

Battalion Combat Series:

v2.0 Series Support Book

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A note from Lionel Martinez:

I find the best way to learn rules is to write them out myself. My initial objective was to shorten the rules to be a better reference during play. But I soon saw myself reorganizing entire sections, eliminating repetition, incorporating optional into the core rules. [With Lionel's kind permission, I have personally checked every line and word vs. my updated v1.2 rules and made all rewrites. The resulting rules, updated and rewritten as v2.0 are 100% official—DE]

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v2.0 Preface

These rules correct the known errata and clarifications to the v1.1/v1.2 rules. They include all the cleaning, rewrites, and changes needed to generate v2.0. Furthermore, the older Crib Note concept was replaced by the two booklets you see in this game: The Rules and The Support booklets. The Rules booklet concentrates all the series rules in a format following the Sequence of Play as much as possible.

Changes/corrections/additions in this rulebook are in Red. The following list highlights change from v1.2 to v2.0, by subject:

Basic Items

- ◇ Units move individually, but this really isn't a change. It's a simplification of the rules that were already there.
- ◇ Out of Command Radius units cannot jump enemy HQs, Trains, or block their MSR (if they have no other available alternative).
- ◇ Removed the general Command Radius restriction on Barrages and Shock Attacks, and replaced them with a specific requirement that the Spotter start the Activity Phase in Command Radius.
- ◇ I eliminated the stacking provisions against reinforcement entry and retreats. Added a CRT modifier for the defender being Over-Stacked (bad for him).
- ◇ Units in their HQ's hex always have a Safe Path. Eliminated the HQ "tail" business.
- ◇ Cleaned up the duplication of material between Safe Paths and Command Radius in several functions that are not compromised by the slightly more lenient Safe Path version of Command Radius.
- ◇ Eliminated "Command Disruption" from the Isolation rule.
- ◇ Stand Off units in Support can no longer conduct Engagements or Attacks by Fire or create any Engagement Zone. They must be on their Deployed side to do so and no longer in Support. Added a few special DRMs and effects

for these guns on the Barrage, Engagement, and Combat Tables. Stand Off Supported Host units require Stopping Engagements.

Activations

- ◇ Formations conducting a Recovery do **NOT** have a Second Activation.
- ◇ Formations with a PD **DO** have Second Activations but **cannot enter** PD in it.
- ◇ Second Activations always roll for Fatigue increase if they have SNAFU result better than FAIL.

Combat

- ◇ Added a separate column on the Barrage Table to reduce Attack by Fire overall effectiveness.
- ◇ Simplified the Engagement Table layout and variations given the elimination of Stand Off Support fires.
- ◇ The result (generally) of a failure to waive a STOP in a Stopping Engagement is to be STOPPED, not FINISHED.
- ◇ The Target used in an Engagement when more than one is available must be the one with the greatest AV or Range.
- ◇ Combined the Engagement Table's Prepared Defense and Multiple Supports DRMs so that the player cannot get +2 for having both.
- ◇ I revised Shock Attacks. Allowed them to use Arty Points, but reduced their Suppression DRM to +1 and gave the Attacking unit the ability to help itself out by conducting an Attack by Fire against its target. Reorganized the CRT DRMs allowed by Shock vs. Regular Attacks to make them clearer.
- ◇ Added Breakthrough Armor to the list of unit types allowed to be Shock Attackers.

Trains, MSRs, SNAFU

- ◇ Cleaned up the verbose rules concerning the retreat of Combat Trains (especially with respect to map edges).
- ◇ Divided the Track DRM for the SNAFU roll into two parts: normal conditions (the -1 we have always used) and Poor Trafficability conditions (a -2).

- ◇ Cleaned up the confusing description of when Track hexes can be used for Legal Hexes. The use of Tracks in the ending of an MSR (between the Combat Trains and the HQ) is now “inclusive” of the Combat Trains. This would allow the Trains to have the freedom to be in the first Track hex of the MSR.
- ◇ Added the concept of a Complete MSR and cleaned up the details of Legal and Illegal Combat Trains.
- ◇ Engagement Zones no longer affect a hex’s Legal status.
- ◇ Renamed Pass SNAFU to the usual phrase used in testing: Full SNAFU.

Other

- ◇ Added Urban Terrain and the concept of Control in 6.1.
- ◇ Made Prepared Defense radius match Command Radius... also eliminated the 6-hex limit on OBJ placement (just unneeded).
- ◇ Formations in PD **can** recover Fatigue in their initial Activation.
- ◇ Added a Prepared Defense DRM (+1, Target only) to the Engagement Table.
- ◇ Moved the PD creation and Fatigue Recovery out of the Orders Phase and into the Activations, so those functions are handled at the same time in the sequencing whether the Orders rules are used or not.
- ◇ HQs that Voluntarily Retreat increase their Fatigue Level by one.
- ◇ HQ Retreats must follow the Retreat Direction Guidelines (5.5b) unless executing a “Retreat into a Pocket” (4.7f).

Optionals

- ◇ Killed the “Unit Traffic by Coordination” rule.
- ◇ Eliminated the confusing dual-term for “Orders.” Allowed the player to issue a Prepared Defense and a Fatigue Reduction Order simultaneously so as to match the rules when not playing with Orders.

Designer’s Notes

How’d the bus get to this stop anyway?

BCS was a long time in gestation. Many a playtester’s printer, and much of the forests of South America, went to the great beyond trying to keep up. But what was the origin of this effort?

Well, in the beginning it was envisioned as nothing more than a “Battalion-level *OCS*” adaptation. A change of scale—only—allowing for smaller units and battles. Nothing to it, I thought. Yeah, right.

It wasn’t long into the work that it left the *OCS* far behind (battalion level is *much more* than the operational level system could show, even with smaller units). I wanted to do battalion level *right* and show the player things that other systems just didn’t bother doing—primarily because they continued on to where the road I started on would have led: taking fundamentally operational rules sets and shoe-horning them into the smaller scale.

That started a very wild ride.

The Big Ideas

If I may be so bold, I think I’ve come up with a few ideas of note in my 30 or so years of professional design work. Each caused a stir when released of “that just can’t work” but each has stood the test of time in one way or another. Love them or hate them, they are what they are.

They are, I think, actual advances in the art of wargame design and my own small contribution to the effort to show warfare in a way that actually teaches the player something beyond just some “neat mechanics which are popular at the moment.”

I am quite proud of them.

These are: the written orders system in *CWB/RSS/NBS/LoB*, the graphic orders system in *TCS*, the surprise roll mechanic in *OCS*, and I’ll dare to add... the Combat Trains & Traffic systems here in *BCS*. (Noting that the Traffic rule did mainly become optional due to its added workload.)

In and amongst these big items are a slew of other things I’m proud of that don’t rise to this level. Things such as the “Grail Games” (**DAK**, **Last Blitzkrieg**, and **Last Chance for Victory**), the analysis of Gettysburg in **Last Chance for Victory**, the Boss Points system in **Karelia**, the victory system in **Heights of Courage**. But, these are not the same as the top tier concepts above.

So, how do things as “tiny” as Combat Trains or Traffic find its way into the same list as the various orders systems and the *OCS* surprise mechanic? It is the result of what they do and show.

Supply rules are, pretty much, a barren wasteland of design effort. Only a few care to even try and just slap in the standard “trace and you are good” mechanic on their way to the ‘cool kid’ mechanics like cards and chit pull. It’s the red-headed step child of design work.

When it is looked at directly, designers might give it some attention in details such as the availability of Supply Points, maybe Supply types, and the transportation of these Points. In all, this amounts to “if you have enough of the right kinds of stuff, you are good to go.” Certainly, *OCS* made a career out of exactly that kind of decision making.

Even those games that attempted to go well **beyond** that which was reasonable for players to do (I’m looking at you, *Campaign for North Africa*) did so with an accountancy-based system of Supply Points of some sort and a boat-load of mechanics that allowed their use in various mixtures to get a specific end result (or not). But still, when stripped of all the Rube Goldberg sub-systems, if you had SPs, you could do whatever it was you were trying to pay to do. If you had X times the number of points needed, you could do that activity X times and so on.

Originally, *BCS* had a system that grafted the *OCS* one over directly. Players were given SPs (two kinds—Ammo and Fuel) and literally paid for what they wanted to do. One twist I tried was to ignore the transportation of SPs on the map. There were no trucks. Rather, players issued SPs to the HQs (each of which had a “Lift” capability). You could give an HQ all you wanted, but if the HQ moved, it would bring only its Lift value along with it—the rest was wasted and destroyed. The idea was to show that the primary ingredient in logistics in warfare is *waste*. As one would expect, testers reacted by placing only those SPs with the HQ it could move to avoid losing any.

That effort became a drill of screwing over some Formations so that others could live large. On top of this, fuel payments were made behind the scenes so only Ammo made it to the map—and players were constantly finding literal limits to what they had available and balked at the restraints it put on them (especially when one of the “stripped” Formations had to defend).

Historically, this became a problem as well. The Americans were flush enough that in most situations, I just assumed they had all they needed and skipped logistics entirely.

The Germans could be given their points in one of two ways: a huge supply at start and a trickle coming in each turn (fairly accurate to what happened) or a smaller dump at start and a larger amount per turn.

Neither worked.

Both were crushed by the same accountancy mentality they promoted. If the Germans were given the huge dump, by putting “unwelcome” Formations on a starvation diet, the “prime” units were never affected by supply shortages (and much of the army would not bother participating in the campaign). The smaller dump version didn’t allow the historical initial spasm of activity, and still encouraged the starvation of the slow and the weak.

Along the way, the literal SPs gave way to the abstract ‘LOG’ (what later became SNAFU) die roll, which forced some Formations in some situations to do less than the player wanted. It got the job done, but was relegated so far into the background that logistics, as such, seemingly disappeared from the game.

We played on, refining the other systems in the game (bringing them, with the great and always insightful help of my dear friend **Red Miller**, to an extraordinarily high level of polish and shine).

A certain level of unease started to settle in on me when I looked at the result. Recalling that I wanted *BCS* to show *something more*. *Something more* than down-scale operations, but also *something more* than the straight-forward level of “ZOC-Bonking” seen in so many titles already. I began to wonder if *BCS* had lost a bit of its philosophic underpinnings and become something I started calling “SCS with Engagements.”

This led to an effort that spawned the re-inserting “something more” soul: OBJs, Traffic, and Combat Trains.

OBJs simply applied some of the player’s effort toward the planning of operations for a Formation. They limit the number of different directions the Formation could manage at one time and limit how well he could react to events as they unfolded.

Before, a Formation could split up to the four winds to do any number of microscopic jobs all at once (or worse, execute what my son, John, did and run what I termed a “Bubble Offensive”). None of those things looked anything like what the real Formations could, or did, do—always an excellent tip-off that something isn’t right.

After some experimentation, the fairly straightforward OBJ marker placement system addressed these and numerous other issues. On top of that, I was able to dedicate a simple system allowing players to make use of the critical assets of these Formations: the ability of some units to conduct recons of locations that became useful after the Activation began (so as to take advantage of the evolving situation).

The optional March OBJs (and the later more elaborate Orders rules) bring out a modest, but important, job of committing the player even more to a specific course of action.

Traffic came about later but addressed player concerns that while two Formations would interfere with each other via the Coordination rules, inside a given Formation, march congestion was never an issue. Now (when using the Unit Traffic optional rule), players must carefully orchestrate their movements so as to avoid causing traffic blockages that will quite realistically jam up the movement of follow-up units. And even then, Murphy raises his ugly head when an attack clumsily ‘barely wins’ leading to a situation blocking the way.

At this time, logistics began to make a come-back into the system. Trains were added first, but were merely placeholders for the road net needed to operate the Formation (leading to rules about ‘MSR Congestion’ which later converted into restrictions on coming back into ‘in Service’ and later ‘LOG Congestion’ which eventually became ‘Optimal Distance’ and ‘Crossing the Streams’). These worked nicely and the players responded well to the planning and care needed to “do things right.”

