RULE BOOK

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Battle for Kursk

THE TIGERS ARE BURNING, 1943

C3i Combined Arms Series, Vol. I

RBM Studio

RULEBOOK
Battle for Kursk: The Tigers Are Burning, 1943

Rules

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[0.0] USING THESE RULES

New gaming terms, when they are initially defined, appear in dark red lettering for quick referencing.

The instructions for this game are organized into major "**Rules**" sections, shown in large green **CAPS** font and represented by the number to the left of the decimal point (e.g., rule 4.0 is the fourth rule). These rules generally explain the game's components, procedures for play, the game's core systems and mechanics, how to set it up, and how to win. With each Rule, there can be "Cases" that further explain a rule's general concept or basic procedure. Cases might also restrict the ap¬plication of a rule by denoting exceptions to it. Cases (and Subcases) are an extension of a Rule shown in the way that they are numbered. For example, Rule 4.1 is the first Case of the fourth Rule; and Rule 4.1.2 is the second Subcase of the first Case of the fourth Rule.

• **Important information is in bold text.**
• References to examples of a Rule or Case are in blue text.
• *Text in italics, like this, provides the voice of the game's designer, who is addressing you to explain an idea or concept that is not, itself, a Rule or a Case.*

[1.0] INTRODUCTION

Operation Citadel was the code name for the German Army's offensive to pinch-off the Kursk bulge in mid-1943, and along with the three Russian counteroffensives that followed, is the subject of the **Battle for Kursk** game. This operation was intended to disrupt the Russian Army and its preparations for its own summer offensive, reduce the length of the German line and secure the continued support of German allies. If *Operation Citadel* succeeded, it would demonstrate the continued offensive capability of the German Army and its ability to capture large numbers of prisoners. If it failed (as it did historically), it would leave the exhausted German Army open to a Russian counteroffensive that

would push them forever beyond the banks of the Dniepr River. **Battle for Kursk** is played on a map of the former Soviet Union where the battle was fought. It uses playing pieces that represent the actual military units that participated in this campaign. Each player represents the combined General Staff (OKH composed of Army Groups Center and South for the Germans) or STAVKA and the 8 Fronts of Russian Armies that faced them. The individual German ground units repre-sent Corps of approximately 25,000 soldiers and what was left of their equipment after two years of sustained combat in Russia. The Russian ground units are Armies of approximately 40,000 men each.

Battle for Kursk uses similar mechanics to **Battle for Moscow** (as published in **C3i Magazine Nr 24**), and as such may be considered an expansion of that game in a series which includes **Objective: Kiev** found in **C3i Magazine Nr26**. Nevertheless, **Battle for Kursk** intro-duces new terrain types, a revised Combat Results Table, and a Posture Selection Segment to allow players to plan the level of activity and resource expenditure of their armies. It also introduces new Combat Capabilities such as the Front / Army Offensive, and combat modifiers attacks to showcase the effects of mass Combined Arms.

[2.0] GENERAL COURSE OF PLAY

Battle for Kursk is a two-player game: One player assumes the role of the **Germany** (the Axis) and the other player assumes the role of **Russia** (the Soviet Union). Each player moves their units and executes attacks on enemy units in turn, attempting to fulfill the game's **Victory Conditions**. To move from one space to another, each unit expends a por¬tion of its **Movement Allowance**. Combat is resolved through Battles by comparing the total Strength Points of adjacent opposing units and expressing the comparison as a simplified probability ratio (**odds**). A die is rolled, and the out¬come indicated on the **Combat Results Table (CRT)** is then applied to the units involved.

[3.0] GAME EQUIPMENT

Parts Inventory
• One 22" x 34" mapsheet (with the game map and all charts and tables required for play)
• One set of **114** 5/8" square game pieces
• One Rules booklet
Not included is one 6-sided die needed for resolving battles.

[3.1] The Game Map: The map portrays the area around Kursk where the German Army made their fateful assault to capture the Russian rail juncture in mid 1943, and from where the Russians launched their Counteroffensive later that year. A hexagonal grid is superimposed on the terrain features on the map. These hexagonal spaces (referred to as "**hexes**" for short) define units' positions just like the squares of a chess-board. The map also shows important terrain such as forests, marsh, rough, cities, fortifications, rivers, and railroads. Explanations of the terrain features are found on the **Terrain Effects Chart (TEC)** printed on the map.

