bridge are also set for inclusion.

MMP are on the look-out for articles. In view of the forthcoming releases, they are particularly interested in articles on seaborne assaults, caves, and city-fighting tactics articles.

The first components of the Doomed Battalions reprint were printed during the Action Pack #2 print run. The remaining components will be done during the BR:T and AbtF print runs and DB should be released sometime shortly after those modules.

Although there are no concrete plans for releases next year at the moment, numerous projects are being worked on, including the Axis Minors, Stalingrad, Italy, Guadalcanal and assorted magazines.

The future will also see the former AH game series The Great Campaigns of the American Civil War series published under the Hasbro/MMP banner. The first fruits of this collaboration will be the release of The Skirmisher, a magazine along the lines of the ASL Journal, which will see the publication of the Standard Series rules among other things. It is not expected that this will have any effect on ASL.

It has also been reported from American distributors that Hasbro will be dumping its remaining stock of Avalon Hill and Victory Games games in mid-September. It is anticipated that stockists will stock up on supplies in the short term, but that eventually AH/VG games will become harder and harder (and thus more expensive) to find.

CANADIAN HASL

Ortona is a HASL module being worked on by members of the Canadian ASL Association. Raging from 20 – 27 December 1943, the battle consisted of a rural approach to the town and then some bitter street-fighting in rowhouses in Ortona itself.

Ortona sits atop a promontory jutting into the Adriatic, and the KGP I sized map includes proper vineyard artwork, cobblestone, piazzas and a castle.

The main CG is a manageable 15 CG dates with typically around 35-45 Canadian squads battling 25-35 German squads.

Play testing of the scenarios is half complete, 2 CGs are good to go with a third in the works. When all is done, this project will be formally submitted to MMP. Curt Schilling is in contact with Jim on a consistent basis regarding their play test and work on Ortona.

CH’s GALORE ON TARGET

Critical Hit have released details of several new products they expect to ship in the coming months.

As the name suggests, Euro-Pack V: Eastern Front Warfare contains eight scenarios set during the early stages of the war in the east. The majority are German-Soviet clashes but there is one Finnish-Russian action included.

The map of Jerusalem for Genesis ‘48, CH’s forthcoming module on Israel’s 1948 War of Independence, is finished, and CH expect it to ship before the end of the year. As well as scenarios and PL CGs, the module includes a set of new counters and copious Chapter H-style notes and data about the new combatants, weapons systems and AFV included.

Randy Yeates’ Carnage at Cassino has grown from the originally announced Operation Diadem into the first half of a two part module with linking maps. Carnage at Cassino offers several scenarios and two CG covering the Polish, French, American and British assaults against the German 90th Panzer Grenadier Division on the Monte Cassino Massif (just north of the Monte Cassino monastery) in February of 1944. In addition, players may recreate the two Polish Corps attacks against elements of the German 1st Parachute Division in the same area from 12 – 17 May 1944 through additional scenarios and two more CG.

Coming for September is the first part of a third part Okinawa series, Ordeal Before Shuri. The culmination of three years of research and development led by designer
Dave ‘Ogre’ Dally, the large map features numerous terrain features including Nishi Baru Ridge, Kakazu Ridge, Kakazu West, Ursae Mura Escarpment and three separate villages. The module will include eight scenarios (including some monsters), two CG, play aids, and special rules.

Work is also well underway on the second game in the series, Item Pocket, which is slated for a 2000 release.

Darrell Andersen’s Uncommon Valor covers the USMC actions against the Japanese at Iwo Jima’s Motoyama Airfield #2 and surrounding heights. The first part of a two-game Iwo Jima series that will cover the action, the module includes eight scenarios, a CG, and special rules. The map is a standard 22 x 30 size and covers a large portion on the centre of Iwo Jima, including the airfield, and the dominating terrain around it, such as Hill Peter and Hill 199-0.

CH are also releasing an updated version of the old AH game Tobruk. The most obvious change is that the firing system has been completely redesigned – now, for each shot, you make one die roll which determines the result, anything from a miss to a burning tank. This single change will speed up play dramatically. Other changes have also been made to speed up play, and the time scale is also a bit longer so there are fewer turns in a game.

The counters and maps have also been re-done to give the players a better feel of moving “tanks that look like tanks on boards that look like desert”, to quote CH.

SEVENTH BUNKER MADE

Dispatches From The Bunker 7 is out now and contains two new scenarios, a Scenario Analysis of ‘J1 Urban Guerillas’, reviews of Hell On Wheels and Action Pack #2.

Design, development, and initial in-house play testing for the two scenarios due to appear in Dispatches From The Bunker 8 is complete. “Smashing the Semovanti” is the latest in Tom Morin’s Tunisian Series and sees a mixed, mobile, armour/infantry force of Italians trying to force their way past a relatively small French defensive position on board 9.

The other scenario is the latest in the Gross Deutschland Series, a fairly large action which sees elements of the division assaulting a Russian blocking position at Kamienka in the early weeks of Barbarossa.

Each scenario is also accompanied by an analysis article and designer notes.

Also due to be included will be a re-view of ‘Red Storm’ from Action Pack 2, the usual tips for veterans and novices, ASL news from around the globe, and a look at the New England ASL scene. Four issue subscriptions are available for $13.00 ($15.00 outside the USA). Issue one is available free with a subscription or an SAE, while other back issues are $3.50 ($4.00 outside the USA). Payments should be payable to Vic Provost and sent to Dispatches from the Bunker, 209 Granby Road, Apt: 18, Chicopec, MA 01013. Tel (413)594-4301 (evenings) or email aslbunker@aol.com.

SCHEERPUNKT 4

Scherpunkt Volume 4 is in the final editing stage and is due to be printed soon, ready for release at ASLOK. The format will be similar to previous issues, featuring scenarios SP37-SP48 printed on card stock. Also included is a booklet with an historical article on the French and the usual analyses of the new scenarios.

The final phase of the play-test for Scherpunkt Volume 5: The Medal of Honor, is also underway. Expected to be released early in the New Year the pack contains 12 tournament level scenarios which focus on acts of extraordinary heroism or leadership. Along with the scenarios will be a booklet containing analyses and an article on the Medal of Honor.

Play testing has also begun on Scherpunkt Volume 6: The Victoria Cross. As with the MoH issue the pack will contain 12 scenarios focusing on individual acts of heroism in North Africa, the Mediterranean, Burma, and Northwest Europe). The issue is expected to be out sometime late next year.

Scherpunkt Volumes 1, 2, and 3 are still available.

Each issue of Scherpunkt costs $12.00, plus $3.00 shipping and handling ($5.00 outside the U.S.); add $1.00 for each additional copy ordered. Payment should be made out to Sherry Enterprises and sent to Sherry Enterprises, P.O. Box 3, Rusklin, FL 33570. Note that Scherpunkt Volume 4 will not be available prior to 12 October 1999.

THIRD PARTY PRODUCT

UK AVAILABILITY

Following Neil Stevens’ retirement from the role, I am now acting as the UK distributor for those third party products not generally available in the shops over here.

The prices are as follows, and are effective until the next issue of VFFT:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Price</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scherpunkt</td>
<td>£8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scherpunkt II</td>
<td>£8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hell On Wheels</td>
<td>£13.50</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

OOS - Out of Stock

Add 10% for postage and packing [EXC: Crusaders are exempt P&P charges] and send your payment made out to PETE PHILLIPPS to The Crusaders, 49 Lombardy Rise, Leicester, England, LE5 0FQ.

For the latest on stock availability telephone me on (0116) 212 6747, or email me at pete@vfft.co.uk.

UK SUPPLIERS OF OTHER THIRD PARTY PRODUCTS

To purchase goods produced by other third party producers such as Critical Hit, Inc. and Heat Of Battle, UK ASLers should contact the following shops.

LEISURE GAMES, 91 Ballards Lane, Finchley, London, N3 1XY. Telephone (0181) 346 2327 or e-mail them at shop@leisuregames.com.

SECOND CHANCE GAMES, 182 Borough Road, Seacombe, The Wirral, L44 6NJ. Telephone (0151) 638 3535 or e-mail them at ahaston@globalnet.co.uk.

PLAN 9, 9 Rosemount Viaduct, Aberdeen, AB25 1NE. Telephone (01224) 624 467 or e-mail them at PLANS@ITF.CO.UK.

I shall endeavour to list all UK stockists of third party ASL products here in the future.

VIEW FROM
I once read that most board gamers’ use of the term ‘simulation’ is not ‘reality-to-game’ but ‘less detailed/complex game to more complex game’. This is a very astute observation that sums up one of the essential games design quandaries far more succinctly than I ever could.

**COMPLEXITY = REALISM?**

In my various careers in many different media, I’ve encountered an increasing tendency to either misappropriate or misuse the technical language of other disciplines. For example, in my days as a comic-book artist, terms such as “shot” and “scene” were stolen from movies and TV, and incorporated into the technical language of comics, regardless of how appropriate they were. In some cases, the use of these words in relation to comics actually became a perversion of their original sense, and could cause confusion for someone moving from one media to another. It is only in recent years that a comics vocabulary has been established that is independent of the jargon of other media.

We see something similar happening in wargaming between simulations and games. An epiphenomenon of applying misappropriated terms like “simulation” and “realism” to games is that many players have begun to equate detail with fidelity of simulation. Sadly, there is no established or well-defined games vocabulary anywhere which could be used to correct these perceptions. In the sim business, “simulation” and “realism” are terms that are more closely related to statistical analysis (output of results within anticipated norms; reproducibility, etc.) than games. Real simulation design is far removed from the freewheeling “design for effect” formula that is applied to a wargame like ASL.

The ill-usage of the term “realism” can be very frustrating. In the PC sim business, abuse of the word is rife. Here, “realism” is all too frequently equated with graphic detail and its misuse is perpetrated by people at all levels of the industry. I remember one games producer — a self-professed “sim-head” and “detail freak” — came into the office to examine the helicopter sim that myself and my team were developing for a publisher. When I explained to the gentleman the work we’d done on modelling the difference between first- and second-generation Explosive Reactive Armour he just nodded blankly. He didn’t become at all animated or excited until we showed him the new graphic flourishes, such as an animated tank commander, at which point the producer declared how “real” the game looked. This absurd attitude, which has nothing to do with fidelity of simulation, is common in the industry. One of the best and most authentic flight sims currently on the market is consistently underrated by magazine reviewers simply because it isn’t pretty enough. It makes one want to pick these people up and shake them until their eyeballs drop out.

The fanbase can be worse, and after a while one’s patience with their wear as thin as a bachelor’s underwear. As a defence mechanism, as much as anything else, one begins to develop a healthy contempt for the fans. Here, “complexity = realism” is taken as an article of faith, and I have seen self-important “propellor-heads” argue that a particular flight model could not be accurate just because it was not difficult enough for them (in that instance, the aircraft in question was an Apache helicopter that we had painstakingly modelled the physics for. It did not occur to them that, as our army aviation adviser pointed out, the AH-64 is packed with flight software designed to make the aircraft simple enough even for “dumb coneheads” like him — a Desert Storm veteran — to fly).

So, if one problem with the fans is that they wouldn’t recognise realism if it came up and spat in their eye, another is that if you deliver them realism, they sometimes decide they don’t want it. As an example, in our recent game release, “Team Apache”, we originally built in some quite sophisticated artificial intelligence handling the player’s wingmen. They would display more initiative in battle, and more concern for the effects of morale if things got hairy. Our playtesters, to a man, hated this. Their complaint was that their wingmen didn’t hesitatingly do everything they were ordered to, however suicidal. We suddenly twigged that the players would not accept any level of “realism” that reduced their level of control over the game. Gamers play wargames to control, not be controlled by events or factors out of their direct influence. As a result, we had to rip their AI out of the game and ‘dumb down’ the wingmen to acceptable levels. (As an aside, I wonder how many players would appreciate it if ASL was turned into real C2 modelling tool? Would they really enjoy the very real loss of control and influence over the behaviour of units in the lowest echelons? Or the limited decision making that would prevent them micromanaging the battle as they do in ASL? I’ll leave the answer blank).

**BOARD GAME DESIGN**

The “complexity = realism” assumption also passes over into board wargaming. In my spare time I work with a very talented designer, Tony Valle, on developing Birds of Prey (BoP), a next-generation air combat game. Generally, we have aimed to nudge BoP closer to the “sim” end of the scale than the “game” end.

BoP has been a difficult project to manage, in part because of the complexity of the subject matter and also because we have had to sell some fairly radical new concepts to the customer base on the list. For example, because we are working to model flight physics as realistically as we can get away with on paper, there was absolutely no way that we could design the game without getting players to do some math. Predictably, there has been a lot of resistance to this, despite the fact that we have managed to limit the math to four functions and no more than two decimal places (all the calculus is handled in the charts and tables). However, players have come around, once we demonstrated that the math wasn’t really too difficult to get people’s heads around, and was within the bounds of playability.

There is a perception that this level of detail in the modelling makes BoP “accurate”. Of course it isn’t — though we haven’t compromised the physics too much, the fineness and level of resolution in the model is still very crude. However, because of this perception, we have been showered with requests for adding detail.

This has put us in a bit of a bind. There have been individuals who contribute a lot of good data and ideas and enthusiasm to BoP — usually in the name of authenticity and realism. However, both Tony and I have
fairly firm ideas about what we wish to model. We are trying to focus the game on the key decision making and have devoted a lot of our time to analysing the essential elements in the O.O.D.A. loop. A game like Bop, just like ASL, has almost limitless potential for adding detail and chrome to. But there becomes a point where the chrome either:

(a) Increases the workload to the point where the game loses gameplay value [i.e. becomes unplayable].
(b) Obscures the game’s key decision making with trivia.
(c) Adds unwanted variables into the model that produces undesired or unrealistic results.
(d) All of the above.

These considerations have forced us to decline or ignore most of the suggestions that have been sent our way. In the case of some of the really insistent listeners who won’t take no for an answer, we have sometimes lost our tempers with them; a terrible thing really, because they were only trying to be helpful, after all.

Interestingly, Tony hates ASL with a passion and cannot fathom my interest in the game (as I’ve said before, it is the atmosphere and immersive experience that I find so charming). For him, ASL is a perfect example of what can happen when “complexity = realism” is taken to an extreme. In designing BoP he is moving right to the back of the bus in his attempt to distance himself from what he perceives as ASL’s “bankrupt” design philosophy. I find it very hard to argue this point with him.

**ALL CHANGE?**

Having played SL/ASL for something like sixteen years now, there have been times when I have been dismayed by the increasing workload that additional detail has placed on the player. I sympathise and generally agree with those who wish to simplify and streamline the system. I for one was quite horrified by, say, the Chapter G rules and they way in which they took simple concepts such as Wire and tried to reinvent them as the much more complicated Panji. This seems like an application of detail for detail’s sake. Was it necessary? I think not. I could have designed something much simpler and fitted it all on the back of a fag packet.

But now that the damage is done, do I want to change it? Well, er, no. Most of this is for quite selfish, rather than rational, reasons. I have a reputation as a radical, but as I trip lightly into middle age, ASL is one area where I allow myself to act the conservative. ASL is an old friend, and I have become familiar with its idiosyncrasies. They have become part of its rude charm, no less.

The various sleaze rules don’t bother me at all, because I don’t play the game that way. Indeed, I’d have a very dim view of anyone who did, and would probably refuse to play them again. So I don’t care about arguments on bypassing ponds or other minutiae; that’s like counting angels on the head of a pin. Frankly, I’ve got better things to do.

So, for me at least, the ASLRB are canonical, as are the Q&A and errata.

I wouldn’t completely pooh-pooh any ideas on rulebook change though. Some of them have merit, but I think it might be too late to implement them without an unacceptably thorough overhaul. If you went through with such a project you would be in danger of losing your core audience for the sake of pleasing some fanboys and foiling a minority of sleaze merchants.

Think back on the development of Squad Leader, and the terrible state it got into with the advent of GI: Anvil of Victory, I think that ASL is in pretty good shape right now, comparatively speaking. We don’t have the migraines GI’s changes generated, and most of the issues are, I believe, minor as far as the majority of casual gamers are concerned (casual gamers please tell me if I’m wrong!).

I think the next step would not be to ‘fix’ ASL, but instead design a whole new system from scratch. This was pretty much the decision Tony and I made when we decided to stop fiddling with a flawed mechanism like Air Superiority/The Speed of Heat, and build something better, starting with a blank sheet. As a project it might take you years, but the result would be an evolutionary step towards the level of realism and/or game play you feel the subject warrants. If people truly want simulation fidelity, then they should be prepared to ditch the paradigms that ASL is premised upon, do some research and formulate brand new ones. It’s really the only valid approach.

In an era where quality self-publishing is not beyond the resources of many people, it doesn’t seem an unfeasable task to build and market one’s own game (it’s more or less what Tony and I are doing). I’m in all for people empowering themselves and realising their own creative vision. Anyone who tried this I’d support all the way...

**EMULATE, SIMULATE, GAME?**

I like people to be clear about what they are talking about. Without precise definitions of technical terms, how can any of us discuss concepts such as “realism” intelligently?

Broadly speaking, I employ three primary classifications:

- Emulation. Emulation is imitation. Emulation aims to reproduce and approximate real-world experiences as authentically as possible. Aircraft training simulators come into this category.

- Simulation. Technically, a simulation is a process for studying or solving problems, or for calculating the effects of a course of action. Simulations are usually solved through some form of mathematical modelling, such as statistical analysis.

- In the wargames world, the term simulation has been misappropriated and has come to mean something very different. There, it defines a game which seeks to represent events through some form of modelling. Because it is a game, the model has frequently been compromised for the benefit of the player’s enjoyment, though the significance of this is often lost on many people.