Moving the Trains results in them flipping to their ‘out of service’ (Ghost) side and inflicting a DRM on the Formation’s SNAFU roll. Players reacted with care as to when to shift the Trains around and when to wait. This was good, but something still seemed to be missing. That something is what elevated Combat Trains from a simple mechanic to *something more*.

It was the additional *Logistical Inertia* and *Supply without Accountants*.

But, ya gotta count them Points!!!

Trained by the games that even bothered about it, players learned to think of logistics like accountants. You have a pool of resources which are both quantified and discrete. You draw off them at some constant level for the actions you'd like to do and can repeat that process until you run out. When you run out, you are done until you can get some more. Logistics was literally a matter of resource allocation and nothing deeper.

Cardboard units have no needs (or feelings) when you choose to not use them. So, you can deny Formations all ammunition and fuel so that your favorites can make use of those points. Those stripped units will cheerfully await the end of the war, costing you nothing in the meantime, while they sit on their hands and watch.

Not much of that reflects reality.

Your resources are in a state of flux to an unknown degree. Errors exist in the inventory of what you have, spoilage is occurring, parts were mislabeled or put on trucks going to the wrong units, supplies you counted on get pilfered by units that thought they had more use for them than the ones you chose, all manner of things are making the clear cut become vague and unknowable—some of which are difficult to imagine—and all completely beyond your control.

Every activity has a cost, true, but the amount of the cost is only known in general terms and the planning figures can be thrown out the window by unforeseen conditions, unit behaviors, and waste. What you thought should last for four days ends up being burned down in two, while something else set up for four days seems to be lasting forever. And your best guess on hospital beds was simply wrong.

Inactive units still use food, fuel, and even ammunition. Troops have a bad habit of stealing from neighboring units ("They can make that good, right?") and bulldozing dead vehicles off the road instead of sending them back for repair. Nobody knows what

happened to the cases of ammo Private Snuffy was supposed to bring from the unit's last position. Supply sergeants the world over maintain private stashes of material for trading purposes and 'rainy' days. "They asked for two of them? Grab three, you never know what might come up." No unit is so inactive that it doesn't continuously tap into your—still unknown—resources. Nor do they (and their commanders) react well to the idea of "you are going to be helpless while we send all the fuel to so-n-so."

Ask Patton about that.

Yet, game supply systems invoke a world where the exact opposite is true on almost all of these points. Accountancy systems cannot help but measure with precision a system that has 'precision' in only the roughest terms. Accountancy rewards "just enough" thinking; real life revolves around pushing as much forward as you can, as fast as you can, and wait for the war to be won. You don't know where "just enough" exists between "failure due to not enough" and "too much"... so you opt to risk too much.

The SNAFU (originally LOG) system bypasses the accountancy game. The typically player-driven main effort business is impossible to create (because you can't). Predictive certainty in results "where it really, really matters" is illusive. The trucks might get stuck or not arrive at all—not based on where it is important, but like Mr. Murphy says, where it'll probably hurt you the most. What's available in the depot doesn't translate into a discrete amount of activity on the map. Or, for that matter, a dip in depot reserves may or may not show up as a specific reduction. Eventually, as the Germans see in *Last Blitzkrieg*, their weak logistical system will give them an **overall** reduction in effectiveness—but the player will still not be able to starve some units in order to keep his panzers gassed up.

Furthermore, without the 'accountants gone wild' method of supply, the player himself cannot say with certainty that Formation X will do everything he needs them to do. The overall supply situation will produce a distribution of capabilities across the map that reflects itself, but the player can't count on any given Activation turning out for the best.

All of that brings logistics more into line with reality better than the more precise *looking* SP based system accomplishes.

One last point about prioritization: of course the real commanders can *try* to force scarce resources away from one sector so as to help out another. That's not at issue. The problem with the game model is that such actions are taken as *standard behavior* and executed with *ruthlessness* and *precision* that is simply impossible in real life. We all see this a lot in games. Players will ask me for a rule covering a certain action that a given unit did in a very special situation. No doubt—they really did it. Problem is, should I allow that action in the rules, players will use it frequently and in situations that are nowhere near as extreme as the reason it was done in real life. So, therefore I cannot allow the exception.

As time went on, the need to insert other items of friction, confusion, and outright failure into the 'LOG' system caused me to change the name to SNAFU. Logistics is (of course) still an important part of why units might not do all you ask of them—but so too are traffic control, command failures, and the myriad of other reasons, all of which force 'but it looks so easy on a map!' into not translating into reality.

Inertia of what?

There are a couple levels of inertia built into Combat Trains.

When the Trains are jumped by the enemy, they bounce backwards (which brings its own inefficiencies) or eventually end up off map if a Complete MSR is impossible (which brings bigger ones) creating less than optimal behavior on the part of the Formation.

A smaller effect is when the Trains move and temporarily go “Out of Service” or into Ghost. Once on their Ghost side, the SNAFU problem can compound until you get your lines of communication straightened out. It’s reasonably mild, but can degrade sloppy play in favor of the player who takes the time to mitigate and minimize the effect.

The choice of when and where to move on the part of the player is a drag on his freedom of action. In a perfect world, he’d be able to shift the Trains, right now, to where he needs them without the fuss of having them re-establishing themselves. If he chooses to shift too soon, he risks a hiccup in his logistical net. If he moves them too late (or not at all), he could find the speed of his operations degraded as the Trains try to keep up and maybe can’t. In any event, we can count on Murphy making the worst possible thing happen at the worst possible time.

As with units tripping each other because of Traffic, rear area establishments (HQs and Trains) must be positioned with care to avoid crippling the movement of other units or Formations.

Mechanical Mechanics

There are quite a few mechanics in this system that go against the grain of traditional wargame fodder. All were carefully chosen to show what they are designed to show, and tempered by exhaustive testing. All contribute to my goal of giving the player an insight into this level of warfare he’s been denied until now.

Alternating Formations within the turn (as opposed to either a IGO-UGO framework, or full-on Chit Pull) was designed to allow both sides to both have more lower level interaction than IGO-UGO allows (with less perfect across-map coordination of your own side, and no need for special ‘inactivity’ (read: Reserve) phases and rules), yet also allow the player more input into what he wants to do (theoretically based on relative importance) than you get with completely random Chit Pull.

The order of Formation selection by default assigns some Formations a type of ‘reserve status’ as they ‘wait and see’ what happens. They wish to exploit the new situation later at the cost of not influencing the situation right now. Likewise, the Reactivation choice at the end of the initial Activation gives them the chance to exploit what they just did before the enemy can interfere. It does so with a strong nod to the agility of the Formation involved as well (through the die roll needed to get it). Simple and gets the job done very well, in my opinion.

Reactivation itself allows the Formation to (maybe) do more in the turn and that “maybe” is luck driven with a probability based on the Formation’s ability to think on its feet and react rapidly to events.

The final Engagement/Attack/Barrage system for combat resolution is the result of a very long and convoluted series of trials and (mainly on my part) errors to find the best balance of playability combined with the distinguishing features of armor and infantry combat at this level.

In a brutal over-simplification, this can be seen as armor spars with opponents at range (and sometimes rams straight into enemy held hexes), infantry gets in the enemy’s face and literally assaults their position, and artillery lays waste to whole areas in the hopes of inflicting losses.

Of these, artillery was the simplest—they provide a chance of inflicting step losses. There were a number of side-trips along the way (usually dealing with interdiction in various forms, all of which were subject to easy abuse and not worth the weight of rules needed to have them around).

Infantry ground assault was also pretty straight forward. We went through a lot of modifier permutations to pick the best ones to retain, adjusted the table to the point where it gave the right level of losses mixed with retreats, and it rapidly evolved toward final form.

Engagements, the interaction of AV units, their supports, and how all that boils into the final EZOC and AV EZOC rules was a long and involved affair. I’ll talk about that in the Tanks! section below.

The ‘Combat Flow Chart’ idea is best left forgotten in the dust bin of the system’s history. Suffice it to say, the road to the final form has been long. There—literally—isn’t an idea out there that wasn’t tried (sometimes multiple times) to flesh out what works best.

The essentially Odds-Free combat system and the seemingly lack of effect of step losses goes completely against the grain of wargame canon. I can understand how those ideas will rub players raised on odds CRTs and surrounding defenders to get some coveted ratio and a linear degradation in unit strength as losses accumulate. It strikes me that **all** those ideas are deeply rooted in attrition-based theories of warfare (the reader should underscore that and contemplate how that long-standing emphasis affected his games’ image of warfare). *BCS* attempts to meld maneuver and attritional warfare into their proper respective positions. Real warfare is a mix of both. I have attempted to replicate that here for you.

Let’s look at those parts in turn.

First off, surrounding the defender with stacks and, essentially, attacking him from 4 or more directions at the same time is simply impossible in real life. One could argue that all those “extra” directions are merely pinning forces (much like the assist stacks here), but if that’s the case, why do they add to the combat strength as much as the ‘real’ attackers and also why can any of them advance after combat like them? No, the design is giving the (false) impression that units at pretty much any scale form a circle around the defender and charge toward the center. This is not how things are done in real life and a fine way to generate Blue on Blue fighting.

Odds ratios are trickier. They have their place, of course, but the rub is in how they are shown. Typically, this is done on a combat-by-combat basis where the attacker (free of enemy interference) pumps the odds up as best he can against a single perfect-intel selected point while literally ignoring any other enemy units nearby (the hoary old ‘soak off’ attack and mandatory attack requirements were attempts at mitigating this effect). The problem was that the player was doing exactly what those systems reward: surging force ratios in a very small zone in order to obtain a maximal result from the few combats done.

That, of course, is the problem. Such massive concentrations of power are unlikely in real life simply because the desired (best) target can’t be identified properly and the resulting forces would trip all over one another in such a small zone of attack. The example one might try to use is late-war Russian offensives that applied incredible mass to small sections of line in order to achieve a breakthrough. Key there is the business of ‘sections of line’ as the target is geographical in nature, not some specific weak German unit. Also, ‘sections of the line’ being quite large in extent—huge stretches of front by the end of the war.

In *BCS*, force ratios come into play because if you out-number the enemy locally, you can afford to build more ‘complete’ attacks across the zone; you have more power leftover to exploit the results, and can protect your forces from any counterattack potential that exists. It’s not that you do an ‘extra good job’ on ‘A’ Battalion in front of you, but you can take out ‘A’, its supporting units on either side, and thrust into its rear areas all at once.

Linear degradation of unit strength is another attritional chestnut. Obviously, attritional theory itself is based on the idea that you will destroy the enemy faster than you destroy yourself and, eventually, in a mindless pool of blood, ‘win’. Losses, disruption to unit cohesion and leadership, all contribute to a unit eventually becoming combat ineffective. That’s true (and true here, too), but where the problem is in the linear nature of the business typically shown. A 5-step unit that loses one step is not 20% weaker. It’s 20% closer to *becoming* ineffective (or, in our imprecise gaming terms, dead), not 20% less of the unit it was before.

The model here follows more the one I showed in the *TCS* 25 years ago (where the combat strength was determined by the crew-manned weapons and taking out strength of the unit wouldn’t diminish firepower until the bitter end) than the one in the bit later *OCS* (where losses instantly take the shine off a unit’s offensive power and half losses reduce it defensively).

The *OCS* case is at a very different scale than you see here. One counter is usually an entire *BCS* Formation, so taking 1 *OCS* step loss (out of maybe 4) actually represents 25% of the units of the Formation becoming destroyed—as things go here, that rapidly hits on the offensive power and *number* of operations the Formation can do on the attack. By the time a Formation has lost half its units (the next layer in *OCS*), I’m pretty sure you’d say they are ‘defending at half strength’ (if not far worse) and their offensive potential will be very limited.