[3.2] Game Charts & Tables: Various game aids are provided for the players in order to simplify and illustrate certain game functions. These include the **CRT**, TEC, **Turn Track, Sequence of Play,** etc. All charts and tables are printed on the mapsheet and explained where presented in the appropriate rules section.

[3.3] The Playing Pieces: The playing pieces represent actual military units that fought in this campaign. The numbers and symbols on the playing pieces represent the strength and type of unit simulated by the particular playing piece. The playing pieces shall henceforth be referred to as **units**.

Sample Military Units

The German Player controls the German (field gray and black) units. The Russian Player controls the Russian (brown) units.
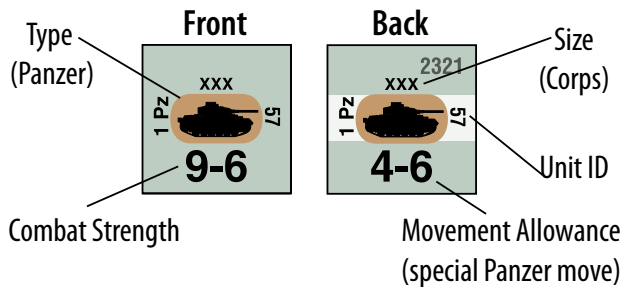
Unit Type Symbols

| Infantry | Shock Infantry | Panzer or Tank |

Infantry: composed primarily of infantry divisions
Shock: composed of infantry divisions with massive artillery reserves (considered Infantry for game purposes)
Panzer, Tank, Guards: composed primarily of armored and mechanized divisions and collectively called Armor (Guards units are noted by the 5 Movement Value, as they are acting in a mechanized role with desant infantry on the decks of their tanks)

Unit Size Symbols

XXX Corps Symbol
XXXX Army Symbol

Units of the same German Army or Russian Front share a similar interior color and higher-level organization on the left side of their unit type symbol. Note that both 4th Panzer Army and Army Detachment *Kempf* coordinated their actions heavily during this campaign and are considered the same Army for both Replacements and Offensives rules, and thus share the same blue interior color.

Unit Type is either infantry (foot soldiers, including Shock) or armor (German Panzer or Russian "Tank or Guards").
Combat Strength measures a unit's value in battle as expressed in Strength Points (higher numbers are stronger).
Movement Allowance determines how far the unit can move in Movement Points.
Unit Size and ID (identification) are included purely for historical interest and have no effect on game play.
All units have two sides: A **full-strength** (front) side and a **reduced-strength** (back) side; the reduced-strength side is indicated by a white horizontal band across the middle of the counter, and

contains values that are half the Combat Strength of its full-strength side (rounded down). Losses in combat can re¬duce a full-strength unit to a reduced-strength unit, by flipping the counter over to its back side. Replacements can turn a reduced-strength unit into a full-strength unit, by flipping the counter over to its front side.

[3.4] Markers: There are 13 markers included to track the game turn, phases, postures, offensives and the strategic objective. These will be described in greater detail below and when placed in a hex, these markers do not count as a unit for **stacking**.

A six-sided die is used only with the CRT to determine the result of attacks. The die has nothing to do with movement of units.

[4.0] SEQUENCE OF PLAY

Game Length: There are four **preliminary** and eight **regular** Game Turns in the **Battle for Kursk**.
Time Scale: Each **Game Turn** represents approximately 2-to-4 weeks of real time, depending on weather and operational tempo. For example, the preliminary turns A-D each represent approximately one month (in the spring of 1943, both sides were recovering from their recent winter offensives and building fortifications). The game begins on turn A, unless playing the **Kursk** Short Scenario (then it begins on turn 1; see 6.0.5). Both preliminary and regular turns use the same Sequence of Play and are essentially identical.

How the Turns Work: Each game turn is divided into ten **Phases** that are performed in the exact order listed below. All actions in one phase must be finished before the next phase can begin.

Phases 2-5 are the German **Player Turn**; Phases 6-9 are the Russian Player Turn; Phases 1 and 10 are performed simultaneously by both players.