For most wargamers a “realistic” simulation is something that approximates events in a manner that satisfies their perceptions of how the events should play out. I used the term “Hollywood” with reference to ASL because most people’s perceptions of WW2 combat (mine included) come from the media, rather than hard analysis or experience (I’m beginning to regret making that connection).

Game. A game is a diversion: a competitive pastime. Because the primary purpose of a game is entertainment, it has dynamics that are at odds with the requirements of simulation. Play balance, for instance, is not a requirement of simulation, but is frequently an essential for a wargame.

When talking about wargame simulations, gamers frequently make comparisons with military wargames, which are often tools used to test tactical knowledge and decision-making ability. These sorts of games are not entertainment (they are rarely play-balanced, for instance) and the level of approximation and abstraction is usually fairly high. War-school wargames are usually designed to test human factors rather than technical and environmental factors. The latter categories are generally left to the mathematicians and computer modellers to test.

So where does our hobby stand in all of this? Even if ASL is not a simulation in the true sense, surely we are simulating something?

Well, my take on it is that we are
AN ARTFUL COPY

I think SL/ASL reflects aspects of WW2 combat, and I don’t want to sound ungenerous, but we should never lose sight of the quite “unreal” (for want of a better word) compromises that have been made to produce ASL.

As an approximation of the real thing, we should avoid thinking of ASL as a simulation. “Representation” would be a fairer term, more appropriate to our hobby, as it doesn’t carry the technical baggage of the S-word. Also, in saying it is a representation, there is an implication that there has been a certain loss of sim fidelity in the transition to a game. I find it significant that the term simulation has hardly, if at all, been used by the designers in the ASLRB. Crickey. I hope this doesn’t sound as if I’m pettifogging or splitting hairs...

Jon Mishcon, in one of his clinics, defined ASL as “not a simulation, but an artful copy”. One of the best definitions of the game I’ve ever heard.

Constructive criticism suggests areas for improvement and can give important feedback on what to do better next time. Without it the same old mistakes can be made over and over.

What I actually feel is that, for the good of our hobby, it’s actually now our duty to comment on parts of products that we are unhappy with, honestly and constructively, so that overall quality can improve.

Let me practice what I preach with a couple of observations.

First, is it my imagination or do the maps for Stonne, Pointe Du Hoc and Those Ragged Bloody Heroes really look consistently inferior to those connected to Ian Daglish’s All American and Scotland The Brave series? Why is that, if the computer technology is available to ensure some conformity?

I am currently playing Stonne and enjoying it even if some of the scenarios aren’t currently the most balanced in the world, but it has one glaring weakness – the eight different contour level colours are terrible. I’ve been playing board wargames since the tender age of 11, and I’ve never seen a map where it is so difficult to figure out the high and low ground at a glance. Some of the different level colours are virtually the same, and there isn’t a consistent ‘light to dark’ theme. Why couldn’t Kampfgruppe Peiper have been used as a model, moving from green to yellow, orange then brown? Cost may be sited as an excuse, but we normally all manage to afford our ASL treats and a coherent, visibly clear method of differentiating levels would have drastically improved to excellent what is already a good product. It seems a shame to skimp on such a vital facet.

Anyway, that’s just enough for now. I just wanted to get off my chest a feeling that we are all treating game producers with kid gloves on when, to every ones benefit, sometimes we should be cruel to be kind.

Drinks all round during one of the Scotland The Brave CG played at the recent Mud Vet Con. See page 25 for a full report and details on the KGP five map monster CG that was also played.

THE TRENCHES
AN ANALYSIS OF SQUAD FP VALUES

Stéphane Nollet

I have always wanted to figure out the secret behind the firepower values of the different ASL squads and corresponding SW. When I read a note by Jim Mcleod, which basically said give 0.33 FP per rifle, 0.5 per automatic weapon, 0.45 per semi-automatic weapon and 1 FP for an inherent LMG, I set about analysing it closer. That is about right, and I will prove it. Even so I still have some reservations, such as why does an inherent LMG have only 1 FP or so while the same LMG as a SW has 3 FP? Since the LMG SW counter represent a weapon alone (no crew to man it; see A9, and you will read that the LMG counter represents an additional LMG to complement the inherent FP of the squad), how can I explain that?

FACTORS

When I read the SL designer notes (Page 31) I notice that the designers concluded that ROF was far more important than calibre size for effectiveness, so I bore that in mind doing my FP calculations. But when you want to know which weapon is more effective than another one, you have to take consideration many factors. Calibre, ROF, feeding method (ammo clip, drum or bands), the weight and the initial speed of the bullet, even though the speed is directly related to the weight of the bullet.

When you have a FP factor for a weapon you can apply it to the number of men using it to calculate the squad FP, then modify that by the ability of the squad to use them adequately (poor training, for conscript troops etc...should be factors to look after for final FP allocation).

Suddenly I fell on a real problem, maximum ROF vs. real ROF (or effective ROF) of a weapon in real fighting situation, so the time scale has to be viewed. Again I referred to the basis of the game in the SL designers note. Abstraction seems to be the word in SL/ASL, and by far they were right because of the so many factors. So for a two minute turn I assumed half of it (1 minute) was for loading, aiming and firing the weapon. I then gave a 1.25 factor for ammo clip changing for a rifle, 1.5 for a semi-automatic weapon and 2 for a LMG (MMG and HMG was another business). This means an average fellow could fire it 6.25 times in one minute including clip change, pretty realistic.

THE CALCULATIONS

As the basis of my calculations I used the German Gewehr G98 Mauser Rifle and gave it a Base FP of 0.1 (before modifications). This is a 7.92mm calibre capable of firing 6.25 round by minute (effective ROF based on what I presumed upper) and with an initial speed of 640 meter per second. The basics were:

For example, the M1 Garand semi-automatic rifle is 7.62 mm divided by 7.92mm of the Gewehr G98 = 0.96212 x 25% = 0.2405303. Then the M1 is Clip feed with 8 round clips and being a semi auto rifle is multiplied by 1.5 then 12 effective ROF/min then 12 = x50% = 6 plus one = 7.

Finally the M1 fires the bullet at a speed of 855 meter/second giving a better damaging and stopping capabilities than a much slower bullet like the G98, simply 855 divided by 640 =1.3359375 x25% = 0.3339843 plus one = 1.3339843.

These are then multiplied and added to one and multiplied by the basis FP of 0.1 times the product of [0.2405 (Caliber)x 7(ROF) X 1.3339843(Speed)] plus one = 2.2457625 plus one = 3.2457625 X 0.1. Total Firepower for this weapon gave the M1 a 0.32FP.

The rest is simple math and here are the results and it match almost everywhere. For comparison I’ve put the ASL of some SW to see if it work, although the MG were a real puzzle, being belt-fed most of the time; in my opinion the PDH BAR with a 0.71 FP does not deserve a one FP counter.

SUMMARY

Anyone who wants to recreate the counter of a WWI period squad should take the Squad Organisation Chart and Technical data of the weapons they were equipped with, and just apply the formula, and it will pretty well scale it down to ASL size. Range and Morale are another thing, although I’m not sure it will be as playable as a WWII period tactical warfare or at least as more fun.

EXAMPLE SQUADS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>American (41-45 squad) 6-6-6</th>
<th>Weapon’s FP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 BAR rifle</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 M1</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>5.1</td>
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<th>American (paratrooper) 7-4-7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 BAR rifle</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Thompson M1928</td>
<td>1.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 M1</td>
<td>0.46</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>German (39-43 squad) 4-6-7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 MG34 LMG</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 MP18, MP28</td>
<td>0.62</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 G98</td>
<td>0.23</td>
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<td>10 Men Total</td>
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<tr>
<th>German (44-45 squad) 5-4-8</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 MG42 LMG</td>
<td>0.95</td>
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</tr>
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<td>2 MP38, MP40</td>
<td>0.91</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 G98</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Men Total</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2 MG34 LMG</td>
<td>1.35</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 MP18, MP28</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 G98</td>
<td>0.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Panzerschreck</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 MP38, MP40</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 SVT 40 Rifle</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 DP model 1928 LMG1.74</td>
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<td>10 1891/30 Rifle</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Russian (43-45 squad) 4-4-7</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 PPSb-41</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 DP model 1928 LMG1.74</td>
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<td>5 1891/30 Rifle</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 PPD 1934/38 (25 rounds/0.67)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 DP model 1928 LMG1.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 1891/30 Rifle</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2, M2 A1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2HB</td>
<td>Browning</td>
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<td>M1919 A4</td>
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<td>Springfield</td>
<td>American</td>
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<tr>
<td>M1</td>
<td>DWM</td>
<td>American</td>
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<tr>
<td>M1, M1 A1, M1928</td>
<td>Thompson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brem Gu6 Mk 1</td>
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<td>Vickers MkI</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Delisle-Ford</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Lee-Enfield</td>
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<tr>
<td>No 1 Mark III SMLE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sten Mk II</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modele 1931 MAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modele 1924/29 Chantier de la Guerre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modele 1886/93 Lebel-Berthier</td>
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<td>MAS 36</td>
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<td>Modele 1907/15 M34 Lebel-Berthier</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gewehr 98</td>
<td>Mauser</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karabiner 98k</td>
<td>Mauser</td>
<td>German</td>
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<tr>
<td>MP 38, MP 40</td>
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<td>German</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ITALIAN</strong></td>
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<td>Beretta</td>
<td>Italian</td>
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<td>MP 35</td>
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<td>Tokarev</td>
<td>Russian</td>
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<td>DShK 1938</td>
<td>Degtyaryov</td>
<td>Russian</td>
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<tr>
<td>SG 43</td>
<td>Stankovski</td>
<td>Russian</td>
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<tr>
<td>DP model 1928</td>
<td>Degtyaryov</td>
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<tr>
<td>DP model 1891/30</td>
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<td>AVS 36</td>
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<td>PPSh 40</td>
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<td>PPSh-41</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPSh-43/47</td>
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<td>Russian</td>
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For those of you who are unaware of Charles’ work in the ASL field, he has been the author of some of the best articles on nationality distinctions in The General (on the British) and the ASL Annual ’91 (on the Japanese). He was a major contributor to the design of the British AFV counter set with Bob McNamara. He is a co designer of published scenarios. This is missing out lots of other contributions he has made to our hobby at the design and development stage that would fill a page. It makes interesting reading. Enjoy! – Pete.

At the risk of sounding rather negative and over-critical, I would take Lorrin Bird’s article ‘ASL Armor Studies’ (The General Vol. 24 No 4) with a large pinch of salt as it contains some errors, untested assumptions, half-truths and is over-selective in its approach, as will be revealed. Although well intentioned, it seeks to further complicate the game in the name of realism - and succeeds only in the former. My main objections to the piece have not changed since I first read it, and are as follows.

APCR Hits on Sloped Armour

There is no real evidence, and Bird fails to cite any, that APCR suffered to any significant extent against sloped armour. Just what is this German and US data? One modern authority on armoured vehicle technology is Richard M. Ogorkiewicz, author of Design and Development of Fighting Vehicles (MacDonald, London 1968) (henceforth cited as Design). On page 82 he makes the following point; “The exact effect of sloping of armour depends on the projectile, sloped plates being more effective in the case of APDS [not APCR, you will notice!] shot than in that of full bore projectiles with caps, or with blunt noses which have been used with Russian tank guns”. Although the performance of APCR does fall off quicker than APDS over distance, it is/was a more complicated projectile with the outer, lightweight, case aiding penetration by lubricating the area for the solid inner core to then strike. Nowhere does Ogorkiewicz single out APCR for being less effective against sloped armour, even though he is not slow to dwell on its shortcomings in other areas both in Design and in his earlier Armoured Forces (Armor, in the USA) (Arms & Armour Press, London, 1960 and 1970). A number of sources make the point that, ordinarily, ie unsophisticated, AP projectiles ‘solid shot’ are more effective against steeply-sloped armour than APCBC, APCR or APDS rounds, but APCR types are never singled-out as being any worse than the others.

Certainly all the data that I have accumulated on armour penetration supports Ogorkiewicz rather than Bird, and if APCR did suffer from a significant performance deterioration against sloped armour we would expect to see it in the penetration figures themselves. As a general rule of thumb, an AP shell will penetrate about 125% more armour sloped at 90 degrees to the horizontal ['normal impact'] than at 60 degrees to the horizontal ['30 degree impact']. Most armour penetration figures are expressed in one or the other, and occasionally but never always, in both.

Conversely, the 30 degree impact figure normally represents about 80% of the normal impact figure. More on this later when discussing some of Bird’s other points. If Bird’s thesis is correct, we would expect APCR’s normal impact, 90 degree, figures to be greater than this 125%: 100% ratio described above, or conversely the 30 degree impact figures to be less than the 80%: 100% ratio. The best test would be to look at figures for penetration at acute angles only, say 30 degrees from the horizontal, but such figures - to my knowledge - do not exist for most weapons. I have tested Bird’s thesis against all the data in my possession that cite both 30 and 90 degree impact figures; data for the western Allies uses only 30 degree impact as a rule, whereas that for the Soviets tends to use 90 degree impact only. Many, but not all, German guns have data for both angles of impact and this does not support Bird, or at least suggests that there was no significant difference in game terms: we are talking millimetres here rather than centimetres.

If we compare the ratios for APCR and the standard APCBC, then to prove Bird’s theory valid we should see 30 degree impact figures for APCR to be below 80% of the 90 degree impact figures. The German 37L is remarkably consistent between 100 and 500 yds, even though 37L APCR this is a lightweight, small-calibre, shell that should make it a prime candidate for ‘the Bird factor’ against sloped armour. APCBC comes out at 84.31 - 86.07%, whereas APCBC varies between 73.91 and 75.0%! Round one to APCR!

For the 50L the APCR performance is also better below 250 yds: 86.66 - 77.3% depending on range, compared to 73.73 - 76.13% for APCBC. For the 75L Pak 40 the APCR performance is worse than APCBC with 77.84 - 63.85% for APCR over 0 to 2000 yds as against 81.2 - 74.48% for APCBC.

For the ex-Soviet 76L in German service the APCR performance is again almost as good as APCBC at close range; 80% at 0 yds for APCR compared to 81.2% for APCBC, but is worse at greater ranges with 74.68 - 66.15% between 500 and 2500 yds, whereas APCBC scores between 81.66 and 82.05% over the same distances.

For the 88L APCR is also worse at longer ranges; 85.2 - 71.69% between 0 and 2500 yds compared to APCBC 88.0 - 87.93%. But for the 75L, APCR is about the same with 86.88% at 2000 m compared to 85.57 - 88.0% for APCBC (figures vary). In any case, neither the 75L nor 88L appear ever to have fired APCR in combat due to tungsten shortages; the figures so often quoted by authors were test figures.

The performance of the low-velocity 75* firing basic AP shot is a respectable 80.39% at 500 yds, while the more powerful 50 with APCBC scores only 78.87% at the same range. The APCBC performance of the 75L L/43 varied between 73.55% and 67.53% over 500 to 2000 yds, which is actually worse than the 75L and 88L APCR rounds! That for the 75L L/48 firing APCBC at 500 yds is only 72.44%!

VIEW FROM
What all this suggests to me is that there is not enough firm evidence to prove the Bird thesis, and that performance varies so much from gun to gun and at different ranges that it is too sweeping to lump all the performances of APCR into the same basket, although I do admit that the test sample used above is only a small one. Moreover, Bird does not mention in his article whether or not APCNR, as fired by ‘Squeeze-bore’ guns (also known as either ‘Cone-bore’ or ‘Taper-bore’ weapons), should also be included in his exercise. Strictly speaking they should have been included too, as to all intents and purposes they fire a projectile which is no different to a normal APCR round in shape, appearance and performance after being fired from the gun.

If we examine data for these weapons we find only evidence to support what I have already stated above; the German 28LL’s ratios reveal that at short ranges the APCNR round is actually worse at 30 degree impact than at 90 degree impact, 73.4% at 100 yds, 75.5% at 200 yds, 75.9% at 300 yds, and 77.7% at 400 yds. You will notice that it is approaching, over range, our 80% baseline.

Another APCNR weapon excluded from ASL because it was fairly rare and short-lived because of tungsten shortages, the German 75mm PaK 41 L/55 (in parlance it would be a 55L - my ‘L/55’ just refers to the bore length expressed in calibres), also shows a similar performance, with 81.63% at 0 yds and slowly improving - in this context a relative term - to 82.25% at 2000 yds.

All these APCR-firing weapons perform better against sloped armour than the Birde would have us expect, adding weight to my argument that they cannot be arbitrarily lumped together in the way that Bird has.

Bird’s cosine formula is all very well, but he himself admits that it does not give the whole picture and then fails to give more than one example of how sloping affects protection. Many wargamers use the cosine method by default and in ignorance of anything better (Ogorkiewicz’s books were not exactly best sellers), albeit by the much simpler method of drawing the armour thickness out on a sheet of paper and then measuring a straight path through the lines at the relevant angle! The cosine formula devalues the true protection given by sloped armour and over-values that derived from near-vertical faces. TM 9-1914 is hard to get hold of and I have never seen it, but Ogorkiewicz in Design gives us all the data we need on p. 83 by supplying two graphs that evaluate (respectively) the ‘horizontal’ path (the cosine formula), and actual effective thickness through plates at 0 to 90 degrees. Bird’s cosine formula merely publicises the former in a way guaranteed to bore all but the most avid mathematician.

The cosine formula is a pessimistic assessment of the plate’s protective value, whereas Ogorkiewicz’s graphs give both the worst and best case values. Faced with the nightmare of calculating AF values for hundreds of vehicles with numerous permutations for each depending on the type of ammunition being fired, Bob McNamara sensibly just took the mid-point between Ogorkiewicz’s two graphs, and this is the best we can expect in a game of ASL’s overall complexity, especially as meaningful data on the different performances of projectiles is not that easy to come by, and, in the final analysis, does not make a great deal of difference to the overall result.