In *BCS*, steps are a measure of the remaining ‘depth’ of a unit. What damage it can take before becoming combat ineffective. They are not a direct increment of fighting strength.

It should be noted that the choice to use ‘Arty Points’ instead of the usual physical artillery units was to keep the counter density under control, to better reflect the assignment requirements of higher level artillery units (and its natural inertia), plus to avoid the ‘games players play’ in terms of either hunting these relatively defenseless units down or using them in ahistorical functions (like convenient road blocks).

Command

The simple framework of ‘Command’ as shown in *BCS* was a relatively late addition to the design process. I added it only after spending a great deal of time hammering out the movement and combat mechanics. Its need literally grew out of what I was observing in the testing of those underlying systems.

One obvious issue was that Formations were simply able to do too much and were too agile. They’d strike out in multiple directions at a time (zeroing in on weak defenders in order to advance the attritional ball by merely killing off enemy units). Even if this did not happen, players would instantly react to events as they unfolded to the degree that if the planned advance to objective X fell apart because of a botched earlier attack, objective Y was instantly substituted as if X was never contemplated. Large scale units can’t act like this—heck, *any* complicated undertaking cannot do this.

OBJ markers were the solution to that unease. Before seeing how events would unfold, the player had to make decisions on where the Formation would attempt to drive and was limited to attacking those enemy forces near those Objectives—not merely cherry-picking some weak unit that meant nothing in the bigger picture, but was simply available (according to perfect intel) to be killed.

OBJ development went through a series of complex versions (usually involving route control and recon assets) to its current fairly straight-forward system. In the end, movement routing wasn’t deemed all that important as the places you could go (and do something major) was limited and that indirectly affects how you choose to get there (other pathways being of limited use). The more important matter was the development of an honest (and reasonably inflexible) Axis of Advance representing the Formation’s current plan.

Coordination came about as an outgrowth of what was a bit more complicated rule on Passage of Lines (the name change needed because Coordination covered a number of topics that weren't technically Passage of Lines). Its development played around the edges with another difference between game thinking and real life. The player approached these rules with a mindset of 'how much can I get away with before I get punished' or trying to figure out where the line was so they could exploit it as far as possible with the least application of resources or effort. To an extent, players still act that way around these (and other rules), but not to the disturbing degree they did in playtesting the old Passage rules.

Meanwhile, in real life, staffs routinely 'coordinate' with adjacent Formations, an effort that moves from 'courtesy' to a 'major command function' depending on the degree of Passage of Lines involved. What they won't do is look at a map and figure out how close they can run an OP to the nearby unit and get away without bothering to let them know.

Coordination is a minor item if not allowed to get out of control. A DRM on SNAFU isn't the end of the world unless it gets stacked with other planning failures or affects a large number of units. Ramming a bunch of Formations into a small space is inviting all manner of confusion and not a little bit of Traffic problems.

The maneuver model vs. attritional model comes to a point here in the effort to smash enemy rear area installations (when you can). The benefits of clobbering a guy's lines of communication are many. You might induce logistical paralysis. This can be more efficient than simply 'attacking his units to death' in the usual wargame slugging match. These are not necessarily easy things to accomplish (especially if the player has a taste of what they feel like when done to him!), but can give bigger benefits faster than not doing so.

Players who like their attrition can indulge themselves here, too, but mastery of what maneuver can reap is the best way to win. The best mix is the most effective way to play. Enjoy the swim.

Tanks!

I am greatly indebted to **Jim Stravers** who was able to share his expertise in actual armor operations with a crusty old infantryman like me, even if he did end up having to use small words and a lot of crayon wax to get me to understand.

The armor model is of a greater detail than the infantry one here as, literally, armor affects the battlefield, other armor, and infantry in ways the infantry model simply cannot show. Typically, designers force the armor into the infantry model and get what you'd expect—armor that behaves like really strong (and fast) infantry.

Armor fights other armor using the Engagement Table (i.e. by trading fires) or they can mix it up directly (using Shock Attack). Tac MA units in general can use Shock Attacks to allow them the increased tempo their mobility creates.

How they do these jobs or if they can do them is based on one primary decision: the use of the armor in concentrated form or split up into support teams.

This takes some explaining as players frequently confuse what 'infantry support' means. The confusion comes from thinking that being dispatched as infantry support means something like what the French did with their armor in 1940.

Strictly speaking, the French model is what happens when a player here stacks a concentrated tank unit with infantry and then asks me wondering why he didn't get a support mod for it.

No, that's not it.

The development of effective tank-infantry teams took much of the war for the US Army. Too often the two arms would operate "near" each other, doing their own actions independently and accidentally functioning as Combined Arms to a greater or (usually)

lesser degree. Doing this kind of Combined Arms correctly (and obtaining maximum effect) requires the arms to work together frequently so they can both learn what the other can and cannot do, and requires a means of communication between the crew in the vehicle and the infantry commander on the ground (usually by a telephone mounted in the back of the tank).

Properly mixed, the resulting tank-infantry team is many times more effective than either by itself in both offense and defense, but is still limited in rapidly moving operations (because of the infantry's limited mobility unless they come equipped with their own armored vehicles).

Importantly, training and skill level is critical to obtaining these abilities.

'Concentrated' (or Real) armor is—of course—centralized and operating as a 'herd.' As such, it cannot have the close working relationship with infantry that happens to be around (if the tank-infantry team effects of support were allowed for Concentrated armor, we'd have the infantry working at armor speeds, which they cannot manage). Rather, Concentrated armor gives up some Combined Arms abilities so as to fully exploit the massive hammer they can wield. That is subject to terrain, of course.

While an AV EZOC may require armor to trade blows (or stop functioning in a hex), there are no *Overwatch* or *Opportunity Fire* rules to follow out at range. Well, none in terms of *literal* fires, but the restrictions on HQ and Truck movement in Engagement Zones should not be ignored. A relatively enormous amount of time was expended on various ways to either show fires literally or have the ZOC and/or Engagement Zone rules 'cover' the topic of fires while the active player is moving. What you see here is the final distillation of those rules to the best balance of playability and simulation. More isn't better. We tried everything and many ideas more than once.

Beyond that, there is the matter of typical combat ranges being far less than the theoretical maximums available to the weapon system. In NW Europe, this is a

matter of a lot of minor terrain (hills, trees, etc.) blocking what looks like a clear LOS on the map. In the desert, matters are different.

Basically, avoiding an unplayable nightmare of excessive detail and (actually) excessive losses meant that inactive player fires are not literally shown (but are what is going on in Stopping Engagements). Normally, they do their shooting in their own Activations.

In addition to the major issues of being Concentrated or in Support, armor units are frequently faced with a decision on which of their two modes to use: Move-side or Deployed-side. 'Move' gives the unit its best map speed, lowers its AV, and (when using the optional rule) provides the potential to create Traffic downstream on the map. 'Deployed' tanks are busy dodging and weaving, so they do not move rapidly on the map, but do have a better AV.

Of these, the latter is very important, as it shows the current thinking on 'first fires' whereby it isn't necessarily the 'best' vehicle that wins the fight as much as it is whoever gets off the first shot. That small increase to AV may not look like much, but it has a significant effect on the result of an armor Engagement.

Deployed-side vs. Move-side also is a rough stand-in for 'who's running along vs. who's looking for targets' as a gauge of who gets the first shot. It's not perfect by any stretch, but is better than trying to track movements done over previous Activations!

In the end...

What you see here is the result of an enormous amount of testing and work on the part of many people. I'm only the tip of the iceberg. The tester list at the start of the book does not do justice to the effort given by so many that helped make this system a reality. I called out **Rod** and **Jim** earlier in these notes for the specific jobs they did... I'd be remiss if I did not do the same for others:

Carl Fung... researcher extraordinaire and the one who kept me grounded on unit/vehicle type interactions.

Lynn Brower... who put up with rewrites and edits well beyond the abilities of non-cyborg species and did so through personal and loved ones health issues.

John Kisner... who played devil's advocate in spite of a frequently 'cranky' designer.

Hans Kishel... who doggedly, and with good cheer, played on and on and on regardless of a patent on low dice rolls and personal health issues.

Jim Pyle... who cheerfully put up with an endless and sometimes (usually?) maddening series of changes to the playtest VASSAL module.

Joe 'Hammer' Linder, Mike Solli, Tom Kassel, John Malaska, John Rainey, and Ken Schreiner... who endured months (years?) of testing and rapidly changing instructions from the GHQ Puzzle Palace.

Herman Wu... who carefully edited v2.0 in amazing detail and an understanding of not only Essig grammar, but also a clear image of how the material was being presented to a person trying to follow it as well as an encyclopedic knowledge of the rules themselves. Without Herman's hard work of hundreds of hours, v2.0 would not be what it is.

This was the biggest and longest team effort I've been part of in my years as a designer. It would not exist but for the selfless and generally unrewarding hard work of so very many people. I hope you enjoy the fruits of the project.

BCS Rules— Read This First

by Lynn Brower

This article is designed to help first time *Battalion Combat Series* (BCS) players learn the rules. In most ways, BCS is a traditional hex and counter wargame, but there are new concepts that players need to learn. Above all players must learn the rules for **Formations** and **Units** and understand the different roles they have in game play.

Formations and Units

In wargames, each counter typically represents one *unit* (division, regiment, battalion, company, etc.) and these *units* are the focus of the player's actions in playing the game.

While *units* are approximately battalion-sized in BCS, these units are organized in **groups** called **Formations**. Formations are the higher organizations (brigades/divisions) the unit counters were historically assigned to.

I believe players should read the BCS rules dealing with *Formations* **BEFORE** reading the rules dealing with *Units*. When players play a BCS game, they need to think about how to operate their Formations before they move and fight the Formation's internal units. So, to learn the BCS rules, new players should work through the Table of Contents in the following order.

Read **Sections 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0** first, and the **Glossary**. Pay special attention to **Case 1.1c** Unit Types and the **Glossary**. These contain descriptions and definitions for terms and concepts that will be explained in depth in the remainder of the rules. There is no need to memorize them but refer back to these two cases frequently. The Glossary section is especially helpful in determining what is meant by a number of new terms used in BCS that are not in other wargames. Players frequently skip reading the Glossary section (figuring they know it is there and will look things up when needed), but giving it a real

read before hitting the rules themselves is helpful in getting a start at understanding what things mean. Skipping it leaves them scratching their head later and not fully appreciating the information packed into that section of the rules.

Sections 1.3 through 1.9 involve Core Concepts (introduced in 1.2) which are key throughout the game and need to be understood as they affect units at multiple times in the Turn Sequence and in multiple ways.

Section 2.0 contains the sequence of play for a Game Turn. This sequence of play will be familiar to players of other war games. But players should note the Assignments phase. Assignment is an important rule affecting both Artillery and Support of Formations. The Activation Phase is the heart of the game so it has its own sequence of play.

Section 3.0 details the sequence of player actions in the Activation phase. New players should read this section carefully and refer to it frequently when learning to play. Experienced players should do the same thing because most errors in game play can be traced to not following this sequence carefully.

Learning Formations

Understanding Formations is central to playing any *BCS* game. After reading sections 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0, new players should review the sections below again. They detail rules that affect Formations. Most of the game play concepts that prompt questions from new players are described in these sections. They contain many of the new concepts in *BCS*.

Sections 1.0 and 3.0 describe the key concepts affecting Formations: Command Radius, Objectives, SNAFU & Mixing, and Prepared Defense. The Support booklet also contains a detailed example of a complete Formation Activation.

Remember, as stated in Case 2.5, players are activating Formations one by one, alternating

between the opposing sides. I strongly urge new players to **wait** to read through the play example in this booklet until they have read through ALL the rules. Many of the details in the example describe how to use Units as well as Formations. As I have stated, it is important when learning *BCS* to understand Formations **before** adding in the details of handling a Formation's Units.

Case 1.3 Formations. The central building block.