Procedure

At the beginning of each turn, the players consult the turn track and to see if it is a **Mud Turn** (see 11.0). They also add any indicated Offensive markers (see 9.2.1) to their **Available Box** (these are immediately available to both sides – note, a player may never have more than three available Offensive markers at one time). The amount of Replacements is also given, but these don't arrive until each player's **Replacement Phase** (Phases 2 and 6). Finally, players consult the track to see what Fortifications become active this turn (these are immediately active based on the range of hexes given in the box for that turn).

1. **Posture Selection Segment.** Check the turn track for new information as listed above, and then both players secretly choose their **Posture** for the turn (see 12.0).

German Player Turn
2. **German Replacement Phase.** The Germans receive replacements (see 10.0).
3. **German Armor and Rail Movement Phase.** German Panzer units may move, and all German infantry units that begin the phase on a rail line on their side of the **Start Line** may move along it (see 8.1).
4. **German Combat Phase.** German units may attack (see 9.0).
5. **German Movement Phase.** German units may move, including Panzers and Infantry that moved by rail in Phase 3 (see 8.0).

Russian Player Turn
6. **Russian Replacement Phase.** The Russians receive replacements

(see 10.0).

7. **Russian Armor and Rail Movement Phase.** Russian Tank and Guards units may move and all Russian Infantry units that begin this phase on a rail line on their side of the Start Line may move along it (see 8.1).

8. **Russian Combat Phase.** Russian units may attack (see 9.0).

9. **Russian Movement Phase.** Russian units may move, including Tank, Guard, and Infantry that moved by rail in Phase 7 (see 8.0).

Administrative

10. **Housekeeping Phase.** Advance the Game Turn marker or, if the last turn was played (Turn 8), stop and determine the winner (see 5.0).

[5.0] VICTORY CONDITIONS

The Germans win immediately if they control Moscow at any point during the game. Barring that occurrence, at the end of Turn 8, victory is determined by counting the number of Victory Points (VP) achieved by each side, as marked by the VP track on the map. Note that Russian VPs are positive, while German are negative (flip the VP marker over to the negative side if needed). The Russian player receives 1 VP for each **Major City** they **control** (see 10.0.2) on the West side of the Start Line and the German player receives 1 VP for each Major City they control on the East side of the Start Line at the end of the game. Either player may earn 1 VP by completing their Strategic Objective Requirements (see 12.2). Lastly, if a player has fewer units in their Eliminated Unit's Box than their opponent at the end of the game, then they receive 1 additional VP (if the number of units are the same, no one receives this bonus).

Victory is either **Operational** or **Strategic** in nature, depending on the number of VP earned, as indicated by the Victory Point Track on the map. *Historically the Russians achieved a Strategic Victory of 10 VP (9 Major Cities controlled and a +1 for eliminated units).*

[6.0] SETTING UP THE GAME
Procedure

1. Place the Game Turn Marker, German (grey) side up, in box A of the Turn Track. Place the **VP Marker,** Russian (brown) side up, in the zero space of the VP track. Place the Strategic Objective marker, German side up, in the **Kursk** space on the map (hex 2113). Place the German **Previous Turn Posture** marker in the **Engage** box, and the Russian **Previous Turn Posture** marker in the **Reposition** box, on each side's respective **Posture Track**. Place the three Offensive markers for each side in the Expended Offensives Markers holding boxes on the map, Expended side face-up.

2. Take all Russian units and flip them to their **reduced-strength side**. Place each one on the map in the hex grid coordinates given on the top right corner of their piece. All Russian units are placed on the map.

3. Take all German units and set them up in the same manner. All German Infantry units start on their **full-strength side**, *except the four units that have their set-up location printed on the reverse side.* All German Panzers start on their reduced-strength side. All German units are placed on the map.

4. The first Game Turn starts with the Posture Segment of Turn A. The game then follows the Sequence of Play (as per Section 4.0) until the last Game Turn is completed or Moscow is German Controlled (see 5.0).

Kursk Short Scenario (Optional): As an alternative setup, players may play a shorter game that skips the preliminary maneuvering of turns A-D, and starts on Turn 1 instead. In this case, **all** German units start on their **full-strength side** in their original starting locations, and the Russian player adds 17 Infantry and 8 Armor replacement steps to their units in their original starting locations, before play begins. The German **Previous Turn Posture Marker** is placed on the **Deploy** box and the Russian one on the Reposition box. The German player begins with 3 **Offensive Markers** available, while the Russian Player has 2. Place the **Game Turn Marker**, German (grey) side up, in box 1 of the Turn Track. The Strategic Objective marker starts German side up in the **Kursk** space (**hex 2113**).