If players really want to determine the fate of each shell being fired they should play Tobruk rather than ASL, but even this cannot give the whole true picture because it involves far fewer gun, vehicle and projectile types than ASL. Moreover, players are likely to get Repetitive Strain Injury from all the permutations for each depending on the type of ammunition being fired, Bob McNamara merely distorts the picture to suit a particular prejudice or fetish. As an example, there were 5 different versions of the US 76L, with the M1A2 version at least having a slightly better AP performance when firing APC shot at the longer ranges. Similarly, there were two versions of the vehicle-mounted Soviet 122L, again with slightly different AP characteristics, while the British 57LL came in two different barrel lengths (L/45 and L/52.1) with different characteristics, complicated yet further by the sheer variety of AP munitions successively issued for this gun; AP-T [T = tracer], APC-T, APCBC-T, APCR (briefly) and finally APDS. Afaik German 75L also represents three different guns with slightly different ballistic characteristics; the 75mm PaK 40 L/46, the 75mm L/43 and later 75mm L/48. Even the US 75 and 90L had different types of AP ammunition available at the same time, giving slightly different performances. Bob has already had to weight some guns to make them fit into the scheme of things historically, and any further tinkering merely threatens to undermine the whole system. To use an American phrase: if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it!

The 17 pounder

Bird’s use of the British 76LL (17 pounder) is a bad example to quote as evidence in his thesis about sloped armour. He contends that this gun “could” penetrate the Panther’s glacis plate, worth 18 AF, when in actual fact he should have said that it often could not! Alexander Mckee in Caen: Anvil of Victory (London 1984 ed, page 309) cites the case of the 23rd Hussars in Normandy shortly after D-Day who were dismayed to find that even at 300 yds, let alone 500, the 76LL would “frequently” fail to penetrate the glacis plate, and a desert veteran who also served in Normandy, the South African Robert Crisp [author of Brazen Chariots - which relates his desert experiences in Stuarts], stated that the 76LL needed three good hits to penetrate as shells tended to merely scuff the surface and bounce off. This is cited in David Fletcher’s The Universal Tank: British Armour in the Second World War Part 2 (HMSO, London, 1993) on pages 111-112. As APDS was not available until the autumn of 1944 these tests must have been conducted with plain AP shot or APCBC; the former penetrated 109mm at 1000 yds 30 degree impact, 120mm at 500 yds - say 150mm at normal impact - and 149mm at 100 yds, but was probably better against sloped armour than these figures suggest. APCBC penetrated 130mm at 1000 yds, and 140mm at 500 yds 30 degree impact, or about 175mm normal impact. I have never seen normal impact figures quoted for this gun, but I think Bird’s 180mm is a trifle optimistic in the circumstances. It is also possible, if the user manuals are anything to go by, that 17 pounder APCBC was not available before June 1945 (!), so that the tests might well have only been with plain AP shot. The occasional penetrations in the tests add weight to the theory that AP and not APCBC was being used. The quality of the Panther’s armour varied considerably from tank to tank and was further compromised by a carbon content which was much higher than the ideal (due to non-ferrous metal shortages), which made welding extremely difficult. This, I believe, could explain why the 76LL could sometimes but not always penetrate. Using Bird’s cosine formula, the Panther’s 80mm
tankette, the Belgian T-15 L T, the IS-2m, and other vehicles, including the AFs of a host of other vehicles, including the Panther and Jagdpanther and (rendering them impenetrable to APCR from the US 76L and Soviet 85L on the upper hull front - an absurdity), the Japanese Type 97 Te-Ke tankette, the Belgian T-15 LT, the IS-2m, Lee, Grant, and Sherman with 30 degree hull front - to name just some. Where would all this end? With a substantial change to all the Chapter C and D rules and extra complication to burden ASL players with! A classic case of where the 'cure' kills the patient!

The IS Turrets

Bird is also wrong about the IS tank turrets. The first batch of the IS-2, about 150 vehicles, used the IS-1 turret with 100mm frontal armour - see Steve Zaloga and Peter Sarsen's IS-2 Heavy Tank 1944-1973 (Osprey New Vanguard, London 1994) page 6 (photo caption) and 7. The later, 'standard', IS turret has a triangular chunk cut out of the lower right-hand side of the gun mantlet when viewed from the front, the earlier version lacks this and has a protruding gun shield whereas the later version is more flush with the turret front proper. Although Soviet data is still often sketchy or contradictory there is a well-known photo of an early IS-2 captured and examined by the Germans with, as usual, the armour thicknesses and angles stencilled on the vehicle in white paint as was their standard practice. This photo appears in both Peter Chamberlain and Chris Ellis' Soviet Combat Tanks 1939-1945 (Almark Publications, London, 1970 page 61) and, slightly smaller, in Kenneth Macksey's The Guinness Book of Tank Facts and Feats (Guinness Superlatives, Enfield, 1972 ed, page 156). The photo shows 100mm for the turret front on either side of the gun mantlet, and what looks like 100mm for the mantlet itself; the numbers are hard to read because of the collar round the gun barrel. This 100mm is not in dispute with Bird in any case. The IS turret mantlet is not only curved very much like that on the Panther's gun mantlet but is also of identical thickness to the Panther's, except that the IS turret is bulbous in shape on either side of the mantlet whereas the Panther's armour is flat and angled at 79 degrees to the horizontal (ie almost vertical) and worth about 104mm on the Panther D and 114mm on the Panther A and G, because it was slightly thicker at 110mm on these last two versions. So, if anything, the IS turret front on either side of the mantlet would, because of this curvature, deflect projectiles more readily than a Panther turret struck in the same place. In ASL the Panther turret front is rated at 14 AF because the 100mm rounded mantlet is worth about 133% more in effective thickness on account of its curvature - as is the IS gun mantlet - giving a notional thickness of 133mm = 14 AF. The small, weaker, areas on the Panther turret front to either side of the gun mantlet are ignored in ASL because they were so small in size and constituted another complication that the Critical Hit system already takes care of so well. Note that some sources erroneously give the Panther's gun mantlet as being 120mm thick; it was not.

Bird, in his eagerness to downgrade the armour on the IS tanks to an 11 AF value, also ignores the fact that the Panther gun mantlet was also more likely to deflect projectiles hitting the gun mantlet downwards through the hull roof because the Panther turret was set much further back on the hull than the IS turrets. Balanced against this, the Panther's sloping upper hull front was more likely to deflect projectiles clear of the turret front because of this more rearward position - you cannot have it both ways! Again, these situations are best left for the Critical Hit rules and I would argue that the same should apply to any lucky shots on the IS tanks. Again, where would all this end otherwise? Most IS-2 tanks had the same turret as the IS-2m, and I cannot believe that the Soviets would armour the front of the turret to 160mm and then foolishly leave the mantlet at just 100mm. I do not know what his sources are, but I suspect that they are German rather than Soviet, and many of the former are demonstrably poor in their objectivity. All my sources state that the later IS turret was 160mm thick at the front and so I see no reason to single out the early IS-2 mantlet for special treatment, but if two players agree that the early version of IS turret is to be used in the game for their IS-2s, then fine - it can be given 14 AF on the turret front. It should not be rated at 11 AF under any circumstances. Bird talks of giving it just 11 on the gunshield, but as we have seen he forgets about both the Panther's 100mm gun mantlet (which gets 14 AF), and the deflective qualities of curvature! The curved 160mm plates on the 'standard' IS turret merit 18 AF because of their deflective value.

Targeting at long range

When talking about the Germans' supposed ability to actually target the IS gun mantlet for special and precise attention, Bird claims that an 88LL penetrated the gunshield at 1.61 miles. So what? Is he claiming that this was a common event? This is just another example of a Critical Hit situation being used to justify something. At such ranges the target would just be a dark smudge in the gun sights, and the idea of targeting the mantlet at other than very close range is absurd. It was/is standard practice to aim at the turret ring when targeting a tank not so much because this is a Critical Hit weak spot, but because it is essentially the centre of the target and thus offers the best chance of a hit somewhere. To quote from Colonel Gordon-Hall in his Armoured Fighting Vehicles in the Mediterranean Theatre 1939-1945, a secret report compiled in 1946 for the British Army's School of Tank Technology and copied to me through the good offices of the Bovington Tank Museum, "At the ranges of modern engagements A/T gunners do not and cannot aim at a small point on a tank: they aim at the tank itself and hope that the cross wires will not entirely obscure the target. "Aiming marks" are hardy annuals which come up periodically when a tank has any conspicuous feature, but no one has so far produced any evidence in support of the theory that they lead to increased casualties. Examination of battle damage to Churchill's in both North Africa and Italy showed that, in proportion, the mantlet received no more hits than any other part of the turret front and sides". So there! Certainly Bob initially considered making some special rules for vehicles whose mantlets allegedly cast...
shadows that could be used as aiming-points, especially British tanks with their internal gun mantlets set behind a rectangular opening in the turret front. However, I reminded Bob that nervous British Sherman crews often painted their external gun mantlets and lower portions of the gun barrels white - most commonly seen on Sherman Fireflies - in order to minimise the shadows cast, and that tanks like the Panther, IS series, T-34 series and a host of others also had external mantlets that cast shadows. Where would all of this have ended?

The difficulty of aiming at a specific point on a tank is illustrated further by Ogorkiewicz in his Design, page 135, which contains a diagram ‘Pattern of hits on a situation’. See Tom Jenet, Hilary Doyle and Peter Sarson King Tiger Heavy Tank 1942-1945 Osprey New Vanguard, London, 1993, pp. 23 and 24. That means, a hit somewhere, the gunner knew his job and under the best combat conditions, achieve a first-round hit of 500 metres against a target 2 x 2.5 metres, so the Tiger I’s crews rightly could not guarantee to penetrate at over 600 metres, just inviting trouble. The Panther’s 75LL could not guarantee to penetrate the Soviet tanks at the traditionally long ranges that the Germans sought to fight their actions, and to open fire at 1.61 kilometres, let alone Bird’s miles, was just inviting trouble. The Panther’s 75LL could not guarantee to penetrate at over 600 metres, so the Tiger I’s crews rightly bemoaned the 88L being powerless to reply to the IS tanks, which often opened fire at up to 3000 metres, or more than treble the mean/average World War Two engagement range (according to Ogorkiewicz, Design, page 68). Certainly IS tanks appear to have been invulnerable to Tiger Is above 1500 metres, see Zaloga & Sarson IS-2 Tank, pages 9–13 and Steven J. Zaloga and James Gransden Soviet Heavy Tanks (Osprey, London, 1981, pp. 28-9).

Split Armour Ratings

Some of Bird’s comments do have merit, particularly his points about the thinner lower hull front armour but he is again advocating the introduction of over-selective exceptions that just further complicate the rules, since in certain situations the lower hull front could not be seen/hit due to intervening obstacles or objects, or because the firer had a significant height advantage relative to the target. Bird also forgets that the lower hull front armour usually slopes away from the projectile’s path, and this must also increase the tendency of shot to bounce off and down rather than through the armour. After seeing the first draft of this article Bob McNamara replied, “As I recall (dare I trust my fading memory?), Ogorkiewicz said that the very reason lower hull front armor was thinner than that on the upper hull was due to the fact that at normal combat ranges the lower front was almost always masked by undulations in the ground [I cannot find the comment]. And your other points about it being affected by the firer’s height advantage and its slope are well taken”.

As to AFs, the whole problem with split armour ratings revolves around the lack of space on the vehicle counters in ASL. I did suggest to Bob that to increase the ‘fog of war’, keep costs down and allow for more detailed AFs, he use generic rather than variant-specific vehicle counters in ASL, with separate off-board cards/data sheets to identify the particular sub-variant vehicle in play and showing all the AFs and other data. Bob’s response was that US gamers would find this unacceptable; they preferred everything to be on the vehicle counters themselves. Well fine, but the price of this is that the AFs have had to be condensed/simplified and counter symbology problems prevented the use of split AF ratings where the turret and hull values, respectively, differed by more than one step in ASL’s scale of armour ratings. Andy Daglish, replying to the first draft of this article, suggested various symbology solutions; so did I at the time. Andy, but Bob felt unable to use them. Personally, I mark the relevant armour factor on the counter with a small red dot, alerting me to the fact that it is not quite right for the pursuit. If I and my opponent then wish to be more precise and use the true value, we have an aide memoir built-in. Certainly the Deacon’s turret front is over-AF’d, as is the Belgian T-15 LT, and there would be similar problems with vehicles like the Porsche-turreted King Tiger, the ‘LT’ reworked Churchill tanks, among others, if they were to be also now represented in the game.

Cast Armour vs. Rolled Plate

Bird is also correct about cast armour being softer than rolled plate, but forgets that its often rounder shapes tend to deflect shells easier. Cast armour is softer but also less brittle - ie stronger and less prone to shatter; if it severely compromised protection it would never have been used so much. If we make a specific exception in ASL for the KV-1 side armour then we should also apply it to the Sherman M4A1 side AFs, to the Matilda II entirely, and indeed to every tank that has a significant portion of cast armour on the turret or hull. Again, where is this to all end? At the end of the day the armour rules in ASL are of necessity the best compromise in an already very complicated game. Remember that complexity alone does not guarantee realism, and that total realism leads to total unplayability. Bird’s article is interesting to read but at the end of the day it is tinkering to no real purpose save gilding the proverbial lily. All the points he raises with evidence to support them (as we have seen, this is not always the case) were considered at some point during ASL’s creation and rejected, sometimes very reluctantly. If people really want all this detail (judging by the negative feedback given in a later issue of The General to his article, most players do not) then they should either play tank-heavy games with miniatures and ditch all the non-armour rules, or they should play other board games that address this particular issue better. Few games do, except perhaps Tobruk, and this covers only part of World War Two armoured combat. Even here the purists will fall foul of what is really practicable for even a computer, let alone board, game if present software that I have seen is anything to go by. The Steel Panthers system, for example, merely copies inaccurately ASL’s AF system in electronic form, I cannot comment about Talonsoft’s Eastern Front and Western Front as I do not own them.

Bird’s Vital Contribution

Bob has this to say about Lorin Bird’s contribution to the ASL armour rules as I had to the fact that it is not quite right for the
no knowledge of it, and he was never mentioned to me by Bob in our voluminous correspondence. “I want to point out that the current To Kill system in ASL was conceived by Lorrin Bird, so he should get the proper credit and thanks for it. I believe it was back when Don Greenwood and I were developing the SL gamette GI: Anvil of Victory that Lorrin and I struck up a correspondence and he presented me with his ideas on improving the original TK system. What he suggested was far superior to the existing method, and I lobbied Don successfully to incorporate it. Lorrin’s suggestion remains essentially what ASL uses today, so we all owe him a tip ‘o’ the hat for it. And if I ever failed to give him full credit for his contribution when I should have, I accept full blame for not doing so. Thank you, Lorrin!”

Schürzen vs. ATRs

Lastly, schürzen. This is actually the German word for ‘aprons’, not skirts; it loses something in translation. They were made of 8mm mild steel for the turrets of PzKfw III and IV, and the hull plates were 5mm thick. I would dearly love to know the source of a quotation mentioned to me about schürzen “saving the Panther I” from an ATR as this really is an absolute gem of melodramatic nonsense! Even at point-blank range the Soviet PTRD and much rarer PTRS ATRs could not penetrate the 40mm vertical lower hull side armour of the Panther; the best they could manage was about 37.5mm, assuming a perfect strike angle. On lighter vehicles, making schürzen from only mild steel rather than armour plate would still make sense even if they were intended to defeat just ATR projectiles as even mild steel offers some increase in protection for the weight involved. To quote Bob, “Striking anything of even medium density during its flight can cause a small projectile to tumble, definitely diminishing its penetrative capability. (I have a video that shows how even a few small twigs can cause .50-cal MG bullets to tumble). To be honest, I wasn’t aware of this when I wrote the schürzen rules; however, when I did learn of it I decided to leave the rule alone due to its generic nature anyway. As you pointed out [see below], individual schürzen plates were often missing or misaligned, and an ATR gunner would generally have little trouble shooting at where the schürzen weren’t”. The Soviet ATRs could just about penetrate the side armour of the PzKfw III and IV if the strike angle was good, although the IV E had 20mm + 20mm applique side armour that would often defeat it, and such vehicles reworked to later variants’ standards during overhaul and/or repair would be encountered now and again right to the end of the war. Again, ASL has no real place for these. How often schürzen defeated ATR is difficult to assess, but for ASL purposes it does not really matter since ATR are at best marginally-effective weapons.

As the ATRs would not penetrate the Panther’s lower hull sides, and as the latter’s small schürzen did not extend up to protect the upper hull sides from HEAT rounds, there was no point in including them in ASL; yet another example of a neat way to avoid pointless complication. If there was space in ASL for lower hull AFs, the Panther’s hypothetical 4 AF could, in theory, be penetrated by ATRs at 0 or 1 hex range, since Soviet ATRs get a modified 8 TK value, but this would be both unhistorical and would also ignore the protective value of the Panther’s interleaved road wheels. The situations covered in footnote 13 to the Chapter C rules on page C20 are to my mind well covered by the Critical Hit rules anyway; this provides opportunity enough for ‘special cases’. Certainly the Soviets would routinely fire at all German tanks, even Panthers and Tigers, with ATRs because hits on the glass vision blocks or periscopes would help to impair vehicle visibility and occasionally killed or injured German crewmen - the Critical Hit system suffices!