Case 1.4 Command Radius, simply states that the units of a Formation operate normally within a defined distance of the HQ unit. In *BCS* Formations can operate when units from other Formations are mixed together, but they do so with significant penalties.

Case 3.3 Objectives (OBJs) introduces an important concept that requires players to focus the combat activities of a Formation's units. Formations in *BCS* have three basic methods of applying combat power against enemy units: Engagements, Attacks, and Barrage Missions. Simply stated, all Attacks and Barrage Missions must occur within an OBJ Zone, which is defined by the placement of an OBJ marker at the beginning of a Formation's Activation. A player must decide where to place his available OBJ markers BEFORE he moves any of a Formation's units.

Case 3.2 SNAFU is the need to keep Formations well defined and with their needed Main Supply Routes (3.1) well defined and arranged to allow them to operate efficiently. Your ability to do so relative to your opponent's will show in the activity levels your Formations manage versus what his do. If you are running at 90% and he is creeping along at 40%, your forces will do very well in comparison.

SNAFU is a simple procedure that requires a Formation to make a die roll at the beginning of every Activation. If the modified roll is 2 the Formation fails to Activate; roll 3,4,5,6 and the Formation can make a Partial Activation, and if the roll is 7 or more the Formation gets a Full SNAFU and obtains full capabilities. The procedure is simple; the details are in the list of DRMs. The SNAFU

die roll is modified primarily by the state of a Formation's supply line, but it is also modified by the Formation's Coordination and Fatigue state. Studying the DRM list and the SNAFU Result Effects table will pay dividends in understanding how SNAFU affects game play.

Playing *BCS* for any length of time will convince you that another name for this rule could be Murphy's Rule; what can go wrong with a Formation Activation will go wrong **and** at the worst possible time.

Cases 3.2c Coordination and 3.2d Mixed Formations simply describe when one Formation is interfering with another friendly Formation. Formations are *penalized* when they move through or overlap with other friendly Formations. Players must think about the location and actions of their Formations BEFORE they consider the movements and actions of individual units.

Case 1.7 Prepared Defense describes the capabilities and penalties applied to Formations which are placed in a Prepared Defense status. Prepared Defense is a Formation **state** that a player must choose to apply at the beginning of an Activation before determining how the Formation will Activate. Formations placed in Prepared Defense gain defensive combat benefits at the cost of restricting their movement and offensive combat capabilities.

Case 4.7 HQs & Combat Trains detail the rules for Headquarters units and the Combat Trains needed to keep them functioning. HQs have two primary functions. 1) HQs define the center of a Formation's area of operations where that Formation's units must operate and 2) HQs (in combination with that Formation's Combat Trains) define the Formation's supply line. Understanding Formation supply lines is important for using Formations efficiently in the game.

Case 3.1 Main Supply Routes (MSRs) and **Case 4.7 HQs & Combat Trains** define the logistics rules for *BCS*. In *BCS* the traditional 'trace an unblocked line of hexes from a unit to its supply source' Supply Line definition is expanded by these rules. There is a supply line from an individual unit to a supply source but that line has three parts rather than a simple trace. The first part is the connection between a unit and its Formation HQ. This part is controlled by Command Radius (1.4) and Safe Path (1.9). MSR is the path leading from the HQ through the Combat Trains (CT) and then on to a game specific defined supply source. The MSR path from an HQ to a CT is slightly different from the path beyond the CT and to a Supply Source. Study these rules carefully, especially those describing what happens when enemy action requires an HQ or CT to retreat.

Case 1.5 Support details the rules for Support. Support is a Formation *property*. A Formation's "support" is created by assigning Support-capable units to the Formation. These units, in turn, provide the Support functions to the Formation's units. The presence or absence of various types of Support has important Combat and ZOC effects on a Formation's capabilities.

Support is one of the game concepts in *BCS* that generates many player questions. New players should read this Case carefully. Most Support-capable units can exist in two states ("Real" or Support) while a few can **only** be Support. Units providing Support do not occupy any specific map location. Think of Support as being broken into small subunits distributed to other units of their Formation. Many units capable of providing Support can be concentrated into a unit counter and can then operate as normal (Real) units on the map. When units capable of providing Support are concentrated as a Real unit, they **no longer** provide Support to any other units. New players should read Case 1.5 slowly and carefully.

Case 2.1 Reinforcements describes how reinforcing units enter the map. Reinforcements in *BCS* act much as they do in other games. Players just need to remember that in some situations Reinforcements could be Assigned to specific Formations.

Case 2.2 Replacements details the rules for acquiring and using Replacement Points (Repls) to rebuild units in *BCS*. Players should note that both Reinforcements and Replacements are placed or used in the Reinforcements segment at the start of each turn.

Case 2.3 Assignment details the Assignment process which allows Independent Units and Arty Points to be functional parts of a given Formation. Independent units are units that do not have a permanent Formation assignment printed on the counter. These units can be traded between Formations using the procedures in this case. Artillery in *BCS* is shown as Arty Points. Some Arty Points are assigned permanently to Formations and are listed on the HQ's counter. Other Arty Points are assignable to Formations as the player wishes. These are shown as markers which can be placed on the map with the HQ counter or stored off map as the player chooses.

Case 1.8 Fatigue tracks the cumulative effects of continuing combat on a Formation's performance. A Formation's fatigue level operates as a negative DRM on the SNAFU die roll. Fatigue level may increase depending on a die roll made each time a Formation completes an Activation. The probability that this die roll will increase Fatigue increases as the scale of a Formation's combat operations increases from Barrage to Engagement to Attacks. Formations can improve Fatigue level by conducting Recovery during an Activation.

Case 3.6 Isolation defines the effect on units when they are cut off from a connection to their Formation HQ. Units lose steps when they are located outside of their Formation's Command Radius and/or the unit has no Safe Path.

Learning Units

The above should provide a new player with an understanding of how Formations operate in *BCS*. New players should **now** read **Sections 4.0** and **5.0** to learn the rules for operating *Units* in *BCS*. For players experienced in other hex and counter wargames, these sections will be more familiar.

Section 4.0 Movement and Section 4.3 Zones of Control (ZOCs) detail the rules controlling how units move on the map. Movement is the familiar hex-by-hex movement controlled by a unit's Movement Allowance and map terrain. ZOCs are slightly more complex and there are differences between the normal ZOC, ZOCs provided by assigned Support, and ZOCs of units made up of anti-armor weapons.

5.0 Combat contains the rules defining the three methods of combat between opposing units. Players need to learn all three types:

1. **Barrages** (5.4) by artillery, air, and vehicular weapons systems. The latter making what is called "Attacks by Fire" which are resolved on the same Barrage Table as would Artillery using a separate column and its own Section, 5.3. Attack by Fire is slightly less effective than some single Artillery or Air Point Barrage.

2. **Engagements** (5.2) between ranged anti-armor weapons.

3. **Attacks** which could be **Regular Attacks** (similar to normal wargame attacks) or **Shock Attacks** (which are akin to familiar wargame Overrun Attacks).

Finally after reading these all these rules sections, new players can read the *Complete Activation Example* with hopefully better understanding.

BCS Primer

Tips For Playing The Battalion Combat Series Well

By Doug Fitch

The *Battalion Combat Series (BCS)* is a fantastic design from the creative mind of Dean Essig. However, the system's radical design means that nothing you have previously encountered in your gaming career can fully prepare you for it. While the game mechanics are quite elegant, previous gaming experience can hinder, rather than help, your attempt to learn the system. You must throw out everything you know about playing operational level wargames when you come to *BCS*. To quote a certain Jedi Master, "You must unlearn what you have learned." Combined with some new terminology, this leads to a bit of a steep learning curve for the game.

The most challenging aspect of *BCS*, though, is not learning how to play the game, but learning how to play the game *well*. The purpose of this article is not to help you learn the game's rules. There are many excellent resources for that already available. This article aims to go a step beyond the mechanics and focus on how to apply those mechanics in the new world of *BCS*. We will discuss some of the key principles I have learned (sometimes the hard way) through my experience with the system.

Forest For The Trees

Focusing on your individual battalions as discrete independent units causes players more grief than just about anything else in *BCS*. The vast majority of wargames published to date allow players to move their pieces across the board without penalty, freely intermixing them with other units from different larger organizations. Real world considerations like unit boundaries and lines of communication are not a factor. Frequently, battalions and regiments from various divisions end up stacked with one another without penalty. Or divisions jump from corps-to-corps on a weekly or even daily basis. By so doing, games have trained

players to maximize the movement and attack abilities of each individual piece. One is not only allowed—but encouraged—to shuffle units back and forth to bring maximum firepower in each attack. Do this in *BCS* and you will lose.

Trained by years of playing other games, most players' initial reaction to *BCS* is to focus on what they can do with each of their individual battalions. They lose sight of the forest for the trees. One of the critical skills to master for success in the *BCS* is to "think big". By that, I mean that you cannot think in terms of the individual pieces on the map. You must think in terms of *Formations*. When you look at the map, you should not see 10 or 12 units, but one Formation (usually a division though occasionally a smaller sized organization). The individual pieces are merely parts of this whole.

If you are looking at a *BCS* map and thinking, "I can move my tank battalion from this hex to attack that hex," you are going to set yourself up for failure. Instead, your mindset needs to be, "I can send 3rd Armored Division to capture that crossroads/village/bridge." But since the entire division cannot fit in that village, you need to think about not only the battalion or two you are going to send to capture the village, but where you are going to put the rest of the division; as well as how that division's location (described in the rules by the 'scientific' term "blob") is going to interact with the other divisions in your force. In *BCS*, you move *Formations* around the map, you do not simply push pieces. The command and logistical system *BCS* uses will punish you severely for not thinking in terms of Formations.

The Objective marker mechanic reinforces this. Other games you have played basically allowed you to attack everywhere, with all of your units, every turn. And if you did not, you felt as though you failed to optimize your forces. In *BCS*, all of your attacks and artillery barrages must occur within the "Objective Zone" that exists out to two hexes from an Objective marker. Newbies view this as a restriction on their ability to attack. Experienced players find that this mechanic *focuses* their Formation's activities.

When you place these OBJ markers out, you are making a conscious decision about your Formation's priority for this Activation. Instead of your battalions careening about the map attacking everywhere and nowhere, you now have a strong visual reminder of the task you have assigned to the Formation. This should not only impact the movement of the individual battalions you have selected for the actual attack and capture of the objective, but also every other battalion in the Formation as you consider how best to secure and consolidate your recently won objective(s). *BCS* Formations do not have the strength to successfully attack along more than one, maybe two, avenues in any given Activation. In addition to dissipation of force, spreading your Formation to the winds has more (and often worse) problems, which will be addressed below.

If there is one thing you should master that will improve your *BCS* play the most, it is to "THINK BIG". Do not let the fleeting opportunity an individual battalion's position might offer distract you from the situation of the Formation as a whole. Stepping back and seeing the big picture in terms of Formations will help you get more out of each of your individual battalions over the course of a game.

"A Tidy Battlefield"

Field Marshal Montgomery's predilection for a 'tidy battlefield' is something for which every *BCS* player should strive. The SNAFU Table punishes players whose sloppy play results in units from multiple Formations getting intermingled. This can have an ongoing and detrimental effect on the ability of your army to do...anything. Just moving a unit temporarily through another Formation's "simple Blob" results in BOTH Formations being marked Coordinated and suffering a -1 DRM on their next SNAFU roll. If you allow those units to begin their Activation with that unit still inside the other Formation's blob, then you also accrue an additional -1 DRM for Mixed Formations. For Formations like the US early in *Last Blitzkrieg*, that additional -2 DRM usually eliminates ANY possibility of getting a Full result on your SNAFU check. And it makes even a Partial result very iffy.