Note that players are encouraged to play turns A-D in order to experience the pressures and opportunities faced by both sides before the actual battle began, and to consider and play-out possible what-if alternatives.

[7.0] ZONES OF CONTROL
General Rule

Each unit has a **Zone of Control (ZOC)** that consists of the six hexes surrounding it (*see diagram below*), including hexes occupied by enemy units. Enemy Zones of Control have important effects on movement, combat, and replacements.

[7.1] Movement Effect: A unit entering an enemy Zone of Control **(EZOC)** must immediately end its movement for that Movement Phase (see 8.3). On a subsequent turn, **units may freely leave EZOCs** as their first movement action. As such, a unit can move directly from one hex in an EZOC directly to another hex in an EZOC, but must then stop (may be EZOCs of the same, or different enemy units).

[7.2] Combat Effect: Units are eliminated if they end their **retreat** in an EZOC. Retreating units loose 1 step when retreating through an EZOC (see 9.3). Also, if all units involved in a battle from one side are not **In Communication** (see 9.2), then the **combat odds** are shifted one direction in favor of the other side (if all units for both sides in a battle are not In Communication, then the shifts cancel each other out).

[7.3] Effect on Replacements: Zones of Control also affect how a path can be traced to allow for **Replacements** (see 10.2).
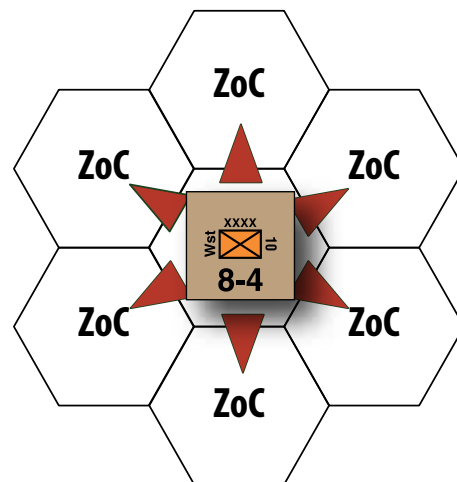
Note that, unlike in some other wargames, friendly units do not negate the effects of enemy Zones of Control for any reason.

[8.0] MOVEMENT
General Rule

Units are moved during the Movement Phases (i.e., Phases 3, 5, 7, and 9) of each Game Turn. Movement works essentially the same way in each Phase. Each unit has a Movement Allowance that represents the distance in hexes it can move in each eligible Movement Phase, subject to **Mud** and **Terrain Effects**. See the South end of the map for the Terrain Effects Chart and an explanation on the various costs of each terrain type. In a Movement Phase, the player moves any or all of their units that qualify (i.e., only Armor and only Infantry units, including Shock, starting on a railroad on their side of the Start Line in the Rail Movement Phase). Units move one at a time, from hex to hex, in any direction or combination of directions up to the limit of their movement allowance.

[8.1] Infantry Rail Movement: In Phase 3 and 7, Infantry units that start the phase on a railroad hex on their side of the Start Line, can spend their Movement Allowance by moving along hexes that are connected by a railroad, and do so at a cost of 1 Movement Point per hex, regardless of terrain (e.g., a *forest hex* counts as only one hex for movement during Russian Rail Movement). Once begun, units using rail movement may cross over to the opponent's side of the Start Line. To use rail movement in future turns, they must begin on a railroad on their side of the Start Line. Armor (units with the vehicle silhouettes on their piece) may not use the rail movement procedure nor may they benefit from the 1 hex MP cost when traversing non-open terrain along a railroad.