To guarantee the defeat of ATR rounds the schürzen on PzKfw III and IV tanks or their SP cousins would need to have been made from armour plate, but this would have merely added to the weight burden of vehicles with suspensions that were already groaning under their existing loads; the PzKfw IV H and J retained the thin 50mm turret front armour because the 80mm hull front plates were about as much as the springs could bear, and the Panther was already about 8 tons heavier that desired. All my sources, including Ogorkiewicz, indicate that schürzen were designed to minimise (not defeat) the effects of HEAT rounds, as mild steel is almost as effective against these munitions as armour plate is, but is lighter, cheaper and quicker to make/cut to size, spot-weld (remember my comments about the high carbon content of late-war German armour plate) and, perhaps, replace - thus placing less strain on strategic materials and war production capacity. Also note that late-war PzKfw IVs and other AFVs got wire mesh hull screens instead, and these would have been less effective against ATR, while the Soviets and western Allies also sometimes improvised such mesh screens from old bed-springs in order to augment the protection against the HEAT rounds from Panzerfausts or Panzerschreckes. No, schürzen were introduced, like Zimmerit anti-magnetic paste, merely as a quick, cheap and useful means to protect German vehicles from an anticipated Allied response to Germany’s own introduction of HEAT ammunition. With hindsight we now know that the Soviets, too, had been experimenting with a Bazooka-type infantry ATW before

A StuG III with four plates of Schuertzen armour. The different pattern on the rear plate suggests it was added at some point after the other three.
the war started, and this could have seen action, but in reality this was yet another victim of the upheavals after Stalin’s purges - see Terry J. Gander The Bazooka: Hand-held Hollow-charge Anti-tank Weapons (Pargate, London, 1998, pp. 10-12).

**Schürzen, HEAT and HESH**

First bear in mind that these were easily and quickly lost in combat; just driving through low vegetation could misplace or tear them off, and unless we keep a detailed record of which vehicle is intact and which has lost the odd plate, we need to make some sweeping assumptions. Effectively, we have all or nothing - less than ideal, but the best compromise (again). Moreover, after hitting the schürzen, a HEAT round detonating properly would remove a large chunk of this outer skirting, creating a gap that the next HEAT round would benefit from, and this is one reason why the PzKfw IVs are being toasted so easily; in effect they are being hit more than just once in the same general area and no Schuerzet remains to ward-off the subsequent shot(s). Remember that an ASL game turn represents two minutes of real time, and that one roll of the dice does not necessarily equate to one shot from a PIAT. Most infantry ATW had a reasonably good ROF; even if ASL does not give them multiple rates (see also footnote 30 to Chapter C on page C21) and one attack on a PzKfw IV in *Pegasus Bridge* actually represents two minutes of trying to knock the thing out with a PIAT. This is just one of many reasons why schürzen appear to be so ineffective; they are sacrificial plates intended to pre-detonate the HEAT round before it reaches the ideal/ critical ‘stand-off’ distance from the main armour plate in order to achieve maximum penetration. But the side armour of the PzKfw III, IV and many SP derivatives was a very thin 30mm, so that even with schürzen a HEAT round would have a largeish margin of ‘overkill’ against the side armour, although even that is not the whole story. I include an interesting snippet received from Bob: “In 12/44 the U.S. National Defense Research Committee published the Review of Principles Involved in Protecting Armored Vehicles against Shaped-Charge Weapons by Emerson Pugh. One of the observations made in this memorandum was that spaced armor achieved only “some success” in defending against HEAT projectiles. It was most effective against “rotated projectiles [ie fired from rifled guns] and those of poor or slightly unsymmetrical [sic] construction”. It then went on to say: “However, the penetrating power of many of the modern unrotated projectiles [ie rockets/missiles] is actually increased by spacing a thin plate a short distance in front of the basic armor. Thus spaced armor may in some cases be detrimental. Since most of these unrotated projectiles explode at values of standoff smaller than their optimum the added spacing improves their standoff”. This little-known fact - that schürzen could actually “increase” the effectiveness of HEAT by making it explode at a more optimum distance from the armor plate (the “standoff” distance) was one of the major reasons why they are only mildly effective in ASL. And to my knowledge no other game system take this into account”.

The optimum stand-off distance will of course vary somewhat according to the calibre and construction of the HEAT round, and also according to where it actually strikes, hence Bob’s “could” rather than “would”. Schürzen were intended to augment the thin side armour of the PzKfw III and IV family quickly and cheaply, not to make the tanks invulnerable to, especially, the larger HEAT rounds under any but the most favourable circumstances. I can only repeat that if players find this too abstract, then perhaps ASL is not for them, and I defy anyone to come up with a workable, playable, alternative to the existing rules. Remember that schürzen double the score of the lower die roll for TK purposes, and although this will often not suffice to save the target from destruction, it will save the odd vehicle now and again - that was the real-life purpose of schürzen.

HESH was first developed for use against concrete fortifications (Ogorkiewicz, Design, p. 71), and like HEAT is a versatile projectile that is also effective against ‘soft’ targets. Unlike HEAT, HESH’s performance is not degraded when fired from a rifled barrel (which spins the projectile to enhance accuracy but breaks up the explosive jet from a HEAT round and thus roughly halves the penetration). It is also more effective than HEAT against armour - although the differences are relative and should be kept in perspective. In fact, most nations prefer to retain HEAT, which is testimony enough to its effectiveness regardless of the claims made for HESH. Both are easily defeated by spaced armour (schürzen being merely one form of this) or sandwiched armour like Chobham because, again, the sacrificial outer armour pre-detonates the projectile either too far, or at least further away, from the main armour than is necessary to inflict significant damage.

Anyone feeling aggrieved about World War Two HEAT rounds should bear in mind that the ‘unrotated’ projectiles are far more effective than modern ones. For un-spun projectiles, a penetration depth of up to 4 times the projectile calibre is the order of the day, for spun projectiles without the device used by the French AMX 30 (to prevent the HEAT warhead spinning with the shell’s outer casing), twice the calibre equivalent can be expected. Because World War Two infantry-fired HEAT rounds were un-spun they could penetrate to about double the calibre of the projectile, even if the quality of the munitions was poorer than the case today. HEAT rounds from rifled weapons usually only managed their calibre equivalents, or at little more - the German 88mm guns managed 90mm, the British 95mm howitzer on CS tanks 110mm, the US 105mm howitzer 100mm and the Japanese 70mm gun about 70mm.
THE COWTRA MANTRA

“Concentrate on what the rules do allow...”

John Brock

The COWTRA shibboleth. Perhaps the worst accidental evil perpetrated on the game of ASL short of VBM Freeze itself, COWTRA fell victim of its own success and has become an excuse for the most literal-minded ASLRB interpreters.

Like everything else in the ASLRB, COWTRA must be read and understood in context.

WHY?

Why did the designers put that paragraph in the rulebook? Because they wanted to be able to just write what the rules WERE, and not what the rules WERE NOT, in order to save space. They wanted to be able to just write: “Count to three before throwing the HHGOA,” instead of writing:

“Thou shalt count to three before throwing the Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch. Thou shalt not count to four; neither shalt thou count to two, excepting as thou then passest on to three. Five is right out!”

On the surface, it’s a very good idea. Without it, we might easily have a 1200 page rulebook. And its value is not diminished by the fact that people so often ignore COWTRA, or that a large percentage of the Q&A sent to the rules meisters would not have needed to be asked if the person asking the question had simply applied COWTRA.

PROBLEM 1

So, why ARE there so many people who don’t apply COWTRA? Well, probably for two reasons. One is that, like Marx’s version of communism, COWTRA turns out to be a wonderfully idealistic concept that doesn’t work so well in the real world. The massive, sprawling, poorly cross-referenced nature of the ASLRB means that unless the page you are looking at makes it clear that the question had simply applied COWTRA.

[This is also why it’s so hard to exercise the ghosts of SL from our minds. As the introduction puts it, “if a distantly recalled rule isn’t found herein... it has been removed!” Well, guess what you have to do to be sure the rule you distantly recall was an SL legacy that was removed, rather than a valid ASL rule that you’ve simply misplaced? You have to go through all the places it could possibly be in the ASLRB, to make sure that it is not found therein. How much easier it would have been on the grognards to see a few statements in the ASLRB to the effect of, “Note: This rule represents a major change from the SL version!”]

PROBLEM 2

The second reason why people ignore COWTRA is that they see a rule which strikes them as so blatantly wrong and unrealistic that they honestly can’t believe the designers intended things to work that way. And in fact, they have a perfectly valid point! The biggest flaw with both COWTRA and the policy of “only writing what the rules ARE” is the underlying assumption that: “The designers thought of everything”.

The US Constitution doesn’t discuss TV, radio, airplanes, steamships, or dozens of other things that simply weren’t imaginable in 1787. In the same way, the ASLRB only discusses those situations the designers foresaw during the design process, or which were encountered during the initial play tests. They couldn’t write rules about situations that had never even crossed their minds.

[EX: why do rules 0.1 to 0.8 exist? Because they deal with situations which the designers did not consider when they wrote the original rules for Sewers, Fortified Buildings, Rubble, Factories, and so on; and until the play test of RB, those rules were so little used that the questions had never been raised before.]

But now toss COWTRA into this mix. Roughly put, it amounts to saying, “Don’t try to read between the lines.” As the literalists interpret this, it means, “Only that which is specifically discussed in the ASLRB is legal.”

What this amounts to is saying that if the designers failed to mention it in the ASLRB because they didn’t think of it, then no matter how obvious and logical it may be, it’s presumed illegal.

This is patently absurd; the intent of COWTRA is not to prevent people from coming up with reasoned, logical answers to questions that the designers never even thought of. And this is one of the reasons I say the ASLRB has to be read in context and with an open mind. It’s the only way one can hope to figure out what the designers left out intentionally, and what they just didn’t think of.

SOME EXAMPLES

In context and with an open mind, it’s easy to recognise that the rowhouse rules are full of things that the designers didn’t consider. And it’s even easier to recognise that split-level buildings were so little used that no one would have found ANY holes in them. Board 15 isn’t part of the ASL modules, leaving 24U4 as the only split-level building that would have been encountered during the early play tests, and it’s only actually a split-level building in ONE Paratrooper scenario! So for example the possibility that the idea of “rowhouse bypass” for split-level buildings was considered and rejected is, in my educated opinion, about nil. As far as I’m concerned, COWTRA doesn’t even apply here. It’s a clear question for Q&A, and until one is submitted and answered I’ll play that it’s allowed.

Some might argue “If a woods or building happens to be in a hex then I can move along the hexside, but if the woods or building is removed then I can’t??”.

Counter-argument: Again a game issue. The only reason why one would WANT to do this is to avoid an enemy LOS. As such, allowing the player to do this would be too much of an unrealistic game tactic - it would allow the player too much ability to avoid enemy fire.

Again “If I look down an adjacent hexspine at a wall/hedge vertex, then my LOS is blocked beyond two hexes, but if I ADD another obstacle to LOS in the form of a wall along that adjacent hexspine then my LOS is clear even beyond two hexes?? Adding an obstacle makes LOS clear??”.

I would have agreed with you on this one; it seems absurd on the surface, and I could never figure out why they wrote the rule that way. But while thinking about the question I finally had a brainstorm that I think explains their reasoning. I think this is the designers’ way of solving the “straight wall, crooked hexsides” issue. If you look at the B9 1 EX and picture both the X5-X8 wall and the Z7-Z8 hedge as being real-world straight lines, you will see that the two units really SHOULD be able to see each other. Yes, there will be situations where the results are still unrealistic, but not that many.

FINALLY

Some think of COWTRA as “Consider Only What The Rulebook Allows”, but this is incorrect - and the difference, while it may seem a trivial one, can also be an important one. The actual statement is: “Concentrate on what the rules do allow...” The former way is a firm injunction against considering any other possibilities. The way it is actually stated, it is much closer to being a guideline of the best way to gain an understanding of the rules.
Ten Questions With ... Eddie Zeman

Brien Martin

Eddie Zeman is one of the owners of Heat Of Battle, one of the third party manufacturers of ASL products. Their recent release, Waffen SS II: The Fuhrer’s Firemen, has received numerous good reviews. I recently sent my “Ten Questions” survey to Eddie and asked if he would take a few minutes to reply. Here is the transcript of that exchange that followed.

Name: Eddie, er...I think....is this a trick question?
City: Los Angeles
ASL Club affiliation (if any): Southern California ASL Club (thanks Kent)
Birthplace: Denver, Colorado.

BRIEN: What is the process that you go through to choose the subject matter of each module?
EDDIE: The first step is a secret, but step two requires that we check to make sure we have enough materials to accurately portray the battle. Then it’s define the battle “time-sequence”. Then we work on the ‘feel’ of the battle. Next, its getting the OB for the forces involved. If all of these things ‘line up’ then we go for it.

BRIEN: From start-to-finish, what is the approximate time it takes for HoB to complete a new module?
EDDIE: An HASL module takes about 12-15 months. We work on them concurrently since much of the work creates some lag time that we fill with research into another product. But once we get going and start the design process, it’s about a year. Recently we have designed some scenario packs (although I won’t ‘plug’ them here) and we have been able to knock those out in about 3-4 months. They are VERY rewarding for our creative side.

BRIEN: Errata has received a lot of “bad press” lately. What steps does HoB take to reduce/eliminate the really “dumb” errors from its products (like typos and simple omissions)?
EDDIE: HOB is plagued with many ‘typos’ simply because we put out many more pages in our product than most others do. Basically, simplifying and streamlining really have helped us over the years to keep such errors to a minimum. Fortress Cassino is proof of this. At the final stage of production, we let several new sets of eyes go over the product. Sometimes we have ‘parties’ where several of us get together and look at the material. Our newest protection against errors is to have our play-testers use a scenario card formatted sheet to play-test from. In the past we used to give them a regular sheet of paper that might say: 658 x3, 8-0 x2, LMG x2, etc. When we would transcode that into a scenario card format we would loose all of the ‘eyes’ that had play-tested the scenario and we would be starting from scratch trying to weed out the errors.

BRIEN: What besides declining sales, do you feel is the biggest threat to a small company like HoB?
EDDIE: Competition. In the past years we have had to battle with Ray (and others) at CH in their attempts to compete with us. We have had to fend off many disgusting acts of selfishness (disguised as “normal business procedures”) in order to protect ourselves from his attempts to copy our designs. Many other designers have had the same problem but I will let them speak for themselves. Currently, we are about to be confronted by the Hasbro/MMP people in their attempts to harness/contain HOB as a contributing resource to ASL. We don’t know how that will end up, but it looks grim.

BRIEN: Who are your modules designed for? Casual ASL players? Or the real Fanatics?
EDDIE: They are designed for neither. We design our games for the routine player. A player who does not have to be incredibly astute with the rules in order to play (or play well) one of our games. We use Night, Glider, PTO, etc for designs in which we are trying to round out a scenario pack by offering a bit of difficulty.

BRIEN: What is your all-time favourite ASL scenario and why?
EDDIE: ‘Hill 621’. It never ends till the very end.

BRIEN: What types of “toys” do like to see in scenarios you play and why?
EDDIE: I like 8 ML troops because you can go for it whenever you want and you can push the envelope of the unimaginable. I like the Tiger I because it has such a great reputation and because, in ASL terms, it is not the ‘dominant’ tank that it was cracked up to be. Its 88L gun does not always mean that you are making a TK DR just to see if the target is a burning wreck or not (like the 88LL). It’s always a competitive fight with one of those babies.

BRIEN: Final question: Wilma Flintstone or Betty Rubble?
EDDIE: Pebbles....in 10 years.

I would once again like to thank Eddie for his time and for his answers. Here’s hoping that he and the other TPMs continue to produce quality ASL components, well into the future.

THE TRENCHES
THE RULES

It is difficult to discuss Combat! Normandy without making direct reference to SL/ASL because this game is a very close relative to those two systems. Obviously they deal with the same subject, that is, tactical World War Two, using squads and individual vehicles with a scale of 50 metres to the hex.

The good news is that all of this is contained in 16 pages of rules with good clear print, although the page count of later editions will almost certainly grow as presently many of the rules are not explained in sufficient depth. The down side is that the ‘programmed learning’ system of Squad Leader has been dropped so those who have never been exposed to the SL/ASL system will have a lot of detailed rules to digest in one go. As the game covers the actions of the 82nd Airborne, some rules (such as river crossings, fortified buildings, bunkers) are not present, although they will appear in later modules when appropriate.

THE COMBAT SYSTEM

To test the system, I set up the first scenario ‘The Milling Crowd’. It has few units and does not use artillery or vehicles, yet within moments of play, I became a confused victim of the rulebook, charts and combat process. Play shuddered to a halt as I flicked between rules and game charts to simply bring on a unit and subject it to defensive fire. The squad and support weapon counters do not display any information, rather, each player has a play aid card, where everything has its own line of factors.

For example, a German squad has a range of 12 hexes with a different level of firepower for each of those hexes. The squad also has an inherent machine gun with a range of 16 hexes and different levels of firepower for each of those hexes. Let's say...
two German Squads and a MG42 combine their fire against a stack of two American squads in a building six hexes away. Then the following process is typical:

1. Total fire factors at six hexes (33 for each squad + 16 for each inherent MG + 54 for the MG42) gives 152 fire points - I know this because I had to work it out on my calculator!

2. Go to the fire table and cross index the fire factor with a percentage die roll. The die roll, say 33, is modified with +25 for fire at a building, giving a result of C/M+20.

3. C/M+20 means one American squad is flipped to a half squad and the other must take a morale check but add 20 to the dice roll.