Again, the best way to avoid messy situations on the map is to think in terms of Formations. But you need to not just be aware of how the Formation will fit into the frontline, but also where its logistical tail will be located. The SNAFU Table will also penalize you for not keeping a tidy battlefield behind the front. Ideally, you will be able to assign a road to a specific Formation. Once you've given the road to a Formation, avoid the temptation to allow other Formations to use that same road unless it's an emergency.

Obviously, there will be times when there simply aren't enough roads to go around. The Germans face this at the start of their offensive in **Last Blitzkrieg**. However, once they cross the Our River and are able to do some broken field running, there are usually enough roads to allow a couple of panzer divisions to operate side by side. And if you can manage to pull that off, it is a beautiful thing to behold.

Because the Crossing the Streams DRM only applies from the HQ to the Combat Trains, keeping your logistical tail as short as possible will also help you avoid a tangled mess in your rear. It's often better to move your Trains (and take the -1 for Ghost Trains) than to leave them far behind your HQ. Crossing the Streams affects every Formation whose Main Supply Routes (MSRs) are crossed, while Ghost Trains only affects the Formation in question.

If you strive to maintain a tidy battlefield for your own forces, your goal should be to make your opponent's army as messy as possible. Retreating units into a neighboring Formation is a great way to Coordinate both of them (and likely leave them Mixed). Similarly, cutting the number of roads available for his Trains forces them all on to the remaining few, thus saddling him with yet another -1 for Crossing the Streams.

Inflicting negative DRM's on your opponent's Formations has a snowball effect. Having a -6 or -8 SNAFU DRM (I've seen it) eliminates any possibility of a Full result, and makes Failure very likely. This prevents him from reacting at all to the initial dislocation,

allowing your units to continue to run amok and worsen his Formation's position. When you have your opponent down, don't stop kicking him.

Conversely, if you find the enemy has pushed aside one of your Formations and that Formation is now mixed up with one or more of your other Formations, you may well be better off cutting your losses and giving up ground in order to unscramble your units. The longer you are under those negative DRM's from being Mixed, the harder it will be for you to do anything about it. In many cases, you are better off withdrawing, reorganizing, and counterattacking to retake the lost positions than trying to hold on to a crumbling front.

A less dramatic situation may be one where you do not move some battalions to their full extent because it would result in either Coordination for the two Formations involved, or even being Mixed. Avoid the temptation to inflict a step loss or two on the enemy in exchange for Coordinating and Mixing your Formations. It simply is not worth the cost.

Along the same lines is the relief operation. *BCS* makes it very tricky to relieve a frontline Formation with another. To avoid Coordination and Mixing, you need to move the Formation to be relieved out of its position before you move in the relief. Rarely will the enemy allow you to do this unmolested. You could easily find yourself fighting to retake ground you just voluntarily gave up. Your other option is to move the relieving force in on top of the original Formation. But this will give you Coordination and Mixed DRM's on your SNAFU rolls, making it much harder to unmix the Formations by getting the original force to activate and move out. The best course of action is to try to keep some reserve battalions within your Formation, allowing some units to rest and receive replacements while others hold the frontline. This will give your Formations a much longer shelf life when in combat. But even this is hard to accomplish most of the time.

Never Send a Tank To Do an Infantryman's Job

A tank has a much bigger gun than an infantryman, and it moves a lot faster, too (okay, Matildas excepted). So I should just use tanks for everything, right? Not in *BCS*. Most games treat armor like it's nothing more than stronger, faster infantry. But *BCS* is not most games. The problem is, armor is NOT the same as infantry, and it doesn't fight like infantry. The *BCS* mechanics do an excellent job of highlighting the differences between the two combat arms.

Any unit that has an Armor Value (AV) qualifies as armor (at least for purposes of this discussion). These units are given different capabilities than the Attack-Capable units in the game (indicated by the white arrow on the counter). They use a different Combat Table entirely (the Engagement Table or Barrage Table, depending on target type). The fact that different combat tables exist should be a huge red flag that these units will not behave the same as infantry, and should not be thought of in a conventional way.

A common mistake I see with new players is using armor units to hold important real estate. Their previous years' experience of armor automatically being the strongest unit in the game has conditioned them to continue that tactic in *BCS*. This often leads to unfortunate results for the player, who is expecting their mighty armor battalion to hold off all attackers. The problem lies in the nature of armor vs. armor engagements.

When armor unit attacks a defending armor unit, it is resolved on the Engagement Table. A modified 9+ causes a defender step loss & retreat. For the US in **Last Blitzkrieg**, the German armor consistently has a qualitative advantage that results in a +2 or +3 DRM to the Engagement roll (+1 or +2 if the US is in Prepared Defense). So suddenly that big, strong armor battalion will be chased out of its hex by a 6 or 7 on the roll of the dice, which is very doable. Armor does not hold ground well. That is as true in real life as it is in *BCS*. Sure, there are times when you will have no other option, but do not expect your armor units to hold their ground for any length of time.

Another common preconception I have seen is players stacking an armor battalion with an infantry type unit (to give it some 'armor support'). While it's true that an attack on the Combat Table will see a +1 DRM for the defense due to 2 units in the stack, your opponent is not likely to humor you by assaulting the hex. Instead, he'll drive up his own armor and conduct an Engagement. And since the rules require ALL units in a hex to retreat if one of them suffers a Retreat result, by placing an armor battalion in the hex you desperately want to hold, you have actually made it far easier to take. If you want to give your infantry units support, then use actual Support. That's what it's there for. Save your armor units for counterattacks to retake the objective if the enemy pushes you out.

But armor is not just vulnerable on the Engagement Table. It is also more vulnerable on the Combat Table. Infantry can assault that nice, impervious armor unit just as easily as they can another infantry unit or some armored cars. But since AV units are never eligible for Support, unless your armor battalion is a Dual unit, you are giving up the +1 DRM for Supported/Dual. And even a +1 could make a difference in an attack.

Speaking of Dual, I'd like to spend a moment discussing them. The late war US armor divisions are chock full of them. Dual units combine the best AND the worst of assault and AV type units. Among the benefits of Dual units is that they carry their own support with them, and it CANNOT be dropped. This effectively gives them an AR one notch higher than what is printed on their counter whenever they face enemy infantry. They can drop enemy support by themselves, or (if that support has been dropped), use a Fire Event to kill a step *before* attacking on the Combat Table. This means that over the course of a game, their attacks are going to bleed the enemy more than non-Dual units. But while Dual units bring along all the benefits of being AV, they also bring along the problems. When facing superior enemy armor, do not expect your Dual units to hold ground very long. All this means that you should view your Dual units as *offensive* units, and use them defensively only when you are absolutely desperate.

Learning the differences between infantry and armor units in *BCS* is critical to success. Armor should be attacking, whether on the offense or as part of a defensive counterattack. Let the infantry hold the ground. By sending the right units for the task at hand, you stand a better chance of achieving your objectives.

IGO-UGO, Not IW8-UGO

BCS uses an alternating Activation mechanic during the turn. I have seen much discussion about players trying to game this mechanic to their advantage. This is especially true when one side has several more Formations in play than the other, like the start of the **Last Blitzkrieg** campaign. The major complaint being that a player can wait to activate certain Formations until his opponent is forced to activate all his Formations on a certain sector of the front. Thus, the player has a free hand for his Activations without interference from any opposing Formations.

While this may be true in certain situations, waiting often has as big a downside as not waiting. By not activating your Formations in a certain area, you hand the initiative on that sector to your opponent. And in *BCS*, he who moves first often has an advantage, one that outweighs waiting out your opponent.

There are legitimate reasons for waiting to activate certain Formations. For example, you need other friendly Formations to move out of the way before you can activate to avoid mixing your Formations (see "A TIDY BATTLEFIELD" above). But playing games with the Activation sequence for no other reason than to exhaust your opponent's Activations on one area of the front can have a lot of unintended (and negative) consequences for you. For example, the Formation you are hoping to trap and destroy may well activate and just move away, robbing you of the chance to inflict any serious harm on it. Worse yet, the enemy may launch an unexpected attack which disrupts your Formations, and could even saddle you with some negative SNAFU DRM's preventing your Formation from even getting out of the starting blocks this turn.

Furthermore, the ability of the side with an advantage in number of Formations to wait is a subtle way of portraying the initiative such a side has. For example, the Germans greatly outnumber the US at the beginning of **Last Blitzkrieg** and the initiative is solidly with them for the first few days (even week) of the campaign. Allowing them to "manage" their Activation sequence reflects their ability to dictate the tempo of the battle early on. As the campaign progresses and the numbers switch to favor the US, we see the initiative also move in their direction. It's just one more example of the elegance and subtleties with which *BCS* is loaded.

"Preppers"

(or Why PD Isn't a Magic Bullet)

Prepared Defense (PD) is probably the game's most overused mechanic. Many players see the +1 DRM it provides to defenders on the Combat & Engagement Tables, combined with the ability to ignore a Situational Retreat (in exchange for a step loss) and think PD is a must have. What they do not consider are all of PD's down sides, of which there are plenty.

For starters, the best SNAFU result possible while in PD is Partial. This halves unit MA and gives you only one Objective marker, thus eliminating any chance at the "Double Tap" DRM for your attacks. Your HQ cannot move while in PD. PD halves (rounding down) your Artillery Points available, which really hurts your plans to attrit the bad guys with your artillery as you sit in your defenses. If you make an attack on the Combat Table you receive a -1 DRM. When you consider that you are also ineligible for the Double Tap +1, this equates to a -2 on the Combat Table before considering anything else. I don't know about you, but I hate giving away 2 pips on my dice in any attack.

Everybody loves to have their cake and eat it, too. And I think this may be one reason why folks seem so enamored with PD. Unfortunately for them (but fortunately for historical verisimilitude) PD in *BCS* is a tradeoff. It is a nice way of showing the posture of your Formation. Either your Formation is mobile or it is not. PD hurts a mobile (even a moderately mobile) Formation far more than it helps one.

All of which is not to say that PD is never useful. If your Formation is where you want it to be, and you are willing to trade casualties to hold terrain, then PD is warranted. But the trend among folks I have played is to enter PD as a matter of course. It is their default position. PD doesn't even provide any better protection from Barrages than regular terrain. You should think hard about entering PD as a protection for your units when just locating them in terrain will serve you just as well without any of the PD downsides.

Do not underestimate the consequences of PD on the Combat Table. Sure, you ignore those Situational Retreat results, but it costs you 1 step to do so. If you were not in PD, you would have to retreat. But the retreat is only three hexes and you suffer no losses. Meanwhile, there's a chance that the enemy suffers a step loss while you do not. You are trading ground for time, and perhaps even getting ahead in the attritional battle, by not going into PD.

Again, there is definitely a time and place for PD, but it should be integrated into your overall plan and not merely a kneejerk reaction every time you go to activate a Formation. Putting armored Formations into PD requires even more careful consideration.

“Kicking Puppies”

(Jumping HQ's & Trains)

BCS places an emphasis on logistics, and that should guide your strategy as well. It is extremely difficult, costly, and time consuming to destroy a Formation by attacking all of its combat units to death. The highest number of casualties you can inflict on a defender in a given attack is two (three, given certain retreat situations). Your typical infantry battalion would need to be attacked at least three times to eliminate it through combat alone. Given the mechanics of the Objective Zone, this means it will take at least a few turns barring the commitment of several armor units to use their Attack by Fire capability on it. Rarely have I seen the situation where a player has two or three

spare armor battalions sitting around with nothing better to do than barrage a single infantry battalion.

No, in BCS the key to beating the enemy is disrupting his command and logistics. This is done by jumping his HQ's and Trains. Jumping the HQ gives the Formation Coordination, drops its PD, and Ghosts its Trains. That's at least a cumulative -2 SNAFU DRM on its next Activation. Jumping his Trains will usually put them beyond Optimal Distance, as well as ghosting them, which robs the Formation of a +1 SNAFU DRM and inflicting a -1 DRM. Another possible net -2 DRM (-3 if you do both). There is also a chance that by jumping his Trains you could cut his MSR. The MSR will not be Complete and thus impose a -3 SNAFU DRM on the Formation. And if he cannot move his Trains to Complete an MSR by the end of his next Activation, the Trains will come off the map, to be followed next Activation by placement of a MSR Blocked marker. Those MSR Blocked markers really up the ante.