[8.2] Restrictions: The following restrictions apply:
[8.2.1] Enemy Units: A unit can never enter a hex containing an enemy unit.
[8.2.2] Stacking: A unit can enter a hex containing a friendly unit, but there can only be one unit in a hex at the end of each Phase.
[8.3] EZOC: A unit entering an Enemy Zone of Control (EZOC) **must immediately end its movement for that Movement Phase.** *There is no penalty or effect for leaving an EZOC.*

Movement Example 1: *(right)*

Here are some different ways that the Russian player could move their units during the Russian Armor and **Rail Movement Phase** (Phase 7). The numbers in the illustra¬tion show how many **Movement Points** each unit has spent from its Movement Allowance (the second

number just beneath the counter's Unit Type symbol), to enter that hex. The Russian 50th Army (an infantry unit) started this phase on a rail hex, and can therefore use rail movement to advance to hex A (spending all 4 of its Movement Point Allowance), or to hex **B**, using only 3 MPs (units cannot end any movement in an occupied hex, and therefore must stop). Note that during the Rail Movement Phase, each hex costs only 1 MP to enter, no matter the terrain type. Likewise, the 63rd Army in Moscow could move due west to hex **C** (using 4 MPs), but if moving southwest by rail, would have to stop at hex **D**, again since its last movement step is occupied – but also because it has entered the Enemy Zone of Control exerted by the German 56th Corps (see 8.3). In a similar situation, the 63rd could also move south towards Tula but would be forced to stop after only 2 hexes, again due to the EZOC of the German 56th. Additionally, during this phase, Russian armor may move using normal movement rules (see 8.0). The 1st Guard has a Movement Allowance of 5 and can spend it to move in various ways. Note how even though the southeast path follows the rail line, armor units do NOT benefit from the reduced rail movement cost and must spend 2 MPs to enter the forest hex (as per the Terrain Effects Chart on the mapsheet). Also note that there is no additional MP cost to cross the river hexside to reach F, as in some other wargames. In **Battle for Kursk**, river hexsides only affect combat, not movement. (Exception: Major Rivers require **all** of a unit's Movement Points to cross when not using Rail Movement). Lastly, when travelling west to hex G, the Russian 1st Guard stops after spending only 4 MPs since an additional forest hex move would cost more than its remaining Movement Allowance.

Sometimes it helps to turn a unit sideways after receiving replacements or moving as a mnemonic that that piece has already taken an action in that phase.

Movement Example 2: *(below)*

To further illustrate the effect of Enemy Zones of Control on movement, consider the Russian 5th Guard in the above example. This armor unit has a Movement Allowance of 6 and can freely cross the Psel river, but must immediately stop when entering hex **A** or **B**, due to the EZOC exerted by the German 52nd Corps. In an attempt to encircle the 52nd and make a run for Kiev to the west, the 5th Guard can instead head south along the Psel, spending 1 MP to enter each open and city hex. To enter the forest on the other side of the river costs 2 MPs, and the final move into hex **C** requires its sixth and final MP – again the 52nd's EZOC would force the unit to stop, even if it had additional MPs left to spend. Note that moving into hex **D** (marsh terrain) would require all 6 MPs, the 5th's full Movement Allowance. An alternative path finds the unit heading northeast, through the city of Sumy. With 2 MPs remaining, a move into hex **E** would force the 5th Guard to stop because of the German 2nd Infantry's EZOC. To make full use of its Movement Allowance, the 5th could instead exit Sumy to the southwest, ending its movement in hex **F**, just outside the city of Konotop.

[9.0] COMBAT
General Rule
In each **Combat Phase** (Phases 4 and 8), all friendly units (those owned by the phasing player) may attack adjacent enemy units. Attacking is completely voluntary – units are never compelled to attack.

A **Battle** is an attack on one enemy defending unit by any or all of the attacking player's units, that are adjacent to that **Battle Hex**. A 6-sided die is used to determine the outcome of battles, utilizing the Combat Results Table printed on the map.

Procedure
First, the "attacker" (i.e., the German Player during the German Combat Phase, and the Russian during their Combat Phase), announces *all* of their intended Battles; that is, they declare in advance which enemy units they will attack and which of their own ("friendly") units will attack them.

Players may find it helpful to pre-designate their attacks by pointing the tops of their units at the defending hex being attacked as a mnemonic that those units are committed to combat. Similarly, players may find it helpful to mark the declared defender battle hexes with pieces marked 1-1 through 6-1 (provided as an insert in this issue) so they do not need to recalculate odds after designating all Battles but before resolving them individually. Note, that through the retreat and advance of units, the EZOC situation could change and the odds on previously designated battles could be different than originally calculated.