4. The basic troop quality of an American squad is 55. It gets a +10 for being in a building and a +5 for being with another unit (there are 19 possible modifiers altogether on this chart) so it’s modified troop quality is now 70. Roll the dice and add the 20 point penalty. If the score is less than the troop quality then the unit has passed. If it fails by 1 - 20 the testing unit would be pinned, if it failed by more than 20 it would instead be disrupted.

As you can see, there is quite a bit of maths involved. Some may like the idea of weapon ranges being always measurable, frankly, certainly when taken across the whole game, I think its too much maths and not enough fun.

I have not tried combat with vehicles or guns yet, each of these have their own chart for each target. That is for example, there are 3 different German vehicles in the game, so there are 3 bazooka charts (1 for effects against each vehicle), 3 Sherman tank charts, 3 x 57mm anti tank gun charts (get the picture). Each chart is substantial, having at least 5 lines of information/figures on them to co-ordinate facing, range and the degree of kill.

THE SEQUENCE OF PLAY

It’s a shame that the combat side of the game is so unfriendly because the sequence of play is actually very good, giving lots of very interactive play. The sequence is divided into 3 main phases.

1. Command phase. A sort of joint admin phase in which all yellow markers (pin, disrupt and casualty) can be removed or reduced i.e. a disrupt reduces to a pin.

2. Fire & Movement phase. A joint phase using alternate impulses. The first player selects a unit to move and/or fire (or a group of units if platoon move/fire is used). The impulse then goes to the other player who does the same and then the first player goes again etc. etc. This continues until both players pass consecutively. Units are marked after movement and fire, multiple fire is allowed when appropriate and of course one or both players may be desperate to end the phase early in an effort to try and recover some units in the next command phase before they degrade into actual losses.

3. Melee Phase. Also a joint phase and very reminiscent of the Close Combat Phase in Squad Leader.

THE COMPONENTS

The quality of the components is fine. All the counters are the small ½” type and are presented on one sheet, squads have their half squads printed on their reverse and the counters are clean as all unit information is presented on a separate quick reference card (small print) rather than the counter face. The lack of information on the counter faces might even encourage some to develop their own rules and charts to make their own unique game.

There are three maps (16” x 25” each) in total, each using over size hexes (nice, apparently to encourage miniatures to be used but mainly helpful when dealing with stacks), basically, if you’ve seen a SL board you will know what to expect.

There are three play aid cards (plus the free replacement for one of them), again nicely set out though the print is smaller than I would have wished for.

The 15 scenarios come in their own booklet (called a firefight booklet - which is typical of the many examples in this game where new labels are used rather than recognised dialogue, i.e. firefight instead of scenario). The scenario’s are set out in standard SL format, although a nice touch is the drawing on each scenario has been replaced by a real photo, showing a terrain feature and naming the hex number that the picture relates to.

The artwork on the box is very good, it is an artists painting, showing a group of Para’s huddled around a Sherman tank and I can well understand the frustration of those who have complained that their boxes have been damaged in the post through inadequate packaging.

Whilst the cover artwork is strong, the rear of the box is a let down. It does not give the buyer the valuable information needed to make an informed decision on purchase.

All in all, 15 scenarios and three maps does provide plenty of replay value to those who are happy with the system.

CONCLUSIONS

The first time that I played this game, I was forced to stop early on turn 1. I had read the rules and felt quite comfortable with them, assuming that since much sounded like Squad Leader, that it would roughly play the same - it doesn’t. My grasp on the rules was actually much less than required. I reread the rules, especially concentrating on the full page that gives examples of play and then on one of the maps, then set up a small firefight with a couple of squads and a machine gun on each side and re ran that about half a dozen times. Even with this preparation, my opening moves of the scenario creaked along.

I have a preference towards low complexity and playable games (which is why I bought Combat! Normandy in the first place) and in that context, I find the excessive use of charts and mathematics in Combat! Normandy somewhat tedious.

I imagine the game will mostly appeal to those who want a tactical game but shy from the size of ASL. In it’s present form it is probably comparable in terms of complexity with The Gamers Tactical Combat Series, although I expect a second edition rulebook will make this the less complex of the two games. An early appearance of a second edition rulebook may encourage me to return to this game.

As a final thought, many of the trappings of this game are rooted in the original Squad Leader game by John Hill; that game was an amazing step forward in game design. I think it would have been appropriate for Critical Hit to recognise in the game credits the contribution that John Hill made to games of this ilk.

Ω

THE TRENCHES

The map for CH’s forthcoming Okinawa module Ordeal Before Shuri.
The following comments have been taken from numerous emails that Ray Tapio and Kurt have Martin posted to the ConsimWorld Discussion Board regarding Combat! and the CH Website. I thought I would include them here for your interest – Pete.

When I see guys in my basement around an ASL game session there’s a lot of hooting and hollering, occasional high-five’ing during team play, etc. In a nutshell - the kind of fun and excitement I believe you get when “your” tank is firing at “mine” in that crucial last turn compared to ‘watching’ me move pieces for three hours while you stare at my book collection. It is that excitement that I want to provide as a publisher and the Combat! playtest saw plenty of it.

Combat! makes it easy for normal folks to play historical battles at the squad level. That means individual tanks, sergeants, machine gun crews and bazookas. At this level we can take the fascinating historical detail of individuals in specific battles and put the players very close to the action. When you move a bazooka (or PIAT or panzershreck or molotov thrower) into the building by the side of the road, you’re likely doing exactly what some young men did 50-some years ago at the same spot.

Combat! is a new game on the same scale as ASL and comments as regards “copying” are off base. Three phases, all in use by both players as they swap impulses. Linear progression of damage to squads. Count the range between gun (AFV) and AFV and roll two dice (i.e., no determining what the “To Hit” or “To Kill” numbers are with dozens of modifiers. That is the core of Combat! and it has been lost on some. Find me these concepts in ASL. You can’t.

Our approach for Combat! is very different than ASL. Each Combat! module will be fully self-contained: you need buy no previous module. They will work off the previous rules-set with extra rules for specific module situations. For example, Combat! Stalingrad will add air support, commissars, sewers, factories, fanatic resistance, etc. With a smoothly playing system, adding chrome is relatively painless. Since each game will stand on its own, players will be free to follow the battles that most interest them without having to buy the whole ball of wax. Thus the main appeal for players will be a rich array of battles to experience, based on one reasonable, well-developed rules set.

The game was also designed specifically to play well solitary as our focus group research revealed a significant portion of you play solo.

Combat! is going to be quite a series as we have so many modules in hand already. We’re going to support this game system to the hilt and our next steps include Combat! Diary magazine, Volume 1, No. 1 (in mid-August); Combat! Normandy expansion module, Stanley’s Hill (also ready for mid-August), and Combat! Stalingrad (well on its way to being finished for a late summer ’99 release).

The Combat! rules will doubtless morph as they move forward, although they already represent a huge amount of research on tactical combat solidly based on ‘the infantry reality.’ With this in mind, the goal will be to continually tweak the rules to make them easier to understand and use. Changed sections will be marked with bullets. Each latest version will supersede the previous (i.e., never more than one rulebook worth of errata and that will diminish as the series matures).

A lot changed during the development of this game following since the article published in Critical Hit Volume 5, Number 2. We replaced the Combat Cards with the GFET tables, concentrating them on the Player Aid Cards (PAC) for ease of use. On the rules side, the concept of “interrupts” was replaced by the ebb and flow inherent in the use of impulses. Because of these improvements we actually scrapped the original counter-set and made all new ones to meet the changes. When we did THAT we decided to go with the 5” AFV counters; use of these helps reduce stacking in large hexes as you can ‘park’ a tank next to your infantry stack.

The feedback coming in has me already drawing up a new card-based effects table format to replace the current GFET presentation. We have the data and the goal is keeping the easy part: target - firer - range - roll two ten-siders (i.e., no need to calculate just what the “To Hit” or “To Kill” numbers are) while limiting the number of charts you’ll need to use.

Other suggestions for future versions include a “To Hit chart for 11.645; converting the MST modifiers were converted into morale check drm modifiers to make it easier to resolve a morale check; and adding some type of random events generator for the battlefield that could include snipers, short rounds and bad rations (not to mention lice, cholera, the occasional minefield or fly swarm). Feedback?

I note with interest some comments about the difficulty in learning Combat! Certainly, undue difficulty is not intended and we anticipated some growing pains as the system is first ‘born’. It was intended to take some effort to master; in the absence of such effort, interest in a series would likely fade. The rules will get easier to digest and with more players to instruct, it will be much easier for new players to get started. Suggestions such as Quick Start and Programmed Instruction from you guys don’t fall on deaf ears - CH is already deep into the possible additions and changes for the next rules set. With that in mind, please let us know whenever anything isn’t clear.

The presentation of the GFET tables for individual firers and targets may look like a lot of data (and they are produced as a result of the analysis of a hell of a lot of data), but they are very simple to use. Simply pick your table, count the range between firer and target and apply the result of two ten-siders to that target facing. Gone are all the calculations to determine the correct number needed for hitting or causing a specific effect. In practice, the system used in Combat! proved quite simple.

But despite the simplicity of individual rules subsystems, the interplay between all this is quite complex. That’s why we came out of the box with the Airborne in Normandy; easier to assimilate these critical play interactions with a limited OB.

A key element of Norman’s review is that he finds the math entry point set fairly high but the sequence of play solid and easy. In a nutshell, play testing found two old gaming truths to hold - it’s much easier to learn playing with someone who already knows how, and it’s much easier to play the second time. What happens is that the same shots and morale checks get taken over and over. References to the charts become less frequent and play moves much faster.

As regards the use of GFET tables and same getting onerous in future releases, remember they are for ordnance vs. AFV only.

**View From**
and each COMBAT! module will only involve a specific group of such weapons. Once again, the trade off is lots of easy to use data instead of a one size fits all approach with tons of modifiers (and resulting rules arguments).

Our goal is to grow the game system and everyone’s feedback assists that goal and is much appreciated. We cannot promise you will become the ultimate company commander your first time out but our play test experience proved once you knew how to maneuver your men and machines about the battlefield, most of the common tasks (e.g., machine-gun strongpoint reduction) came second nature. You then can concentrate on defeating your opponent’s moves and counter-moves.

While there may be complaints about the rules layout or language, the cool fact of the matter is that the system works. It’s a great game to play, and we’re working on a number of ways to make it easier to learn. Because this is a series, each subsequent release will incorporate any changes and improvements. Everyone will have a chance to try the system by actually playing it and seeing others play it - then the very real and important differences from games such as Squad Leader will be apparent.

You can find the Combat! errata and Q&A up at http://www.criticalhit.com/comclarm.html. For those wishing to play larger battles, extra counter sheets are available for $5.00 each. You may also purchase additional Play Aid cards for $2.00 each (be sure to specify which PAC you want). Add $1.50 S & H per order worldwide and send your check or international money order to Critical Hit, Inc. PO Box 279, Croton Falls, NY 10519. We’re also interested in hearing from you if you want to playtest for future games using this system.

Robert Murphy’s account of his actions during the D-Day landings as a member of the 82nd Airborne Division, available now from CH.

Second Platoon Leader
Third Bridge

Kurt Martin

Firstly, allow me to point out why I believe so strongly in Platoon Leader - I’ve been taking everyone’s comments on this system for two years now. I know that we’ve taken a look at every single complaint, suggestion, problem, hang-up and proposal. I’ve heard from the people who were never satisfied with anything after RB, who were annoyed by PL 2.0, pleased/bored by PB - you name it. The result really does work nicely, as the folks who are writing to me about their current experiences show. Not perfect, but better every time out, compatible now with just about every CG, and still free.

CGs under development include Kursk, Guadalcanal, Cassino, Poland 39, Okinawa and Wake Island, among others. Difficulties range from intense, monster PTO to quick play ETO. Players will see the full range of duty from the RB-type workload (lots of planning, purchasing and setup) to things more like the original PL 1.0 series (with lower unit densities and short campaigns).

I trust you will note the original intent of PL, to encourage the publication of numerous modules, by different authors and on different topics, is also moving ahead.

The free on-line versions will never be released along with the versions available in stores - it would be pointally unfair to the game stores. But, there will always be a recent version of PL available for free. Yes, it will tend to be quite up to date, as I’ve been churning versions fairly rapidly to add new features and insert Q&A.

I’m also focusing a good bit on finding ways to ease the workload of people who want to play a campaign but just can’t find the time for extensive inter-game work (the challenge of buying for and setting up those huge, intricate fortification networks, for one thing). At any rate, the new PL stuff will have something for everyone, to be sure, and with the quality bar up where Arnhem: The Third Bridge pushed it this winter.

The specific CG special rules are where the nuances of that particular small unit action are ‘dialed-in’ and that is the intent - provide a framework for historical designs and allow designers the flexibility to work within and around any perceived rules barriers. Check out the wholesale changes to PL in the latest releases - Scotland the Brave II and Arnhem: The Third Bridge. In both cases they simplify things quite a bit to make for tidier and more accurate simulations.

Q&A, ERRATA, NOTES

I’m not especially fond of Redeployment as a general rule, but it is optional and I concede that in certain CGs it may be a better representation of the situation than the “Case B” option.

The new approach is to allow for gamers (read as ‘designers’ also) who do not like the redeployment approach while continuing with it for situations ideally suited for such restrictions.

I consider the Leader Generation rules to be a show-stopper; the potential to skew a CG by a few lucky (or unlucky) DRs by one side is enormous.

There is always the possibility that one or more lucky DRs will skew a scenario in the ASL system, whether it be a ‘12’ on that key gun taking that key shot to stop the AFV from exiting and piling up those last needed VP for your opponent or what have you. We’ve all been there. As 2.362 provides for leader limits (i.e., only one 10-2, etc.) there is no way your opponent can ‘show up’ with a pile of 10-2’s staring you down. Thus, I must assume you did not read 2.362 or your concerns are as regards the lack of any ‘good’ leaders for one side or another.

Yes, a strong series of die rolls can put you in trouble, but CGs give you a break by letting you dissipate the effect over various groups and time (I was most dismayed to face two 9-2’s with two 8-0’s lately, but my RGs were whole and those of the 9-2s were Depleted...)

2.3 “Note that a side may never purchase more than 3 infantry platoons (RG with an ID beginning with ‘I’ and identified as a ‘Platoon’ or ‘Pltn’) unless specifically allowed by that CG.” Is this limit per RePh or per CG?

Section 2 outlines the steps taken during one RePh.

Ω
2.32 “Units purchased for any firefight after the Initial CG Firefight may not set up in entrenchments which were also purchased during that RePh.” This seems a harsh (and odd) restriction; presumably most such units are costing extra for the luxury of on-map setup, but regardless you’re only allowed to place them in pre-existing foxholes? I have trouble seeing the logic of this.

I know what you mean and many people agree with you. In this case, it’s a rule that was inserted after much debate with playtesters. It will be altered by CGSR but the intent is to avoid a trench-line or bunker suddenly appearing ‘from the sky’ in the midst of a heated firefight. In game terms, your opponent can get an annoying ‘creeping foxhole disease’ effect by digging entrenchments at the edge of his Perimeter during each RePh. These poke the Perimeter out a couple more hexes each time without him having to allocate troops to dig them. We also avoid conscript Company A digging a nice fortification line for Company R’s Assault Engineers...

2.33 This rule says Reserve units must setup > 7 hexes from the nearest enemy-controlled Location or Entry Area, but the 1.4 “In Reserve” definition says ≥ 7 hexes.

A. This is a typo! Yow - it’s pretty much always been ≥ 7.

2.34 The setup cost table does not say what the “In Reserve” cost reduction (if any) is for “HW” units (allowed to setup In Reserve in 2.33), but does list “V” units which are not allowed to setup In Reserve (again, according to 2.33).

No penalty or cost reduction.

2.36 So an Infantry company could start with a 10-2 and a 9-2, or two 6+1s, but on average will have two 8-0s? This table seems way skewed. Better, I would think, to have “sets” of leaders rolled for each x no. of platoons, so that you get a better spread of leader types. An entire CG could be won or lost just on this table!

Once again, a specific design choice to avoid the ‘army’ of 10-2 phenomenon. We’ve had plenty of discussion on this one from the various players and testers. All agreed in the end that this was a tidy way of giving both ‘some’ chance for greatness/terribleness with a strong likelihood of ‘Army Average.’

2.362 The rule refers to the “2.361 table” but in the rules there is no 2.361.

The 2.361, “Leader/Armor Leader Table” is directly above 2.362.

2.37 “Each Leader must set up/enter stacked with a MMC...” So it’s not possible to have a lone leader off doing HIP Radio duty, for instance? Or even more likely, hiding in the back line, ready to rally broken troops who come his way? I grant you that you don’t often want your leaders off by themselves... but sometimes you do.

Good point. I added a line we had discussed previously:[EXC: ... OR a leader in possession of a Radio/Field Phone.] A leader, of course, could ‘drop back’ and ‘hide’ anywhere he wants after entering but he is not going to gain HIP status unless set up on-board.

2.381 Footnote 2, at first glance, appears to directly conflict with the Note at the end of the table, but I assume what you mean is that you may purchase dummy cloaking counters, but you may not purchase dummies and then cloak them, correct?

Correct.

2.42 “Cloaked units must dm all possible SW while cloaked.” This is redundant.

Fixed.

The last sentence — should that read “... may NOT be used as Dummy non-Reserve Cloaking Counters”? If it’s a blanket restriction, than an appropriate note should be added to Footnote 2 of 2.381.

Yes.

2.74 The DRM chart seems to have been duplicated.

My mistake - two different formats for the on-line edition. Fixed.

3.15d) Pin & TI counters will already have been removed by this time (since the player turn ended before the Firefight End dr was made).

Just a reminder for the forgetful.

When are concealment/dummy counters removed?