Jumping HQ's and Trains hastens the snowball effect mentioned earlier. By piling up negative SNAFU DRM's on the enemy, it makes it much harder for him to react to your attacks and to salvage his position. Once you've reached a point where you have started inflicting negative SNAFU DRM's on the enemy, do everything you can to continue doing so in future turns until the Formation is sufficiently isolated as to literally wither away.

An abundance of roads can make cutting a Formation's MSR difficult. It may require a substantial commitment of your forces and a few turns to accomplish, but if you can bag a number of enemy Formations, your efforts will be handsomely rewarded. Remember, removing the last combat unit of a Formation from the map will frequently permanently remove the entire Formation from the game (unless the Formation has some straggler units showing up on the OOA). In a long game like *Last Blitzkrieg*, the absence of an entire division or two could be decisive in the late game struggle. And the best way to remove large chunks of a Formation in the same turn is to starve them off the map, not attack them.

Separating Units From HQ's

While cutting MSR's will accelerate the demise of a Formation, to truly eliminate units through Isolation you need to separate them from their HQ. Isolation effects are only implemented if a unit is either out of Command Radius or has no Safe Path (or both). Removing a Safe Path can often easily be accomplished by “ZOCing in” the unit in question. However, this has repercussions when it comes to retreats due to combat. Without a Safe Path, a unit will not retreat, but takes a step loss instead. If you really need that hex, do NOT “ZOC in” the defender. You will regret the time (and often steps) lost attacking the unit, turn after turn, as the Isolation effects slowly take effect.

The better way to inflict Isolation effects is to separate the combat units from their HQ. This is accomplished by jumping the HQ (usually repeatedly) to force it to retreat up its MSR and away from its units. Circling back to the first issue discussed (thinking in terms of Formations), you should develop your attack plans with an eye to dismembering the Formation, ideally decapitating its head (the HQ).

The Indirect Approach

(Apologies to Capt. Liddell Hart)

With the introduction of the Hard & Soft Jump rule, the comments about jumping your opponent's HQ's and CT's need a little modification. While the bulk of the above sections remain valid, the manner in which you go about achieving the goals must change. Being able to blast a hole in the enemy's line and then launching your mobile units like a heat-seeking missile directly at his vulnerable HQ and CT is an ability of which historical commanders could only dream. The Hard & Soft Jump rule is designed to address the player's omniscient view of the battlefield given by the limitations of the medium (in case you missed it, this is a recurring theme in Dean Essig designs over the years). Essentially, now when one of your units enters a hex containing an enemy HQ or CT, there is a 2 in 3 chance your opponent's assets are not there. In other words, your G-2's best guess about the enemy HQ's location was wrong.

This has some significant ramifications for how you go about disrupting your opponent's forces. If you make a beeline for the HQ counter and enter the hex only to find that it is empty, the opponent gets to reposition the HQ (or CT) to establish another Complete MSR without penalty. I have seen many situations where this actually helped the defender more than the attacker. It can be quite frustrating to put your opponent's Formation in an untenable position, and about to administer the coup de grace by jumping his HQ, only to see the HQ disappear and appear in another hex that undoes all the work you just accomplished (often at a price). Do not despair, though. You are not condemned by this new rule to play an endless game of Whack-A-Mole. You need to merely adjust your thinking.

Instead of thinking about jumping the enemy's HQ/CT, you should be thinking about cutting his MSR's. You can achieve much of the same effects as physically jumping an HQ by instead just cutting the MSR. Recall that a Complete MSR runs to/from a supply source, through a CT to an HQ. By placing a unit or ZOC in any hex of the enemy's MSR, the CT is no longer in a "Legal Hex". This will require the CT to flip to its Ghost side and move. If the MSR is not Complete, you've saddled your opponent's Formation with a -3 SNAFU DRM and starts it down the road to MSR Blocking DRMs. Even just having the CT in Ghost mode gives a -1 DRM and you have likely eliminated the +1 Optimal Distance DRM, too. But it gets even better.

Rather than trying to overrun the HQ's hex, you should instead aim to surround it, or at least cut off all viable routes that could be used for an MSR. With his MSR cut, your opponent now has a choice to make. He can leave his HQ in place and accept the penalties (which are severe) of having an MSR Blocked marker on his Formation, or he can voluntarily displace his HQ. This causes the same effects as if you had overrun the unit (loss of PD and marked Coordinated). Remember that it is impossible to permanently cut an opponent's MSR because of his ability to displace his HQ/CT as far as necessary to reestablish it. However, by forcing his HQ to displace farther to the rear, you are also achieving your prime objective of separating his HQ from his line units.

Instead of a dagger thrust at your opponent's HQ hex, you should be looking to cast a wide

net across his potential MSR routes. The deeper and wider the net, the more harm you will do your opponent by forcing his HQ that much farther from his combat units. Instead of the direct approach of overrunning the HQ itself, you will be more assured of the results you want by taking the indirect approach of cutting MSR's and leaving the HQ's hex alone.

A Hard Day's Night

It's easy to forget that those little cardboard counters we push across the map represent flesh and blood soldiers. Soldiers get tired and need rest and a warm meal. *BCS* brings this reality to you with its Fatigue mechanic. Fatigue affects two aspects of the game: as a SNAFU DRM and a Formation's chance to get a second Activation.

Given that the SNAFU Table has the greatest single impact on your army's effectiveness, managing negative DRM's when you roll on it is vital to success. While Fatigue accretion depends on the dice, it is not entirely random. You do have the ability to influence the rate at which your Formations acquire Fatigue. The two activities in the game that do not carry any risk of increasing Fatigue are movement and defending. If you want to do anything else, you will have to evaluate the potential Fatigue impact.

Attacking on the Combat Table carries the biggest Fatigue risk, with a 50% chance of picking up a Fatigue level. Any Fatigue that your Formation does accrue will require an entire Activation (or game-turn, if using the highly recommended Orders option) to get rid of. In a short game like *Baptism By Fire*, that's a considerable portion of the game that your Formation will be useless. Given that, you should not be blindly attacking everything you can, just because you can. A vulnerable enemy unit may not be worth the hit to your future SNAFU rolls. Instead of attacking it, can you surround it, or force it out of its position through maneuver (remember, movement does not increase your Fatigue)?

The Engagement Table and Attacks by Fire only increase your Fatigue on a 2 or less. So your armor units can wreak more havoc on the enemy without Fatiguing as quickly. But if they are facing enemy infantry, they suddenly become a less attractive option for

grinding down the bad guys. Because armor attacks infantry with an Attack by Fire on the Barrage Table, the end result is the same thing as an infantry unit's barrage, but with twice the chance of increasing your Fatigue.

If killing enemy steps tops your priority list, barraging is the most cost-effective option in terms of Fatigue. Only a 1 in 6 will increase your Fatigue, regardless of the number of barrage attacks you make in one Activation. That said, don't get too 'trigger-happy.' I have seen players make one lone barrage attack in an Activation, only to see their Fatigue increase when they roll that 1 on the Fatigue Check. So, to kill a single enemy step (and sometimes none at all) they have saddled their Formation with an additional -1 DRM to every future SNAFU roll they will make. Yet another example of the recurring theme in *BCS* of:

"Just because you CAN do something, doesn't mean you SHOULD do something."

Since any amount of qualifying activity still nets only one roll for Fatigue, if you make an attack (thereby giving yourself a 50-50 chance of picking up Fatigue) maximize your offensive efforts in the same Activation. This is a situation where you definitely want to shoot it if you have it. The lone barrage attack won't hurt you because the attack you made earlier in the Activation has already inflicted a 3 or less Fatigue check on you. Likewise, make sure you can get as many attacks on the Combat Table for a single Fatigue check as you can.

You can also find yourself under the Fatigue 8-ball if you do not pay attention to when you use Second Activations. In v2.0, you cannot do any activities "for free" when it comes to Fatigue in the Second Activation. You will have to roll at least as a 33% chance of Fatigue increase unless you attack (50%) or obtain a Fail SNAFU to let you off the hook. Second Activations represent you demanding your Formation goes above and beyond in Tempo...but to fit it into the same "day" everyone else had to work with. Doing so, at all, is exhausting and in *BCS* terms may contribute to the increase in Fatigue. In other words, you'll want to consider the risk that occurs when you conduct a Second Activation 'merely' to flip your Trains or some such. It might be better to pass on that now, and accept the -1 SNAFU mod for your next real Activation.

Fatigue management can make or break your efforts in the late game portion of any *BCS* scenario. By having a solid plan, not getting distracted by small, fleeting opportunities, and staying focused you stand a much better chance of managing your army's Fatigue and giving yourself a decided edge over an opponent who ignores his Fatigue until it's too late. Once in Fat-4, your SNAFU results will suffer greatly, and you will be denied any chance of a Second Activation. Your enemy could and should thank you.

Summary

The above points hardly comprise an exhaustive list, but they will hopefully give you a framework for approaching *BCS* in a successful manner. *BCS* oozes with subtleties. Understanding (and eventually mastering) them gives you the keys to enjoying this rich system. The beautiful design and hours of great gaming justify the time and effort required to adequately learn the *Battalion Combat Series*. An exciting

line up of future games in the series will allow players to explore operations on all fronts of the Second World War in new and interesting ways, and I hate to see anyone miss out on what is the best game design to hit the industry in the last few decades.

May your dice stay hot!

Complete Activation Example

In this example, we will follow the Activation of the 12 VG Division at the start of Last Blitzkrieg. It will not be a canned example (events will play out as they actually do) nor is it 'perfect' play.

It is here as a straight version of what can happen in an Activation, not a look at everything that could happen in one.



This is the at-start situation. The 99 ID HQ has been moved into an easier to see position. At the far right of the image is the 12 VG Combat Trains which are currently stacked with the 3 FJ units and ensuring, as if it wasn't obvious enough, that they each have a case of Crossing the Streams. The 'Mixed Formations' DRM does not apply.

First, the German player identifies that he is Activating the 12 VG and flips the HQ. This is the Formation's initial Activation so no die roll is required to do so. Since the Germans are on the offensive, the German player is not interested in establishing a Prep Def or doing a Fatigue Recovery Activation, and has no MSR Blockage or odd Combat Train distance concerns to deal with, so the player moves onto SNAFU.

As discussed earlier, 12 VG suffers from Crossed Streams (-1), has a Fat-0 (so no DRM one way or the other), is at Optimal Distance (in this case, 10 hexes, +1), the Germans get a +1 Game Specific SNAFU DRM for this turn, but has no other effects in play. SNAFU roll DRM is a net +1. The player rolls a 6, modified to 7 which is just barely a Full.

A Full SNAFU allows the division to place two OBJ markers. Here I used KT-X markers. The VOR unit in the 12 VG (KG Holz) is capable of laying a Recon OBJ, but will be unlikely to be able to use that function in this Activation due to other demands on it. Looking ahead to the future (poorly, as events will show), I placed both OBJs in 44.20 which catches all three 99 ID front line units and allows the Double OBJ Zone DRMs to be used.

Holz moves first expending 8 MPs to enter 44.19. Note that the Overpass Bridge in 47.18 is not operational, so the Open Terrain cost (2) was paid to move from 48.18 to 47.18. Holz will burn both Fire Events to Drop Support and be STOPPED in that hex to be an Assist for the later attack.

Holz engages the Support in first C44.20 and then C43.19. Holz is a 6, but also has a +1 DRM for the Double OBJ (some call this a Double Tap). Meanwhile, the 99 ID units also have a 6 base, but Prepared Defense also adds a +1 DRM. The Firer's total (7) minus the Target's total (7) gives a net DRM of +0 on the "Target is Support" section of the *Engagement Table*. Two dice rolls of 9 and 8 (and the +0 DRM) give the desired Support Dropped result.