- **Once Per Combat Phase:** A unit may only be involved in one Battle per Combat Phase

- **Battle Commitment:** Once all of a player's battles have been announced for that Combat Phase, they may not be changed.

The Battle Sequence
Battles are resolved, one at a time, in any order the attacking player desires. For each Battle, the following sequence is followed:

1. Total the **Combat Strengths** of all the **attacking units** in the Battle.

2. Divide this total by the Combat Strength of the defending unit, rounding down (dropping any remainder or "fractions"), to get one of the odds levels provided on the **Combat Results Table**.

Combat Example 1: (*above*)

An attacker's 16 total Strength Points engage in a Battle against a defending unit with a strength of 4. The odds reduce to four-to-one (4:1). Note that 15 Strength Points attacking 4 would only be 3:1 (15 divided by 4 = 3.75 … rounding down and dropping the fractional component results in 3, hence the 3:1 odds).

3. Determine if the combat effects of **Terrain**, **Offensives**, or **In Communication** have adjusted the odds column (see 9.2).

4. Roll the die and consult the **Combat Results Table (CRT)**; cross-index the row of the number rolled with the odds column to determine the combat results.

5. Apply the combat result immediately (see 9.3).

6. **Advance after combat:** If the defending unit is no longer in its hex (i.e., it has been eliminated or forced to retreat), one attacking unit may immediately move into the defender's just-vacated hex, regardless of movement allowances or terrain effects.

7. Conduct another unresolved Battle, if any.

The Combat Phase is over when all previously announced Battles are resolved.

[9.1] Long Odds: The odds may begin above 6:1 and below 1:1, but after modification during Step 3, above, if the odds are above 6:1, reduce them to 6:1. If the odds are below 1:1, that attack has no effect on either side (i.e., the attack does not take place).

[9.2] Odds Shifts in Combat: As shown on the **Terrain Effects Chart (TEC)**, if the defending unit is in a forest, rough, major city (i.e., Moscow), or is in a friendly, active fortification hex, reduce the odds by one level (also known as a "shift left"). For example, a 4:1 attack becomes a 3:1, a 3:1 attack becomes 2:1, and so on. If all of the attacking units in a Battle are across a river from the defending unit, reduce the odds by one level; if a Major River, reduce the odds by 2 columns. If *all* of either side's units in that Battle are *not* **In Communication** (see 10.2), then the opponent will receive an odds shift in their favor. If both sides are completely out of Communication, then the shifts cancel each other out.

Combat Example 2: (*above*)

If the previous example had the German 59th Corps positioned just one hex to the west, as above, all three of the attacking units would be "attacking across the river," requiring an odds reduction as noted on the TEC. Shifting the previously calculated 3:1 odds one column to the left would result in a 2:1 attack – careful positioning of your units before battle is of utmost importance!

[9.2.1] Offensives: The attacker may declare an Offensive and involve units behind the line to participate. This is done by designating a lead unit in the Offensive, which must be Armor or Shock. All other units in the Battle which are not adjacent to the defending hex, but which are adjacent to the lead unit, and are of the same organizational color (Army for German and Front for Russian), shift the odds in the attackers favor ("shift right") by one column for each such supporting unit designated. Additionally, these supporting units in the second echelon may be taken as losses during the combat as if they were on the front line. Place an available Offensive Marker on the lead unit to designate the attack and flip it to expended and place it in the Expended Offensives Marker box once complete.

All of these odds shifts are cumulatively resolved together as one net shift from the effects of Terrain, Offensives or In Communication, but may not shift the odds above 6–1, and if shifted below 1–1, the attack is canceled.

Combat Example 3: (*above*)

Consider again the earlier situation, only this time the Russians are on the attack! The Russian player has declared a battle in the Major City of Bryansk; during Step 1, the two adjacent units combined attacking strength is computed as 16. In Step 2, this value is divided by the defender's strength of 8, reducing down to 2:1 odds. In Step 3, terrain effects are checked, and the odds column is shifted left twice: once for the defender being in a Major City, and again because all attacking units are across the Desna river. Thus, the new odds column reduces from 2:1 to 1:1 … and again to "below 1:1," meaning the attack won't occur due to "long odds" (see 9.1). However, the Russians have an opportunity to declare an **Offensive**, since there is an attacking armor unit supported by additional units of the same organizational color (i.e., red – all three units are from Army Group Center). By placing an Offensive Marker on the lead unit, the Russian player increases the odds by two columns (two right shifts, one for each supporting unit). As a result, the shifts cancel each other out – culminating in a final odds calculation of 2:1 (16 vs 8 is 2:1 shifted left twice, then back twice to the right).