When dictated by normal concealment loss and during some Redeployment steps. Some are retained.

3.202 A shame if you’re trying to play one of the early PL CGs that has no “reduced-size map” to photocopy!

But these are easy to create yourself, photocopying the map, at least until demand forces me to do it... Requests?

3.21 “Dismounted Armor Leaders may redeploy as infantry to another vehicle and re-mount.” If this is meant to be an exception to the general rule that Armor Leaders may never take counter form, it should be very clearly stated as such! Are ALs redeployed in this manner subject to Casualty Reduction and/or Replacement, and if so, how is that handled?

This is simply an item that many players wanted included. The specific case is to allow him to change out of an immobilized vehicle. In all cases, the Armor Leader shares the fate of his crew, and thus doesn’t need to take counter form.

“(i.e., a truck could move, pick up infantry and move again as during the MPH)” Uh, that would NOT be allowed in the normal MPH rules — a transporting vehicle may not move prior to embarking passengers/riders (D6.4).

A. Hit me! Duh! No, I really have played ASL before. All MPH rules apply to said movement; I’ve changed the last two items to read: “Dismounted Armor Leaders may redeploy with their crew as infantry to another vehicle and re-mount. Infantry may only combine their Redeployment with that of a conveyance by following normal MPH MF/MP restrictions (i.e., a truck could pick up infantry then move as during a MPH).”

3.219 REDEPLOYMENT DRM: I assume the DRM for leadership does not...
apply for a leader moving alone. Unless a Hero.

3.31 OK, so burning buildings become rubble when they are extinguished; but burning rubble becomes Open Ground?!
It is quite linear, eh? But yes is the answer.

3.44 BATTLEFIELD PROMOTION TABLE The drms are listed twice.
Web version - Fixed.

3.46 “Ammunition Shortage DRM apply.” What is an Ammunition Shortage DRM? “Leadership, Inexperience, Captured Use DRM apply.” I assume only for those units stacked with/possessing the weapon in question?

If Ammo shortage is in effect, apply “Ammunition Shortage (A19.131) DRM, “...all B# and Ammunition Depletion numbers are decreased by one during an Ammunition Shortage”, i.e., apply a -1 DRM. Yes.

Leadership can apply to repairing an Immobilised vehicle. Armor Leaders in that vehicle only, or what?
Yes.

“Captured malfunctioned weapons are removed from play.” I assume this is after you have attempted to repair them?
Yes.

3.461. Again, the mysterious Ammo Shortage DRM is invoked. Also, what are the Captured Use and Inexperienced DRMs when applied to Recalled vehicles?
Apply “Ammunition Shortage (A19.131) DRM, “…all B# and Ammunition Depletion numbers are decreased by one during an Ammunition Shortage”, i.e., apply a -1 DRM. Inexperience is +1 (D3.45).

Let’s say you are hellaciously lucky - you capture a King Tiger with a conscript half squad. Then Mr. Sniper lays a shot on your CE conscript Soviet King Tiger crew. You are now Recalled, and subject to A21 Captured Equipment, and will have a hard time rolling ≤ 2 for purposes of 3.461 with all of those + mods (+4)...

3.47 The ELR Change DRM lists “friendly side won last CG Firefight (if possible)”. What does “if possible” mean?!
If there is no related EXC in the CG SR. Some do not allow a Firefight victory.

CG1 Bocage. These rules are nonsense, in that they do not “clarify” the existing Bocage rules, they contradict them! I strongly suggest that you leave well enough alone and let Bocage be handled where it should be handled, in the ASLRB.

E.G.: You say “Units may not claim WA, fire in the FFPh, then drop it before the enemy can return fire in the DFPh.” Yes, they can — that’s what Bocage is all about. You can say that your rules “only apply to PL,” but in reality people who learn your rule will tend to apply it to all their ASL games. And they will be playing it wrong.

First answer - the ‘official’ Bocage rules are a source of a great deal of confusion and contention among ASL players. Since a good number of CH CGs deal with Bocage, we have interviewed a number of veterans of hedgerow fighting, including William “L” Rod Petty of Pointe du Hoc fame and Bob Murphy, 82nd combat vet and the author of the new CH book, “No Better Place to Die”.
The result of this work was to represent two types of fire from behind Bocage - sustained (full FP) fire, such as represented by Prep/Defensive Fire, and Advancing Fire, which is handled with its own restrictions and in the main represents a shorter burst of fire after moving (½ FP). The vets are clear on these points: Could an enemy machine-gun open up, place effective fire, then disappear before return fire could be brought to bear? Yes to effective fire, but not sustained. Bob Murphy is adamant that the 57mm gun simply “could not” even be concealed behind Bocage.

Note the rule only applies to units marked with a Prep Fire/Final Fire marker. There are plenty of ways that short, surprise bursts of fire are simulated within the ASL rules-set; we have chosen not to represent that HMG that gets ‘hot’ and fires burst after burst (>1 ROF) as capable of avoiding any return fire. Now you can make a choice if you get ROF with a MG; stay and continue to lay in the fire or avoid the risk of placing a Prep Fire marker by skipping that next shot.
It still simulates the function of “time” spent firing on the enemy as same relates to the ability of said enemy to pick out the location of the firer and respond with effective fire. As for “that’s what Bocage is all about” I do not know if Bob McNamara or Don Greenwood wrote that rule; we’ll check with them!

CG4 OBA. I think this makes OBA purchases too much of an “easy” option (“it can’t go wrong!”) but I won’t dispute it too much.
Artillery was the ‘big killer’ and is under-represented in ASL as such. This rules section was largely provided by the input of Jim Thompson, 254th Regiment, a Master Gunnery Sergeant and you can read more from Jim in his article “Steel Rain” in CH Volume 4 No. 1.
The CG effect of this rule is terrific - as the owner of a module, you know that there’s always some chance of getting a mission, although the odds can turn against you steeply with red draws. As an opponent, you can never be sure that more shells won’t come down. The Grainfield is never safe. The vets are clear on these points: Could a HMG get ‘hot’ and fires burst after burst (≥1 ROF) as capable of avoiding any return fire. Now you can make a choice if you get ROF with a MG; stay and continue to lay in the fire or avoid the risk of placing a Prep Fire marker by skipping that next shot.

THE TRENCHES
COMPATIBILITY ISSUES

People have asked about PL2.5 as being “fully backward compatible”. They want to play some of the very first PL CGs that were designed with PL1.0. PL2.0 changed a lot of the “nomenclature” (for lack of a better word). For example, concepts like MLR aren’t around in PL1.0. So can the PL1.0 CGs still be played with this new version?

This from the CH clarifications page:

Use Redeployment option B.
All reference to Battle Hardening (1.6114) should now refer to Battlefield Promotion (3.44)

SSR are now FSR
CPP are now CP
FFP are now FP
PL CG SSR = CG SR

“Scenario” is now referred to as “Firefight”
determine leaders as per 2.36

Each of these is blocked. Remember that the rule of thumb on all of these LOS questions is common sense - of course you can fire from N3 to N5 but L4 to N4 is clearly intentionally blocked.

The same rule says that stray building parts deny Bypass along their hexsides. This is clearly logical for the building that the stray part belongs to. But may a unit Bypass the obstacle that does NOT cross the hexside? For example: Can a unit move from L5 to M7 by Bypassing the L6 building along the L6/M6 hexside? - From I10 to K10 along the J9/J10 hexside?

In both cases infantry could, but a vehicle could not.

Can a unit perform “Rowhouse bypass” by way of a vertex which is covered by the building-depiction/black-bar, such as: - Vertex N7/O7/O8? - Vertex Y7, where the black bar doesn’t extend past the vertex.

If LOS traced along the hexspine of a stray part is not blocked (per the above question), does the presence of a black bar cause it to become blocked? For example: - Is there LOS from P19 to R19?

No.

Is hex A8 a building hex or merely a stray part?
Not a building hex.

Is hex R16 a building hex or merely a stray part?
This hex was actually an error on my part during a late stage of the game. It should have been a building hex, but as depicted is not.
On the weekend of 18th June (Waterloo Day!), a rather remarkable meeting was held in Wybunbury, Cheshire. Mad Vet Con was the brainchild of Iain McKay, the antipodean Mad Vet himself, encouraged by the success of the Gold Beach extravaganza organised last year by Dave Schofield. Once again, a number of the top players in the country assembled for a weekend spent playing the sort of monster Campaign Games that most of us have neither the time or the space for.

One group plunged into “Squeezing Peiper’s Bulge”, the monster CG published in VFTT24 which utilises all five of the KGP map sheets. The group was extremely well prepared and launched straight into the play (moral: if you are going to play a CG at a Conference, do all the preparation you can before the event, even up to purchases and set-up plans. Otherwise, you will end up wasting valuable meeting time with your head in the rulebook! Besides, it is much more fun to ponder strategies and tactics at leisure before the Wind Change DR rather than in a panic once play has started!).

The other two groups played CG3 from Scotland The Brave II, both played with the luxury of photo-enlarged maps (40% increase, yielding RB-size hexes accommodating two half inch stacks). Each involved three players a side, which is comfortable so long as all three were ready to work hard. The two games were remarkably different: one was a close run thing, very close to the historical event; while the other was a totally historical German walkover. Guess which one the designer of the game played, as the British!

Three pieces of advice for CG designers:
ONE: avoid playing your own work in public. It can be embarrassing.
TWO: avoid even being present when they are being played. You see, people will inevitably turn to you with rules queries. Anyone else present who has read the CG rules will probably give the right answer, whereas the designer will remember all the different rules he experimented with… and half the time will not for the life of him remember which treatment he settled for!

And THREE, if you absolutely have to be there and playing (and to be honest, it is very rewarding to witness your creation being played out on a seven foot long map), try using alcohol to make them think your inability to respond is purely temporary. Fortunately, the three British players on the losing side of our CG had all come most appropriately equipped with bottles of very fine malt whisky.

The counters were to give players who only own WOA and BV enough to play the CG. They cover quite a variety, Red Devils squads, leaders and SW, same for the Germans, various terrain markers, control markers, Random Event Markers [could be handy]; the Cleared Fire-Zones and Japanese Control Markers are for TRBH.

Anyway, play A:TTB and let me know what you think. A lot of folks have already had a lot of fun with those 8 scenarios and the CG...
When our resident Aussie vet, Mad Vet Iain Mckay announced he was going to play host to a group of ASLers in his local village so we could attempt to play the monster KGP 'CG V Squeezing Peiper’s Bulge’, I jumped at the chance.

Produced by Australia’s Paddington Bears and reprinted in VFTT24, this is a 4 CG-Date CG running from 20PM to 21PM, which links all three of the KGP map groups to form one massive CG. Although the action on the three map groups is pretty independent, there is scope for units to move between map groups, and for the German side their reinforcements are purchased from a central CPP pool and allocated to each map group as the German players see fit.

The players for each side were allocated by Iain himself, and I found myself as the American player on the Cheneux map, up against Paul Case. I’ve played against Paul a number of times before, and our usual modus operandi is to get some beers in and then decide on a scenario to play - needless to say our games tend to be about enjoying ourselves rather than winning at all costs!

To clear Cheneux I was given three platoons of paras, a captured SPW251/9, and 24 CPP to augment that. I used the CPP to buy another two platoons of paras, a jeep section and an M36 GMC. My plan for 20PM was to purchase some Recon, which enabled me to discover the contents of his forward stacks - two stacks consisting of a pair of squads with LMGs, a third stack of two HS manning a HMG and a MMG, and two more stacks consisting of a squad with a PSK. With both sides lined up facing each other two hexes apart (and unable to see each other due to the NVR of 1!), it looked like a scene from an ancient battle.

The first turn consisted of the Germans placing a concealment counter on one of their vehicles which was out of my LOS, and my paras moving into position to launch their attack.

As the first paras Assault Moved adjacent to the Germans they were met by a 16FP +1 attack which broke both squads and their leader, a situation that was to be repeated for almost every other stack that moved adjacent. By the time he had finished his Defensive Final Fires I had just one unbroken squad out of 12 that had closed to contact with the enemy. It’s not often I claim I was diced, but this was one of those moments, when every roll he made seemed to be under 6 and every roll I made over 8. Things were marginally better in the north-west corner of the village, but with half of my attacking force gone in the first moments I knew I faced an uphill struggle to force the SS out of the stone buildings they occupied.

And that was the case. Rally attempts failed abysmally, many not even being low enough to remove DM. Only the timely arrival of the third reinforcement platoon on the front-line that stopped the Germans from recapturing one or two of the houses they had lost in the earlier CG-Date. A brief surge from a Fanatic squad in the north-west corner of the village allowed me to take a few of these buildings and eliminate several of the Flak trucks he had, but every approach to the other buildings was repulsed. Then I inadvertently moved into LOS of his reserve squads and activated five squads and a 10-2 which led a counter-attack to recapture much of the north-west corner of the village.

As the game was drawing to an end, my luck briefly changed. A squad and an HS man...

The early action at Cheneux. My ‘Amsterdam Special’ OBA cards are not quite visible, but went down quite well with everyone - shame neither me or Paul used any OBA in our CG-Dates!!

Trev Edwards (left) and Paul Sanderson come to grips with the battle for La Gleize. The sound of battle could frequently be heard in Cheneux!
aged to get into the victory building occupied by his MMG and HMG HS and 8-1 who were all CX. I Ambushed him, and split my attacks, the squad attacking the leader and HS with the HMG, my HS attacking his other HS with the MMG. I promptly rolled snake-eyes with the squad, creating an 8-1, and then eliminate the other HS without loss. I now controlled the additional building I needed to win the CG-Date. Unfortunately I was surrounded by German units.

However my luck continued to hold out during his turn. His first Prep Fire managed to break the 8-1 and the HS, but the squad rolled a snake-eyes, went Fanatic and created a Hero. His next shot encircled the stack, eliminating the leader and HS, but the Hero and squad both rolled snake-eyes, and the HoB roll created yet ANOTHER Hero, this one Fanatic coming from a Fanatic squad! They then proceeded to Break the 10-2 as he moved adjacent, which led to the three SS squads moving with him failing their LLTC, and for their Defensive Final Fire they broke another couple of squads for good measure. Despite this he was still able to bring three squads and a Heroic 8-1 in for CC, and he just managed to Ambush me. With a 2-1 and a -3 DRM it was no surprise that my troops were eliminated, and at that point we ended the CG-Date.

It had taken me and Paul eight hours to finish the CG-Date as the date had gone on the longest. By now it was gone 5pm and we had to be out of the hall within the hour, so we only had time to had a brief discussion about the prospects for each side in the next CG-Date. Despite my horrendous losses, I was still able to bring three squads and a Heroic 8-1 in for CC, and he just managed to Ambush me. With a 2-1 and a -3 DRM it was no surprise that my troops were eliminated, and at that point we ended the CG-Date.

The first weekend in July saw the first WESTWALL ASL tournament in Germany. The venue was the youth hostel in Saarbrücken. My regular opponent, Dominic McGrath, and I had travelled out from Heathrow mid-morning on Thursday for Frankfurt, hoping to make a quick rail connection to the Saarbrücken about 200 km away. Times must have changed in Germany however as the first train was cancelled and the next two we travelled on ran late. We finally arrived at the venue around 6.30 pm to find around 20 gamers already getting into the dice action.

On the Thursday night I played a warm-up game of ‘SP11 Pomeranian Tigers’ with Michael Maus. My Russians got lucky with the 57L taking out the three lighter tanks very early in the game and seeing off 1.5 squads. My Russian infantry proved too tough for their German opponents and Michael conceded with a couple of turns to go as he clearly would not exit 40 VP.

First game of the tournament proper was ‘ASLN 58 Nemesis’. This was an unusual scenario design by Ian Daglish as it is set in East Sussex but in truth there is nowhere for the Belgium defenders to hide from the truly massive German firepower which covers the crossing. This scenario is a true dog - avoid it like the plague. At that stage I was well out of the running and just playing for fun.

Friday afternoon was a Critical Hit scenario ‘Long Minutes’ involving a crossing of the board 22 canal on rafts. My opponent Philippe Braiaux played an excellent game as the German but in truth there is nowhere for the Belgium defenders to hide from the truly massive German firepower which covers the crossing. This scenario is a true dog - avoid it like the plague. At that stage I was well out of the running and just playing for fun.

My Saturday afternoon game was a second playing of ‘Pomeranian Tigers’, this time against Frenchman Jean- Pierre Cellufa. I again had the Russian but this time gave up the balance (add two 54s to the German OOB). I think we both had a great time playing this despite the fact that Jean spoke only a little English and found my Scottish accent virtually incomprehensible.

The game was very tight and after losing a STUG early to a known AT mine Jean played extremely well and should have won. However on the last turn he became fixated on trying to eliminate the last JSII rather than running his infantry off-board. This backfired as he rolled about 4 consecutive 6s on PF checks. When he did get one he rolled boxcars on the effects roll and doubles on the random selection for the casualty reduction (a leader directed the fire)! He then followed this up with a boxcars on his CC attack vs the JSII. This resulted in the Germans only getting 34 of the 40 points needed of-board and my Russian picking up a somewhat lucky win.

Final game of the Saturday was a match of Schwerepunkt’s ‘Raiders at Regi’ vs Francois Boudrengren. This came down to a Japanese half-squad ambushing a marine unit on the last turn and withdrawing into the victory area to claim the win.

While I was just scrapping by with a pretty even win/loss record Dominic had recorded three wins in the first three rounds. However on the Saturday afternoon he lost in ‘Death Knell at Kalach’ to Christain Koppemeyer, one of only two other 3-0 players. However with one round to play on Sunday he was still in with a shout of a minor placing.