This leaves the situation as follows:



In order to save closer units for potential deeper operations, I/89 moves to 45.20. This unit makes a regular attack on 44.20 using Holz as an Assist (which FINISHES both units for the Activation). The German player uses 1 Arty Point as Suppression (it is important to evict the US unit from the hex, so the +2 for Suppression on the attack is much more valuable here than inflicting extra losses).

The attack is worth 8 (AR of 4, +2 for Suppression, +1 for Assist, +1 for Double OBJ). The defense is worth 5 (AR of 3, +1 for Terrain, +1 for Prep Def). So, it is a net +3. The German player rolls a 5 for a modified 8 result giving A1, Situational, Traffic. The Attacking unit takes a loss, and the defender must take his Situational as a Step Loss, staying in the hex because the unit has Prep Def. This wastes the Traffic result, as that will not apply unless the defender is destroyed or Retreats.

I/27 and the Pioneer move to 44.18 and attack 43.19. With the main route sealed by the failure in the center, the German player uses three of his Arty Points (he started with 6) to conduct a Destruction Barrage. These rolls need a 4-6 to inflict a step loss. He rolls 6, 2, and 3 for one step loss. I/27 is the Attack unit, the Pioneer is the Assist. The attack is worth 6 (4 AR, +1 for Assist unit, +1 for Double OBJ). The defense is worth 5 (3 AR, +1 for Terrain, +1 for Prep Def). So, +1 overall. A roll of 10 modified to 11 gives a D1 loss result and a required Retreat. The US player

must Retreat the unit three hexes (at least) and end up on its Move Side adjacent to or stacked with the HQ. I/27 advances into the hex.

Further north, I/48 and II/48 move into position to attack 2/394. The German player uses his last two Arty Points to go for kills here, rolling a 3 and a 6 getting one kill. The Attack unit is II/48 and the Assist is I/48. The Attack is worth 6 (AR 4, +1 Assist, +1 Double OBJ) and the Defense is worth 6 (AR 3, +1 Terrain, +1 Support, +1 Prep Def). Net +0. A roll of 6 gives an A1.

The rest of the division pushes forward, including the HQ which moves across the blown Overpass requiring the MSR to the Combat Trains to pass to the Tracks in the 3 FJ area. While the Trains are at 15 hexes, the path is currently not Complete because of the EZOC in 47.17. The player may be hoping that other Formations will shoo the 14 Cav unit away, but this will not help the Second Activation of the 12 VG if there is one. As a result, the 12 VG Trains must be removed from the map before the next SNAFU Roll. The 12 VG's Blob never overlaps that of the 3 FJ, so no Mixed occurs and no Coordination markers are applied.

The situation before Clean Up is as follows:



The German player rolls one die for Fatigue. Because of the Attacks, he will increase Fatigue on rolls of 1-3. He rolls a 1 and increases Fatigue. After Clean up, the result looks like the below:



German Reactivation:

The German player rolls one die to see if he can do his Second Activation. Obviously, he really wants to apply more effort at breaking the frontline before the US player can react. A roll of 6 allows this, the HQ is rotated to Done, and the Second Activation continues with step (a) (Preparation). Only the removal of the Combat Trains (due to no Complete MSR) is applied and then play moves on to SNAFU.

SNAFU is more complicated than last time. The Trains are off map (therefore, not Complete) so many of the usual DRMs do not apply. Rather, they get a -1 for Fatigue, +1 for the German Game Specific DRM, and a -3 for the Off-map Trains (-3 overall). A roll of 8 gives a modified roll of 5 which is a Partial.

Most importantly for this Activation, the number of available Arty Points is halved to 3, all units move at 1/2, and only one OBJ is allowed. The single OBJ is placed on C44.20.

I/27 moves to 42.20 and II/27 moves into 45.21. This cuts the Safe Path to 1/394 in C44.20.

KG Holz is again pressed into service to drop Support on the intended target (1/394). 6 vs 7, or a net DRM of -1. Roll of a 7 is just barely enough to Drop Support. Several options present themselves at this point. Holz could be used for an Assist and make an Attack by Fire. It could do a Shock Attack. Shock Attacks are best designed for weak targets; this target is not weak. Holz could also lead the Attack, which would get an additional DRM because it is a Dual unit.

Holz will do the Assist/Attack by Fire role. Here the Attack by Fire works with a roll of 5, killing a Step.

Because of the Partial, the German player only has 3 Arty Points to use and decides to burn them on this attack in an effort to kill the unit outright. Rolls of 3, 6 and 3 kill one Step, leaving the unit with 3 Steps remaining.

I/89 is the Attack unit again, with Holz as the Assist. The Attack is worth 5 (AR of 4, +1 for Assist) while the defense is worth 5 (AR of 3, Terrain +1, Prep Def +1), so a +0 DRM overall. A roll of a 6 gives an A1 result. The lack of a Retreat result frees 1/394 from the No Safe Path loss.

II/48 and I/48 execute the same attack as in the first Activation, this time with no Artillery support. The attack is 5 vs. 6 (same as the first Activation, less the Double OBJ that existed then). -1 DRM. A roll of 7 gives a modified 6 or another A1 result.

The positions at this point are in the illustration at left.



The German player must roll for Fatigue this time. Because he did Attacks, the roll to increase Fatigue is still 1-3. A roll of 2 does just that and the division will carry a Fat-2 into its next Activation.

The end result of this rather ineffective pair of Activations (fairly normal for beating on decent troops with Prep Def in Terrain with good attacking infantry lacking in Supporting arms). It was a mistake to move the HQ the way I did (blocking off the Trains).

In the next Activation of this Division, the situation with the Trains had better be cleaned up or the suffering for that poor planning will continue to affect them. The Trains cannot move to the map as yet, as there is no hex that allows a Complete MSR. As such, in the next Preparation Phase, the 12 VG will get an MSR Blocked Level 1 marker, which will slow things down while the MSR gets straightened out.

Activation Sequence Flow Chart from the original by Jim Kuchar

Each Activation

SNAFU Roll Modifiers (3.2)

Always...

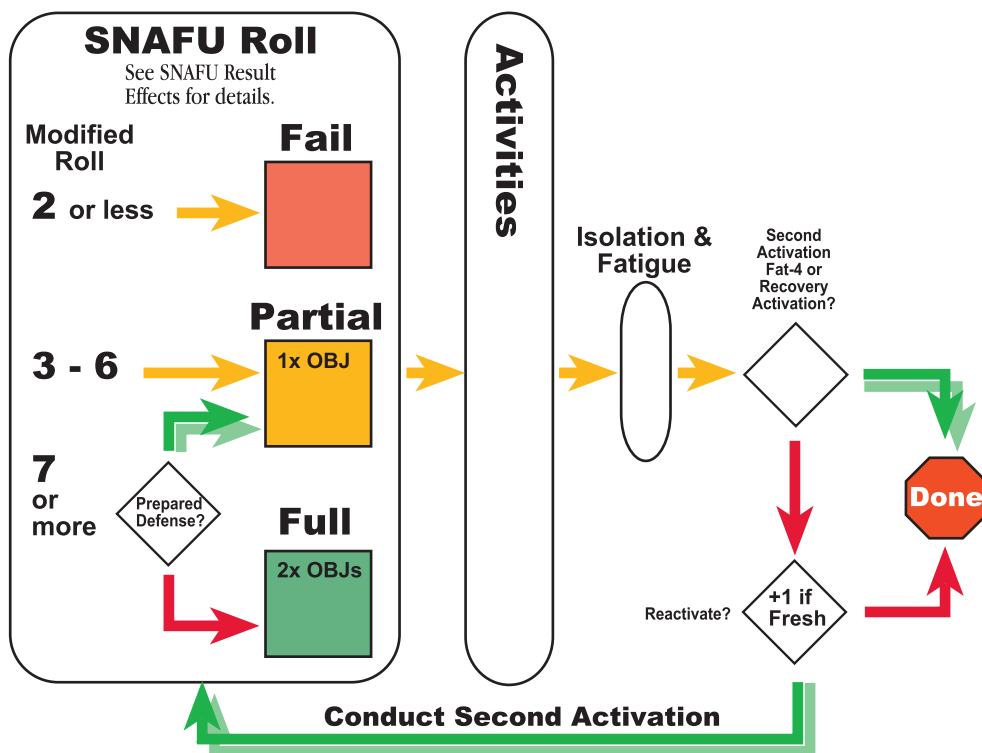
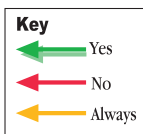
- +1 Fresh Fatigue
- 1 Coordination Marker
- Level Fatigue Level
- 1 Mixed Formation (3.2d)
- +X Game Specific DRM X

The MSR is Complete

- +1 Optimal Distance
- 1 Ghost Trains
- 1 Crossing the Streams
- MSR uses Tracks AND Trafficability is: (use only one)
- 1 Good
- 2 Poor







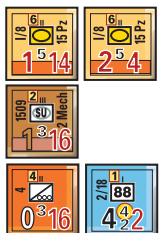

The MSR is not Complete

- 3 Combat Trains are Off-Map
- 1 MSR Blocked Level 1 marker
- 2 MSR Blocked Level 2 marker



ZOC Types and Effects Chart

by Chip Saltsman

Type of ZOC	Exerted by	Effect on Moving Units (4.3d, 4.3e, & 4.3f)
No ZOC	   HQs Trains Unprepared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No effect. Unprepared units are not Attack-Capable and do not have an AV unless printed on that side of the counter. Screen units have no ZOC of any type.
Non-AV ZOC <i>All Adjacent hexes</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HQs can only enter an EZOC if negated by another friendly unit. Leg and Truck MA units must STOP on entering, and cannot move from EZOC to EZOC. Tac MA units ignore Non-AV EZOCs.
Support AV ZOC <i>All Adjacent hexes</i> Regardless of Support Type	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All units must STOP upon entering. AV units (exceptions below) can choose to execute a Stopping Engagement (4.4) and perhaps waive the STOP so as to keep moving. Units can exit any EZOC (keeping in mind the EZOC to EZOC restriction in the box above) in which they might begin an Activity Phase. <p>Exceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stand Off hosts require a Stopping Engagement like real AV ZOCs below. Screening units and Light AV cannot initiate any Engagements. If the Stopping Engagement is required, they are FINISHED, not just STOPPED.
Real AV ZOC <i>All Adjacent hexes</i>	 <div> <div>Color</div> <div>AV Type</div> </div> <div> <div>Red</div> <div>Red</div> </div> <div> <div>Clear</div> <div>Limited</div> </div> <div> <div>White</div> <div>Light</div> </div> <div> <div>Black</div> <div>Stand Off</div> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above for the Support AV ZOCs, except that AV units must STOP and then must execute at least one Stopping Engagement and win it (exceptions above for Screening units and Light AV apply) or the unit stays STOPPED. Regardless of the AV unit's Range, AV ZOCs only extend into adjacent hexes and are unaffected by terrain or units of either side.
Engagement Zones (4.5) <i>Exerted out to unit's range or visibility, whichever is less.</i> <i>Engagement Zones extend into, but not through, Blocking Terrain.</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Truck MA units must STOP upon entering. These do not affect Leg MA & Tac MA units. HQs cannot enter in normal movement nor end a Retreat within one. Friendly units do not negate these hexes. Ignore intervening hexes in a Retreat. Engagement Zones have no effect on MSRs.

Stopping Engagements

An AV unit entering an AV EZOC can waive the resulting STOP by a Stopping Engagement (unless the unit is Light AV or in Screen).

At least 1 Stopping Engagement is **required** if the AV EZOC is from a real AV unit or from Supporting Stand Off units. If a Stopping Engagement is conducted and fails, the unit retains the STOP.