[9.3] Combat Results Explanation: These outcomes can occur during Step 4 of a Battle as shown on the CRT:

NE (No Effect): Nothing happens.

DR (Defender Retreat): The defending unit is retreated (i.e., moved) two hexes by the attacking player as follows:

• **Two Hexes:** The unit must end up two hexes away from the defending hex (i.e., it cannot zigzag; each hex of retreat must take that unit a hex further from the defending hex).

• **Avoid EZOCs:** If possible, the unit must avoid entering an EZOC at all times during a retreat.

• **Unavoidable EZOCs:** If the unit must retreat through a hex in an EZOC, it loses one step. If it is forced to end its retreat in an EZOC, it is eliminated.

• **Retreat Restrictions:** The unit may never retreat into or through an enemy-occupied hex, nor end its retreat in a friendly-occupied hex.

• **Or Else:** If there is no retreat path which satisfies all of these conditions, the unit is eliminated instead.

• **Off the Map:** If the defending unit must retreat off a friendly map edge, it is brought in as a reinforcement during the next friendly Replacements Phase, according to the rule for the placement of replacements.

Stand Fast: When defending in a Major City hex (only), the Defender may convert a DR result to a single step loss and no retreat.

DRL (Defender Retreat and Loss): The defending unit must first take a step loss; then, if it survives, it must retreat as described for a **DR** result (above).

• If a full-strength unit takes a loss, flip it over to its reduced-strength side.

• If a reduced-strength unit takes a loss, it is eliminated (i.e., placed in the Eliminated Units box).

Fortifications: A defender in a friendly, active fortification may convert any **DR** or **DRL** to an **EX** result if they desire.

DE (Defender Eliminated): The defending unit is eliminated, whether it is currently at full or reduced strength.

EX (Exchange): First, the defending unit takes a step loss and Retreat as described in **DRL**.

Then the attacking player must lose at least the same amount of Strength Points from among the attacking units at that Battle. If a full-strength unit is reduced to reduced strength, the amount of the loss is computed as the original strength minus the reduced Strength.

 For example: a full-strength German panzer unit with 9 Strength Points takes a loss; it is flipped to its Reduced-Strength, 4-point side. That loss is measured as 5 Strength Points.

Note that if a full-strength defending unit is eliminated because it is unable to retreat, the attacking player does not match the additional step loss.

AL (Attacker Loss): One attacking unit (of the attacker's choice) takes a step loss, as described in the DRL result. It does not retreat, however. No attacking units ever retreat in **Battle for Kursk**.

Combat Example 4: (*above*)

Returning to the area around Bryansk, in this example the Russian player has declared an attack against the German 53rd Corps just outside the city. The total attacking strength is 12, versus the defending 4-strength unit. 12 vs. 4 reduces to 3:1, while the forest terrain in the battle hex shifts the odds one column to the left, resulting in a 2:1 attack. The Russian player throws the die and reveals a 3 – on the Combat Results Table, the Die Roll "3" row, cross referenced with the "2:1" Battle Odds column reveals a **Combat Result** of DR (Defender Retreat). The defender (the 53rd Corps) must now retreat 2 hexes at the hand of the Russian player. However, the retreat restrictions require the unit to **Avoid EZOCs** if possible. In this case, the 53rd has only one legal hex in which to retreat to, due to the attacker's ZOCs: hex A. From there, the Russian player can decide which of the two non-EZOC hex **Bs** the unit should end up in. Note that the city of Roslaval is not available to retreat into as the 11th Guard to the north exerts a ZOC into its hex. Finally, since the battle hex is now empty, the attacking player

has the option of Advancing After Combat either of the units that were involved in the attack. The 60th Army is well positioned as-is in a forest hex – the 48th, however, would benefit from advancing into the vacant hex, improving its defensive terrain. The second image above shows the position after all combat results have been resolved.