My Sunday morning game was against Ray Wolosyn who I had previous met at tournaments in the UK (BERSERK!) and Copenhagen. Our previous game had been very tight (Ray effectively winning on the last DR) but Ray comprehensively beat me in ‘Broich Bash’ this time around as my American attack developed too slowly for fear of being gunned down before reaching the board 24 village.

4-3 for the weekend was ok but my report card says ‘should have done better’!

Back at the part of the tournament where win/loss record was going to make a difference to who got to take the silverware home, Dominic had beaten Peter Ladwein in ‘Broich Bash’, while Christain Koppemeyer had lost to Philippe Braiaux in the same scenario. This meant three players finished the tournament with 4-1 records. The organisers went into enclave behind closed doors to analyse the records of the opponents of these three, and after an appropriate interval announced the results.

1st Dominic McGrath
2nd Christain Koppemeyer
3rd Philippe Braiaux

A warm congratulations to the organisers Peter Ladwein, Christain Spies and Stephan Jakobi for hosting an excellent event. Thanks also to everyone else for making two Brits feel welcome, and particularly for making a great effort to speak in English!
It seems like only yesterday when I read those words “A shot disturbs the eerie silence of a deserted city street...” Seconds later the sharp staccato retort of a Russian machinegun concludes with the assertiveness of death itself that this time Kruger was wrong.”

When I read those words as a fifteen-year-old boy I was hooked. It’s hard to believe that I first set up ‘The Guards Counter Attack’ twenty years ago. Enough reminiscing. The list is not complete, as I have not covered scenarios from third parties: all remain unconverted to the best of my knowledge.

Where are they now...?

Mark S Walz

**SQUAD LEADER**

1. The Guards Counterattack Published as ASL Scenario A
2. The Tractor Wrots Published as ASL Scenario B
3. The Streets of Stalingrad Published as ASL Scenario C
4. The Hedges of Plesk Published as ASL Scenario D
5. Hill 621 Published as ASL Scenario E
6. Escape From Valkyrie Luki Published as ASL Scenario F
7. Bucholz Stadium Published as ASL Scenario G
8. The Bitchie Sallent. Published as ASL Scenario H
9. The Cannes Strong Point Published as ASL Scenario I
10. Hindrow on the Rhine Published as ASL Scenario J
11. The St. Goar Assault Published as ASL Scenario K
12. The Road to Wittz Published as ASL Scenario L

**CROSS OF IRON**

13. The Capture of Balta Published as ASL Scenario M
14. The Paw of the Tiger Published as ASL Scenario N
15. Hube’s Pocket Published as ASL Scenario O
16. Sowech 79 Published as ASL Scenario P
17. Debarcle at Korosten Published as ASL Scenario Q
18. The Defense of Luga Published as ASL Scenario R
19. A Winter Melon Published as ASL Scenario S
20. Breakout from Brestiowo Published as ASL Scenario T

**CRESCENDO OF DOOM**

21. Battle For the Warta Line Published in VFTT7
22. The Borders are Burning Published as ASL Scenario U
23. Silent Death Published as ASL Scenario V
24. Action at Balberkamp Published as ASL Scenario W
25. Resistance at Chabretz Published as ASL Scenario X
26. Assault on a Queen Published as ASL Scenario Y
27. The Dinant Bridgehead Published as ASL Scenario Z
28. Counter Stroke at Stonne Published as ASL Scenario AA
29. In Rommel’s Wake Published as ASL Scenario AB
30. Ad Hoc at Bourains Published as ASL Scenario AC
31. Chateau de Quensay Published as ASL Scenario AD
32. Rehearsal for Crete Published as ASL Scenario AE

**GE: ANVIL OF VICTORY**

33. A Related Christmas Published in VFTT7
34. Clamor at the Neumagen Bridge Published as ASL Scenario AF
35. The French Decide to Fight Published as ASL Scenario AG
36. Weisshoffen Crossroads Published as ASL Scenario AH
37. Medal of Honor Published as ASL Scenario AI
38. The Factory Published as ASL Scenario AJ
39. Sweep for the Borjoi Team Bridge Published as ASL Scenario AK
40. The Domot Watermark Published as ASL Scenario AL
41. Swatting at Tigers Published as ASL Scenario AM
42. Bridgehead on the Rhine Published as ASL Scenario AN
43. Action at Komserschish Published as ASL Scenario AO
44. Prelude to Breakout Published as ASL Scenario AP
45. Hide and Seek Published as ASL Scenario AQ
46. Operation Varsity Published as ASL Scenario AR
47. Encircing the Ruhr Published as ASL Scenario AS

**SERIES 100**

101. Blocking Action at Lipiki Published as ASL Scenario AT
102. Slammimg the Door Published as ASL Scenario AU
103. Bold Hill Published as ASL Scenario AV
104. The Penetration of Rostov Published as ASL Scenario AW
105. Night Battle at Novoaryszewka Published as ASL Scenario AX
106. Beached at Onzeryskaja Bay Published as ASL Scenario AY
107. Disaster on the Dnieper Loop Published as ASL Scenario AZ
108. Block Busting in Bokshak Published as ASL Scenario BA
109. Counterattack on the Vistula Published as ASL Scenario BB
110. The Agony of Doom Published as ASL Scenario BC

**SERIES 200**

201. Sacrifice of Polish Armour Published as ASL Scenario DD
202. Under Cover of Darkness Published as ASL Scenario DE
203. Bitter Defense of Otta Published as ASL Scenario DF
204. Chance D’Une Affaire Published as ASL Scenario DG
205. Last Defense Line Published as ASL Scenario DH
206. Fighting at the Worlds Edge Published as ASL Scenario DJ
207. The French Perimeter Published as ASL Scenario DK
208. Road to Koszau Pass Published as ASL Scenario DL

209. The Akoirii Peninsula Defense Published as ASL Scenario DM
210. Commando Raid at Dieppe Published as ASL Scenario DN

**ROGUE SERIES**

211. Aud Land Syn Published as ASL Scenario DO
212. On the Road to Andalsune Published as ASL Scenario DP
213. Traverse Right... Far! Published as ASL Scenario DQ
214. The Front in Flames Published as ASL Scenario DR
215. Handy Padding Published as ASL Scenario DS
216. A Small Town in Germany Published as ASL Scenario DT
217. The Whitewind Published as ASL Scenario DU
218. Operation Switch Back Published as ASL Scenario DV
219. Schenfl Fortress South Published as ASL Scenario DW
220. Clearing the Breskins Pocket Published as ASL Scenario DX
221. Vitality I Published as ASL Scenario DY
222. Infatiate II Published as ASL Scenario DZ
223. Night Drop Published as ASL Scenario EA

**SERIES 300**

300. Trial by Combat Published as ASL Scenario EB
301. The Clearing Published as ASL Scenario EC
302. Stand Fast Published as ASL Scenario ED
303. Thrust and Pony Published as ASL Scenario EE
304. Repose Published as ASL Scenario EF
305. The Duel Published as ASL Scenario EG
306. The Rag Tag Circus Published as ASL Scenario EH
307. Point D’ Appui Published as ASL Scenario EI
308. Has Sur Nerd Published as ASL Scenario EJ
309. The Roer Bridgehead Published as ASL Scenario EL

**THE GENERAL**

A. Burzave Published as ASL Scenario EM
B. Hill 253.5 Published as ASL Scenario EN
C. The Birkin Bridgehead Published as ASL Scenario EO
D. Delaying Action Published as ASL Scenario EP
E. The Niemci-Biurcyi Highway Published as ASL Scenario ER
F. The Poperinghe Exit Published as ASL Scenario ES
G. Devil’s Hill Published as ASL Scenario ET
H. The Attempt to Relieve Peiper Published as ASL Scenario EU
I. Hunters From the Sky Published as ASL Scenario EV
J. Semper Paratus Awaiting Conversion Published as ASL Scenario EW
K. Fast Hess Published as ASL Scenario EX
L. The Long Road Published as ASL Scenario EY
M. The Dead of Winter Published as ASL Scenario EZ
N. Faugh a’ Ballagh Published as ASL Scenario FA
P. Aachen’s Pall Published as ASL Scenario FB
Q. Gambit Published as ASL Scenario FC
T1. First Crisis at Army Group North Published as ASL Scenario FD
T2. Pavlov’s House Published as ASL Scenario FE
T3. Land Levitians Published as ASL Scenario FF
T4. Soldiers of Destruction Published as ASL Scenario FG

**View From**
The interrogation rules (E2.) are a really neat section! It makes capture of enemy units an actually worthwhile goal. Personally, I recommend that players agree to use this section before each game. Players should keep in mind that this section usually helps the Attacker—so the Defender may need the Balance to even things out. Further, if a scenario hinges (for the Defender) on just a few units or just a couple of HIP Guns/AFV, then players may want to add an additional +1 DRM for playability/balance. Since I play for fun, I don’t worry about it too much—I use the section and take my chances and my lumps. It will often change your playing style...

THE BASICS

Let’s start with a layman’s description of this section.

Basically, a captor can immediately interrogate a just-captured or just-surrendered enemy Personnel unit [Personnel are all SMC and MMC counters, including those mounted as Cavalry or Passengers/Riders, but excluding inherent crews since they are not in counter form], or if SSR allow Civilian Interrogation then a Wind Change DR of 3 [in hostile/neutral country] or 4 [in friendly country] can help the ATTACKER [player whose Player-Turn it is currently] out.

Just make a DR (dr for Civilian Interrogation [CI]), check and add any applicable DRM, and if you get a 5 (6 for CI) or less you have learned something! Easy, yes? Yes!

A few caveats:

If you get a result that is NA (such a revelation of HIP Attackers), just use the next-higher DR result.

Multi-hex Fortifications get revealed in their entirety if even just one hex is revealed by Interrogation.

Civilian Interrogation still applies even if there is no ATTACKER’s Sniper Counter currently on-map (though what happens if there are no ATTACKER’s units on-map at the time??? Common Sense says to ignore the Civilian Interrogation...).

Units/fortifications can only be revealed if they are both within 8 hexes and are in LOS of the Interrogated unit; though for LOS purposes, that Interrogated unit can be assumed to be in any Location within it’s current hex that it could reach in the next MPh (and no, it does not have to move to that Location in the next MPh!). Note: this rule (E2.3) only specifically applies to Interrogation as opposed to Civilian Interrogation. Oversight? Maybe...

SMC are almost useless to Interrogate since they by definition (A1.11) are Elite (EXC: Partisan SMC, per MMP Q&A) and will thus have an automatic +2 DRM.

POSSIBLE HOUSE RULES

Interrogating unit(s) immediately become TI until the next CCPb (so counter is not removed at the end of this CCPb if Interrogation was done during a CCPb; i.e., capturing an enemy unit in CC and then immediately Interrogating it means the Interrogating unit will be TI during the entire next Player-Turn).

Wounded SMC prisoner receives a -1 DRM
Broken prisoner units receive a -1 DRM
DM prisoner units receive a -1 DRM
Surrendering units receive a -1 DRM
Disrupted units receive a -1 DRM
Interrogating unit is Squad/Crew — +2 DRM (hey, these guys aren’t trained in interrogation! On the other hand, crews “represents picked men who are the best of their company.”)
Interrogating unit is HS — +3 DRM (same, but fewer skills to draw on)
Interrogating unit is SMC — add his/her leadership modifier

Any Final Results DR of 7 is “False Information. Units being informed are TI” (and CX if using the “Interrogating units become TI” house rule).

Rule E2.3 is applied to Civilian Interrogation as well, but is applied as if to a theoretical captured Defender’s unit in the same hex as the “informed” Attacker unit. I strongly recommend using this House Rule (HR)...

Civilian Interrogation is NA unless there are ATTACKER Player’s units on-map. Again, this really should be a rule...
Finally, to re-introduce uncertainty, change the results as follows:

“Concealed Unit(s) Revealed” now means that only the size (Squad/HS/Crew/SMC) and number of SW (but not specifics on type) are verbally revealed [alternatively, unit and specific SW are temporarily revealed].

“HIP Unit(s) Revealed” now means that the player must point out a hex that either has a HIP unit in or adjacent to that hex. Note that the HIP unit is not placed on map at this time (nor is unit type [½” or 5/8”) revealed).

“Hidden Fortification(s) Revealed” now means that the player must point out a hex that either has a Fortification in or adjacent to that hex, and must state whether it is part of a multi-hex Fortification System, as well as stating what general type of Fortification it is (Cave, Entrenchment, Minefield, Panji, Pillbox, Roadblock, Tetrahedron, Wire—but not revealing any other information, nor placing any Fort. counters on the map at this time).

Interrogator is not allowed to make notes or place counters of any kind...
Got a goooooood memory???

Ω

BREAKING BAMBOO

Shaun Carter and Charles Markuss

Given mine and Charles’ reputation for producing ‘heavy metal’ tank scenarios (as the amount of good-natured stick I get at ASL tournaments will easily attest to) we have felt for some time now we had something of a point to prove – that we could design a scenario without any AFV’s! Broken Bamboo, from the newly-released Action Pack 2, allowed us to fulfil that goal.

Some time ago Carl Fago, scenario co-ordinator for MMP, mentioned to us that there was a new ‘dry river bed’ board in the pipeline. While on a research trip to the Public Record Office at Kew, England, I came across a reference to a chaung (dry river bed) in the description of a Chindit action involving Gurkhas and Japanese. Thus the germ of an idea was born.

The Chindits are a good source of possible scenarios in that their operations are well documented, particularly by Brigadier ‘Mad’ Mike Calvert - a brigade commander who wrote extensively on the subject. They cover a wide range of infantry battles in the Burma theatre.

The basic proposition of the scenario is typical PTO with Allied troops versus tenacious, well dug in, Japanese defenders. The challenge was to design something that was just a little different.

I have to admit my own personal perceptions of how Japanese troops behave in battle has probably been too strongly influenced by a literal reading of the ASL rules; they fight and die in place. However the description of this particular action clearly states that the Japanese troops broke and ran. So how best to simulate this result? I have to thank my good friend Iain ‘Mad Vet’ Mackay for suggesting the use of Japanese half squads in this instance. This way they are vulnerable to CC and will break when failing an MC.

The Gurkhas were easier to define: although they are described as having lost their temper, I reasoned that the berserk rules would cover this situation better than using any SSR to simulate their mental state.

A surprise discovery on my part was in the Chindit weaponry used. I had seen references to the use of flame-throwers. Until I read the war diary of the First Battalion, Staffordshire Regiment, which itemised 24 refuelling cells for man-pack flame-throwers.

I did not realise that they were part of the establishment of each battalion. Given the fact that Chindits were light infantry whose machine guns and mortars were the main sources of firepower it is not surprising that they were supplemented by the use of portable man-pack flame-throwers.

In the scenario they are very useful for dealing with the Japanese bunkers. The mortars gives the Allied player extra firepower and the ability to use smoke at a distance - something which should be part of any ASL player’s armoury.

The Japanese player has the benefits of terrain, concealment and fortification to bolster his defence. We’ll let others pass comment on how best to play it. We are both great believers in letting people find out for themselves.

The victory conditions are based upon control of the buildings on mapboard 47 to represent the importance of the stated objective in capturing the village.

I’d like to thank Phillippe Leonard for providing me with a draft copy of the mapboard for design and play-test purposes. We hope you enjoy playing it.

Bibliography

Fighting Mad, Mike Calvert. Airlife London 1996, p 150-154
Prisoners of Hope, Mike Calvert. Jonathan Cape London, p 67-69

Ω
Beckers Battery

There is a plethora of weird and wonderful German AFVS in ASL. The GSW 39H(f) and GSW 39H(f)Pak designed by Major Becker are amongst some of the more effective examples, hence their inclusion here. Rather than being mechanical lost causes both were cost effective conversions mounting the powerful Pak 40 L/70 75mm anti tank gun and 105 mm howitzer on French AFV chassis’. Their claim to fame in the anti tank role comes from their effectiveness in helping to prevent a tank breakout in ‘Operation Goodwood’. Contrary to the claims of Mr Barker in the Imperial War Museum Review issue 10, I find it hard to believe that the defending German forces did not take any casualties from the advancing British tanks, 3RTR being one of the most experienced armoured regiments in the British army of the time. Unfortunately the lack of German strength returns is a problem in corroborating this argument.

This tank versus tank encounter is an attempt to give a realistic feel to the use of mass armoured tactics of the period. It puts the British player in the driving seat, seeking to exit his AFVs off the southern board edge of the playing area. A full squadron of British tanks in represented, as is a battery of German guns. It would be good if those nice people at MMP Hill would give us a decent number of Sherman and Churchill counters to pit against all those Panthers and Panzer IV’s which have become available due to the success of KGP. The addition of rubble to the scenario is at the request of playtesters and nicely represents the aerial bombardment prior to the assault.

Dickie’s Bridge

Before you exclaim “not another Normandy scenario!”, the design rationale for this one is to show the use of armoured cars in a more realistic light i.e. trying to avoid combat and penetrate behind enemy lines. Given the extensive coverage of the action provided by Alexander McKee and the regimental history of the Second Household Cavalry Regiment, finding the background was a fairly straightforward task.

Snipers are omitted for the sake of play balance as they can be regarded as having a disproportionate effect in such a small scenario. In effect this action is a sequence of encounters between the rapidly moving armoured cars and variety of German opposition.

Your objective as the British player is to bypass enemy forces using speed and not to fight them. Thus the victory conditions of getting to the bridge. Any delay in Allied movement is penalised by the arrival of German reinforcements emphasising their ability to respond quickly to Allied attacks.

The German forces are deliberately handicapped to reflect the omnipresent allied air power. German AFVs moving in daylight were subject to constant Allied artillery and aerial bombardment, something that our cardboard heroes in ASL are rarely subject to. This is the rationale behind the SSR regarding the movement of the Panther.