An Engagement results in a win, if the units providing the AV EZOCs are:

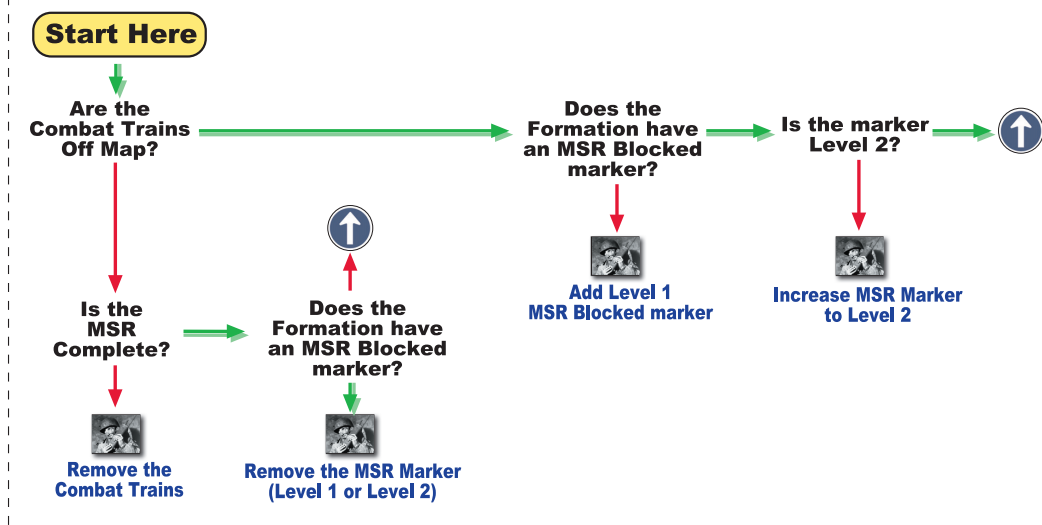
- Destroyed
- Retreat or
- In the case of Support, the Support is Dropped.

Assignment Procedure Chart

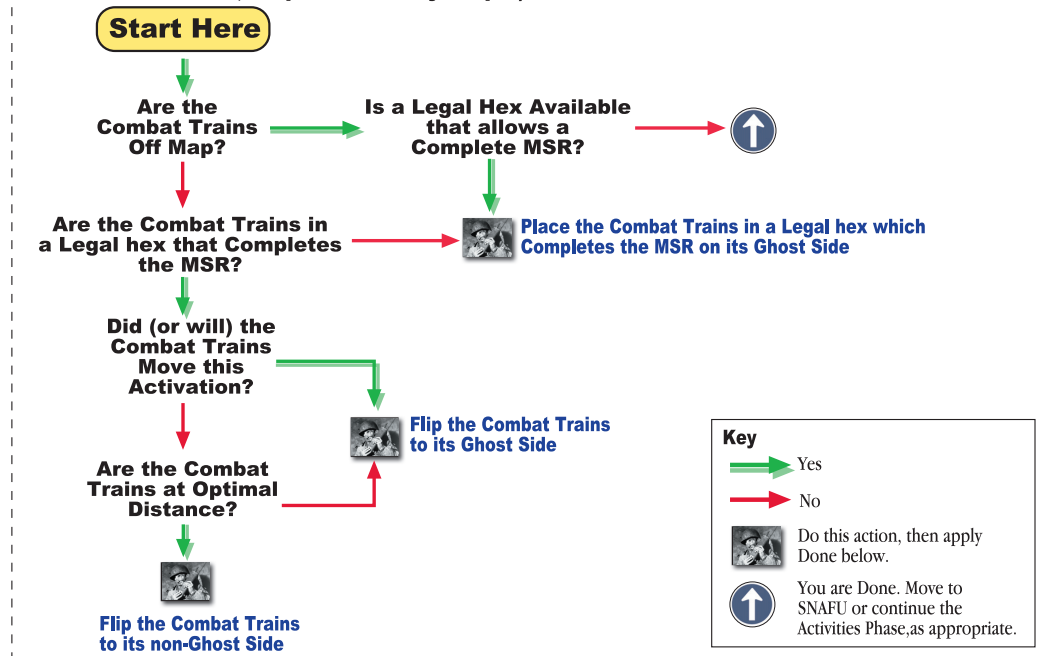
Situation/ Attributes	Desired Action	Requirements	How to Execute
Intrinsic Unit	Enter Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Unit is in Command Radius. ✓ Has a Safe Path of its own MA. 	Place unit near HQ. Mark as Support.
	Exit Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Assembly Hex meets the requirements below. 	Place the unit into the Assembly Hex on its Move-side.
Assigned Independent or Arty Point			
Deployed on Map	Enter Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Unit is in Command Radius. ✓ Has a Safe Path of its own MA. 	Place unit near HQ. Mark as Support.
	Unassign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Unit is in Command Radius. ✓ Has a Safe Path of its own MA. ✓ Current Formation has a Complete MSR. 	Unit remains in hex, Unassigned, or is sent Off-Map for later Assignment.
In Support	Exit Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Assembly Hex meets the requirements below. 	Place the unit into the Assembly Hex on its Move-side.
	Unassign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Current Formation has a Complete MSR. 	Place unit Off-Map for later Assignment.
	Unassign and Exit Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Current Formation has a Complete MSR. ✓ Assembly Hex meets the requirements below. 	Place the unit into the Assembly Hex on its Move-side, or is placed Off-Map for later Assignment.
Unassigned Independent or Arty Point			
Reinforcement, Rebuilt, or Waiting Off-Map	Assign to Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ New Formation has a Complete MSR. ✓ Assembly Hex meets the requirements below. 	Place the unit into the Assembly Hex on its Move-side.
	Assign to Formation and Enter Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ New Formation has a Complete MSR. 	Place unit near HQ. Mark as Support.
Deployed on Map	Assign to Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Has a Truck MA Safe Path to any friendly Formation with a Complete MSR. ✓ New Formation must have a Complete MSR. ✓ Assembly Hex meets the requirements below. ✓ Began this Assignment Phase Unassigned. 	Place the unit into the Assembly Hex on its Move-side.
	Assign to Formation and Enter Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Has a Truck MA Safe Path to any friendly Formation with a Complete MSR. ✓ New Formation must have a Complete MSR. ✓ Began this Assignment Phase Unassigned. 	Place unit near HQ. Mark as Support.
	Go Off Map, Unassigned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Has a Truck MA Safe Path to any friendly Formation with a Complete MSR. ✓ Began this Assignment Phase Unassigned. 	Place unit Off-Map for later Assignment.
<p>To Enter Support, a unit must be capable of going into Support. To Exit Support, a unit must not be Support-Only.</p> <p>Assembly Hex is...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Not more than 5 hexes from HQ. ✓ A Truck MA Safe Path to the Assigned HQ. ✓ Not Prohibited for regular Movement. ✓ Free of any Real AV EZOCs. 			

Combat Train Movement Flowchart from the original by Matthias Hardel

Preparation Phase, Sequence of Play step b)



Activities Phase, Sequence of Play Step e)



Movement in EZOCs & Engagement Zones

EZOCs (4.3)

Leg and Truck MA units must **STOP** on entering any EZOC and cannot move from EZOC to EZOC.

Tac MA units must **STOP** on entering an AV EZOC (either Real or Support). Real and Stand Off Support AV EZOCs **require** Stopping Engagements; non-Stand Off Support AV EZOCs do not. If a unit fails a required Stopping Engagement, the **STOP** remains. Screening and Light AV units cannot initiate an Engagement, so are **FINISHED** instead.

Engagement Zone Hexes (4.5)

Truck MA units must **STOP** on entering.

HQs HQs **cannot** enter EZOC or Engagement Zone hexes. **Reminder:** Friendly units can negate an EZOC for an HQ.

Attack-Type Crib Sheet

Original by Edmond de Seroux

	Available to	Target	Artillery/Air	Cost	Special
Engagement (5.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All real AV units (<i>see right regarding Light AV</i>) 	Target must be either AV or have AV Support	No	1 Fire Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No OBJ Zone required, unless the player wishes to apply the Double OBJ DRM. If the Target is in Terrain or Prepared Defense, the Firer must be adjacent. Drop results Drop all Support in the Target's hex. A Target can be Engaged any number of times. Screen units and Light AV cannot be Engagement Firers. They can only be the Targets of them.
Attack by Fire (5.3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Real AV units 	Target must not contain an AV unit or AV Support	No	1 Fire Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires OBJ Zone. Firer and Target must be adjacent. Resolve like a Barrage, but using the Attack by Fire column on the table.
Regular Attack (5.1g)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attack-Capable units and Dual units 	Any enemy unit.	Up to 3 Arty/Air points Depending on the type of Barrage done.	Units are FINISHED (incl. Assist)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires OBJ Zone. The Attack unit must Advance after Combat (if the defender is destroyed or retreats). An Assist <i>stacked with the Attack unit</i> can Advance if the player desires; no other Assist can do so. The Assist must be stacked with or adjacent to the Attack unit. A hex can only be subject to one Regular Attack in a Phase.
Shock Attack (5.1k)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attack-Capable units Red AV, Light AV, or Breakthrough units ...given TAC MA 	Target must not contain an AV unit or AV Support	Max of 1 Arty/Air point	1 Fire Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires OBJ Zone. Attacker must have at least one Fire Event and one MP remaining. Cannot use Assists. Cannot be into a hex with cost of 4 MPs or more, unless using a road.
Destruction Barrage (5.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arty and Air Points 	Target hex contains an enemy unit	1 Point, unless in an Attack or allowed by Game Specific Rules	Expenditure of Arty/Air Point(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires OBJ Zone. Requires a Spotter which began the Activation in Command Radius. (5.4f)
Recon (3.3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any unit with a Cavalry-slash or listed in the Game Specific Rules. 	Must be a VP hex or an enemy unit.	No	1 Fire Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll one die to attempt. If the roll is less than or equal to the Recon unit's AR, place an OBJ marker w/i 2 hexes. Otherwise, the attempt fails. Recon units cannot place an OBJ marker in a hex already containing an OBJ marker to build a 'Double OBJ.' The Recon unit cannot be STOPPED or over-stacked.
Easy to forget...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only one Barrage (Destruction or Suppression) per target hex per Activity Phase. This does not limit Attacks by Fire. After two Fire Events, a unit is STOPPED, but is not FINISHED. A Barrage spotter, not in a combat, must STOP. 				

Unit Skills and Vulnerabilities Chart

Table Used:	Combat Table					Engagement Table		Barrage Table			AV EZOCs	
	Regular Combat			Shock Attack		Engagement		Barrage	Attack by Fire		Stopping Engagement	
Unit Type	Attack Unit	Assist Unit	Defender	Attacker	Defender	Firer	Target	Target	Firer	Target	Required?	Not Required?
Attack-Capable unit with no Support												
Attack-Capable unit with Red AV Support	+		+									
Attack-Capable unit with Limited AV Support			+									
Attack-Capable unit with Stand Off AV Support			+									
Red AV				+								
Limited AV						-						
Dual & Red AV	+		+	++								
Dual & Limited AV	+		+	+		-						
Stand Off AV			+				+	+				
Breakthrough Armor & Red AV				++								
Breakthrough Armor & Limited AV				++		-						
Light AV												
UnPrepared or Static												

	Unit cannot do (or be the target of) this action.
+	Unit can do this action and has a DRM on the Table used. It can do this well. Number of plus signs is a relative measure of Advantage. There might be additional situational requirements for obtaining the maximum advantage; see the table description.
	Unit can do this action. Note that the entries for Attack-Capable units and various types of Support may say the unit with a certain Support can Support. That is a feature of the Attack-Capable unit, not its Support. The effect of the Support will show up in the + or ++ potential advantage.
-	Unit can do this action but has a negative DRM on the Table used. It does this, but does it poorly.