We would like to thank everyone who has helped with playtesting without which these ideas would be stillborn. To mention just a few Andrew Saunders, Ian Brown, Nigel Ashcroft, Brian Hooper, Pete Kettlewell, Nick Edelsten, Bob Eburne and Steve Crowley. Not to forget David Schofield’s proof reading contributions. Apologies for any omissions you can always seek redress at the next UK tournament when I’m looking for more volunteers.

A footnote: change to ‘CH95 Shambles’

We’ve discovered that the Canadians did not have the normal equipment during this scenario (published in CH Vol 5 No 1), so we suggest the following (little tiny) changes:

- Delete the Sherman Fireflies
- Increase the number of Sherman V(a) from 15 to 19
- Increase the number of Achilles from 1 to 4
- “Shermans? Yeah, I got a few more out back. How many ya need?”

DC PRIMER

Martin Moser

The following is probably not of much use for the more experienced players around, but as there are always some newbies (like me) lurking in the shadows, I thought I post this.

Below is something like a Quick Reference Data Card for Demo Charge attacks some of you might find helpful the first 2-3 times you come across scenarios with DCs in them. It is basically the memos I took from the RB when preparing for a scenario with DCs. They do not save you the time to read the rules proper but afterwards can save playing time and avoid mistakes in the heat of battle when it comes to actually try and place those things (something I always seem to fail to do, being KIAed, broken or pinned in the process sooner or later). Also remember I left out the Thrown, vs AFV and Set DC rules here. I am just aiming for the very basic DC usage for the time being. If anybody finds any mistakes below, please point them out to me so I can correct the list below. Hope this helps some guys out there struggling with their first couple of scenarios.

30FP in AFPh, 15FP against Concealment no Leader modifiers, Defender TEM applies, CX placing unit adds +1 to attack DR

User must be Elite, otherwise the captured SW X# penalty (A21.11) applies

Expend MF necessary to enter target hex to place DC; move is considered to take place in hex occupied by the placing unit, so defensive fire is PBF, not TPBF

Placement vs. AFV: PAATC is necessary DC is operably placed if placing unit survives all DFF, SFF & FPF (i.e. does not break or get pinned) up to the time of the MF expenditure necessary for placement inclusive (any MC/PTC failed thereafter has no effect on the DC placement)

Original attack DR (in AFPh) = 12: malfunction, remove DC

Rubble Creation: Original attack DR = KIA: if subsequent dr (+1 drm for stone building) ≤ KIA#: rubbles level and all above (B24.11)

Falling rubble (upper level buildings): new DR: colored dr (+1 per rubble level above ground level) ≥ 7: rubble falls in direction of white dr (chain reaction possible, B24.121)

Flame Creation: Original DR = KIA result on IFT (check Rubble Creation first, if rubble is created, flame is NA (B25.131)), NA if caused rubble): new DR + EC DRM ≥ Kindling # = Flame
The purpose of the Dance of Death is to gain a favourable target facing on an otherwise-impervious opponent. The idea is to get the other guy to burn off his cover-arc changes as you zip around his hapless pin-wheeling AFV. Tank Destroyers are particularly vulnerable to this as they don’t have the option of pivoting a turret and suffer terrible VCA change DRMs. Blowing right through his hex induces maximum CA changes; for some reason a lot of ASLers are reluctant to do this, perhaps because they don’t realise it’s legal.

For the DoD to work you need to start fairly close and have a pretty swift vehicle, preferably more than one. Gyro-stabilized HVS Shermans are the ultimate DoD tool. The key is to draw his fire with unfavourable modifiers, and hold your own until you are guaranteed a side or rear shot on hull or turret, preferably both. It is not a sure thing, and on a bad day might cost you a couple of tanks with nothing to show for it. It is also not recommended if the opposing vehicle has some support. But, when you pull it off, it is most glorious. In addition to removing a key enemy piece, you have dazzled your opponent with your deft manoeuvring and mastery of the game, thereby seizing the psychological high ground.

The Dance of Death in action

The following is an example from a recent game of ‘Acts of Defiance’ when I had the Russians. I have only shown the units involved; the German actions look like this. 25 (CA AA5/AA6) BU JagdPanzer IV/70 CC4 (CA CC4/DD4 T44 w/malf MA DD8 (CA CC8/DD7) T44 V8 (CA V7/W8) T44

DD8 T44: goes CE, moves CC8, BB7, AA7. Stops.
   TD changes VCA one hexside and fires BMG at CE crew, NE.

W8 T44: Start, go CE, W8, X7, X6/Bypass Y7, Stop.
   TD turns again, fires MA, misses (+4 VCA change, +2 Moving target, +1 BU, -1 PB: +6 TH DRM, needed a four).

Start, Y6, Z5, AA5 (TCA Z6), Stop
   TD turns counter-clockwise two hexsides, Intensive Fires, misses, marked w/No Fire (+4 VCA change, +2 Moving target, +1 BU, +2 IF, -1 PB, -1 Acq: +6 TH DRM, needed a four).

Start, turn VCA two hexsides counter-clockwise, ESBs for two MP - successful, Z5, Y6 (TCA AA6), Stop, Fire

Being a clever sleaze artist and known maximiser of idiosyncratic Special Ammo rules, I chose APCR (depletion of 6) - rolled seven, no APCR! Agh! (+4 BFF, +1 target size, -2 PB: +3, needed a 7).

AP, roll a 10, miss, cannot IF as I do not have any MPs remaining.

Now this story should have had a happy ending, if I had just used AP on the first attempt; I didn’t need the APCR since I had a butt shot, but figured the extra roll offered by the special ammo increased my chances for a hit. Ah well, got too clever by half and it bit me in the ass. Fortunately God is a Bolshie, so my 9-1and a 458 were able to slip up to the TD and kill it via Street Fighting in the ensuing CCPh. So there is justice after all.

Try the DoD sometime when the opportunity presents itself.
In any scenario in which you get AT mines, the question is should you place them all together or spread out?

Let’s look at some numbers based on attacking minefields. There is a 16.7% chance that a 1 factor minefield will attack you on entry (either immobilising or killing you; B28.52). There is a 30.6% chance it will get you when you run through (enter and exit) the location, as there is a 5/6 chance it won’t get you when entering and a 5/6 it won’t get you when exiting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AT factors per location</th>
<th>% KIA/or Immob. achieved</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now if you run through more than one 1 factor mine locations:

- 2 level 1 factor locations: 51.7%
- 3 level 1 factor locations: 66.5%
- 4 level 1 factor locations: 76.7%
- 5 level 1 factor locations: 83.8% chance that you will be immobilised/KIA.

That means that four attacks from 1 factor AT mines (2 locations entered and exited) are slightly inferior to entering and exiting a 2 factor AT minefield location. You lose more to higher level locations, e.g. entering/exiting five 1 factor AT Locations has a 83.8 % chance to bag a tank, while a 5 factor hex gets you 97.2 % of the time.

The problem with minefields is that once your opponent rolls, you know you are in a minefield, thus you will tend not enter again. If your opponent rolls high you do not know about the strength.

My advice would be to put out 1 AT mine fields, both in this scenario and in general. Most players, when they drive into a minefield, tend to avoid it in the future and not try to rush through it, and would not do so even if they knew it was 1 mine factor. The 30% chance is usually just too great.

In a scenario with the bottlenecks it is of course great to make bigger AT mine hexes to get the first vehicle that enter, otherwise, laying out 1 factor minefields will make the opponent very nervous, as you check more often.

Also, if possible, try putting 2 minefields close together, the second located in the most likely “detour” hex. And of course, the minefields are best in hexes where detours are a pain, or where the presence of a burning wreck screws up further enemy moves. Best of all is an AT mine in a hex that that the enemy wants/needs to bypass.

Something some players forget about minefields and fully tracked vehicles is that if a fully tracked vehicle stumbles into a minefield, it places a trailbreak, and can exit the minefield using that trailbreak without triggering another minefield attack. This lessens the 30% chance of a result to roughly 16% for a 1 AT factor minefield.

Don’t forget Daisy Chains. There is probably no good place to use them in “A Breezeless Day”, but they can be used effectively in other scenarios. For example, HIP defenders in areas with paved road/woods hexes effectively gives you HIP AT mines on a paved road.

Finally, don’t forget that, like all obstacles, minefields are most effective if you can cover them (or the detours) with fire.
**ENGLAND**

David Ramsey, 8 Kent Close, Kadworth, Harl. A7 3HE
P. F. Dickens, 62 Yarmouth Road, Tynemouth, Nw. Mids., B11 3PG
Bob Maguire, 23 Ladbrooke Road, Wetherby, W. Yorks, LS22 5DE

If there are any mistakes, please let me know so I can correct them. The players are listed according to the county they live in.

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**Wales**

Ken Sutton, 1 Gwynfryn Road, Windowy Green, Newtrech, Llanelwedd, SA3 4BB

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**Scotland**

**Directory.**

Players are listed according to the county they live in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F. B. Dickens</td>
<td>62 Yarnfield Road, Tyseley, Birmingham, W. Mids., B11 3PG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingery</td>
<td>17 Larch Road, Colchester, Suffolk, IP4 9NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Dando</td>
<td>52 Redhouse Lane, Disley, Cheshire, SK12 2HP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Cook</td>
<td>Toadhall, 1 Westmead Drive, Newbury, Berks., RG14 7DJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Brown</td>
<td>60 Fotherstoun Road, Bromborough, Wirral, CH4 7SL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean-Denis Martin</td>
<td>33 Rothesay Avenue, London, SW20 8JU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Murray</td>
<td>34 Bell Road, Walsall, W. Mids., WS5 3JW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean-Francois Flery</td>
<td>38 Park Avenue, Hounslow, London, TW3 2LX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Chen</td>
<td>Flat 11, 14 Sloane Gardens, London, SW1W 8DL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Kirby</td>
<td>20 Dawson Avenue, Howden, Livingston, EH54 2PS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Quinn</td>
<td>21 Roxwell Road, Shepherd’s Bush, London, W12 9QE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patrick Dale</td>
<td>13 Swinemoor Lane, Beverley, Humberside, HU17 0JU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Hartwell</td>
<td>40 Brambledown Road, Wallington, Surrey, SM6 0TF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham Forest</td>
<td>3 The Valiant, Benson Hil, W. Sussex, BN13 0HL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Stubbs</td>
<td>3 Wallingford Avenue, Bourton-on-the-Water, Glos., GL8 7PU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham Forester</td>
<td>1 Dalston Drive, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG12 1ER</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Fletcher</td>
<td>191 Trent Valley Road, Stoke-On-Trent, Staffordshire, ST4 2LQ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nick Kavanagh</td>
<td>115 Waverley Road, Streatham Hill, London, SW2 3SN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon Jowett</td>
<td>28 Bracken Edge, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4EB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Ashcroft</td>
<td>2 Manor Road, Howden, Livingston, EH54 2PS</td>
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<td>John Bowers</td>
<td>4 Jeffreycroft, Woodhouse Eaves, Leics., LE6 0TH</td>
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<td>Jean Bedson</td>
<td>5 Allerton Meadow, Shawbirch, Telford, Salop, TF5 0NW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Julian Blakeney-Edwards</td>
<td>1 Elmbourne Road, London, SW17 8JS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Chapman</td>
<td>6 Quarry Point, Gosling, Middleham, DL12 1JH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Chapman</td>
<td>6 Hyde Park, Gosling, Middleham, DL12 1JH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bob Green</td>
<td>4 Russel Avenue, Blackpool, Lancs., FY3 7AL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Groves</td>
<td>56 Hall Orchard Avenue, Withwick, Wirral, L22 5NN</td>
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<td>Howard Green</td>
<td>2 Manor House, Northfleet, Kent, DA11 0RE</td>
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<tr>
<td>William Roberts</td>
<td>1 Kiln Close, Corfe Mullen, Wimborne, BH21 3UG</td>
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ON THE CONVENTION TRAIL

There are more and more ASL tournaments cropping up all over the world. In fact, it is possible to be involved in an ASL tournament at least once a month, often more, if you were so inclined (and had the financial means to live such a life - I wish!). If you plan on holding an ASL tournament, please let me know and I’ll include the details here, space permitting. If you contact anyone regarding these tournaments, please tell them that I sent you!

OCTOBER

OKTOBERFEST ASLOK 1999

When: 5 - 10 October.

Where: Radisson Inn, 7230 Engle Road, Middleburg Heights, Ohio 44130. Telephone 440-243-4040. Room Rates are $70.00 for 1-4 occupants before September 12th. Be sure to mention “ASL Oktoberfest” when reserving.

Fee: $20.00 before September 12th, $25.00 thereafter.

Format: Same as always. Weekend Tournament plus numerous Mini-Tournaments.

Notes: Further details to be announced.

Contact: Mark Nixon, 443 Richmond Park West, #201D, Richmond Heights, OH 44143, or by telephone on (440) 473 1680. You can also email Rick Troha at aslok@nwsup.com, or visit the ASLOK Home Page at http://www.nwsup.com/aslok.

INTENSIVE FIRE '99

When: 29 - 31 October.

Where: The Kiwi Hotel, West Hill Road, Bournemouth, England, BH2 5EG. Telephone (01202) 555 889 or fax (01202) 789 567.

Fee: £5.00, free for members of The Crusaders, the UK ASL association.

Format: Two divisions of Fire Teams of three players compete over three rounds on Saturday and Sunday. There may also be some single day mini-tournaments. Open gaming is available for those who do not wish to take part in the tournament. Shaun Carter will be running a number of playtest games of scenarios for possible inclusion in future issues of VFTT or a possible Brit Pack scenario pack.

Notes: Prizes are awarded to winning Fire Team players and the Convention Champion, who is the player judged to have had the most successful tournament with all games played over the weekend being taken into consideration.

Contact: David Schofield, 11 Longfield Drive, West Parley, Ferndown, Dorset, BH22 8TY. Phone (01202) 573 482 or email dschofield@bournemouth.ac.uk.

NOVEMBER

GRENADIER '99

When: 19 - 21 November. Play starts at 1000 hrs. on Friday and finishes at 1600 hrs. on Sunday. A Thursday start is on offer if enough players are interested.

The INTENSIVE FIRE 99 Tournament Scenario List

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<td>Board PB; Night</td>
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<td>A110 Shanghai In</td>
<td>Chinese vs. Japanese;</td>
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<td>Flames</td>
<td>Boards 1, 20; Blazes,</td>
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<td>Ethiopian vs. Italian;</td>
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<td>Boards 26, 30, 31;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>overlays H4, H6, H1,</td>
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<td>H2, H3, S8, D3; Desert;</td>
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<td>Cavalry, Tank Hunter</td>
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<td>Heroes</td>
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<td>Sun AM</td>
<td>DeluxeA3 Back To School</td>
<td>Russian vs. German;</td>
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<td>Boards b, d; FT; DC; Commandoes;</td>
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<td>SP36 Desantniki</td>
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<td>Boards 17, 18; Riders</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>AP13 Shielding Moscow</td>
<td>Russian vs. German;</td>
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<td>Board 46; overlays X16, X17,</td>
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<td>Factories, Steeples,</td>
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<td>NOL; Falling Snow, Ground Snow,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Extreme Winter</td>
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</table>

Where: The “Jugendlandhaus” in Hergarten, near Zülpich in the Eifel (the German part of the Ardennes), near the famous “Hürtgenwald” (near the location for ‘CH76 Hürtgen Hell’). The building will be opened on Friday at 10:00 CET. The country house is rented for three days and provides 40 beds, several showers and a kitchen. For playing we have two large rooms. We plan to provide Coffee and rolls for Saturday and Sunday mornings breakfast. A DM 40.00 deposit (US $25.00 / £20) is required (this will be returned if you cancel before October 1st).

Format: The tournament will be played in three rounds with victory points awarded for each game won. The opportunity to play campaigns or longer scenarios will be provided as well.

Contact: Christian Kopmeyer, Hagebuttenweg 9, 41564 Kaarst, Germany or by email at 100556.3650@compuserve.com.

The maps for the forthcoming Critical Hit modules Genesis ’48 and Carnage At Cassino.

THE TRENCHES
HEAT OF BATTLE presents:
Our first issue of

RECON
48 PAGES OF PURE ASL!

This first issue of RECON will focus on the new HASL release of BLOOD REEF: TARAWA (coming soon!) by the MMP guys.

Inside, you will find a fascinating article about how the BRT Campaign Game Victory Conditions were designed...and why the CVP Caps were set so deadly high!

Also included within these “48 pages of pure ASL” is a Terrain Chart for your soon-to-be-blood-covered BRT HASL map (art by Don Petros). This chart will increase your TARAWA killing time exponentially!

Rich Summers and Rob Banozic have provided us with CROSSFIRE featuring the ASL scenario “Blazin' Chariots”. This article alone will teach you more about Armor vs Armor tactics than ten scenarios will!

Rob Seulowitz shares with us some interesting insights on how to prepare for an ASL tournament!

In addition to many interesting articles from some of your favorite ASL writers HOB has put together a set of eight cool scenarios. To give you a great variety in this inaugural issue of RECON, we have included scenarios designed by some of your favorite ASL groups such as The Paddington Bears, the Bounding Fire boys, and, of course, Heat Of Battle.

These scenarios cover the full spectre of ASL with actions taking place with the Australians vs. the Africa Corps in the desert, to the GIs attacking Italians in Italy, to the Russians steam-rolling through the German lines in the summer of 1944.

RECON magazine is by the ASL player, and for the ASL player.
Send only $17.50 plus $2.50 S&H ($5.00 S&H if outside the US or Canada) to Heat of Battle, PO BOX 15073, Newport Beach, CA 92659, USA