Combat Example 5: (above)

In the north, the city of Velike Luki is surrounded by marsh hexes and the Russian fortification known as the "Moscow Belt." The German player has declared a three-pronged attack on the infantry unit just outside the city. The 4-strength German infantry unit to the west is attacking from a marsh hex, so its strength is halved (see the Terrain Effects Chart). As a result, the attack strength is (4 ÷ 2) + 3 + 5 = 10 against the defending 4 (10:4 reduces to 2.5:1, rounding down yields a 2:1). Both sides have units that are in communication, at least one unit is not attacking over a river, and the marsh terrain of the battle hex does not affect the combat odds – however, the fortification in the hex is active (see the Turn Track) and belongs to the defender (Russia), causing an odds reduction (a shift left). As a result, the 2:1 odds are reduced to 1:1 for this battle.

When declaring an attack, it is usually best to do so in situations where the combat odds are 2:1 or greater – this avoids the potential Attacker Loss (AL) result. However, since attacks are declared at the beginning of the phase and units may have been moved or flipped since then, sometimes you'll be forced to roll against less desirable odds. And sometimes a position is worth taking a chance on a high risk-reward outcome! Either way, in the above example, the German player rolls the die and gets a 5 – cross referencing the "1:1" Battle Odds column with the Die Roll row of "5" reveals a **DR** result. A Defender Retreat here is a bad result for the Russian player – the defending unit will most certainly be eliminated: the 2-hex retreat path would take it either up and over, through the city to the west, or up and over through the shock unit to the east (it is the German player's choice for which one to enforce). Both of these retreats would incur a step-loss due to passing through the German's EZOC, and since the unit is already on its reduced side, will be eliminated. However, since the defender is in an active fortification, the Russian player has the option of converting the DR result to an **EX** (Exchange) result. This is likely the best choice in this situation, given that the defender will be eliminated with either result – but choosing to hunker down in the fortification will inflict an equal amount of dam-

age on the German attackers. Eliminating the defending Russian unit removes 4 strength points from the battle – the German player must now choose how to remove 4 strength points from the attacking force: eliminate the full strength infantry to the west (4 points), eliminate the reduced strength armor to the east (5 points), or a combination of eliminating the southern infantry (3 points) plus flipping the western infantry to its reduced side (2 points) for a total of 5 points of loss. The German player wisely prefers to minimize his losses and chooses to eliminate the full-strength infantry. After the Exchange is completed, the defending hex is empty – allowing the attacking force to Advance After Combat. The German player can decide to move the southern infantry, or the western armor into the now vacant hex, or do nothing. Perhaps the best decision would be to "advance" with the armor unit (even though it would be moving away from Moscow!) to shore up the German line and get the 39th Corps back in communication with the western border – as we'll see in the next example, breaking through too quickly can often lead to exposed positions for advanced units.

Combat Example 6: (*above*)

Let's imagine that the German Player instead rolled a 4 in the previous example, yielding an **NE** (No Effect) result. On the subsequent Russian turn, the tables have turned! The Russian player declares an attack on the German 39th Corps – who is currently NOT in communication: the 39th cannot trace a path of consecutive hexes to the western, blue border edge without crossing into a Russian Zone of Control (even though the 6th Corps is adjacent to the 39th, the EZOC from either of the Russian infantry units cut the path, as does the very effectively placed 68th Corps just to the east). The odds calculation is as follows: (4 ÷ 2) + 10 + 8 = 20 attacking the 5-strength defender. 20:5 reduces to 4:1, in a forest hex (shift left), while the defender is out of communication (shift right). The shifts cancel out, resulting in 4:1 attack odds. This attack is so strong that there is no chance for the defender – no matter the die roll, the 39th Corps will be eliminated. The Russian player proceeds to roll a 4: the result is a **DRL** (Defender Retreat and Loss). Since the 39th is already at reduced strength, the 1 step loss eliminates the unit immediately – no retreat actions occur. The Russian player wisely decides to Advance After Combat with 4th Shock Army – closing the gap in the Russian line.

[10.0] REPLACEMENTS

General Rule

Both players receive replacements on their respective Player Turns (i.e., during Phases 2 and 6). The number of **replacement steps** received each turn is listed on the **Turn Track**.

Each replacement step allows that player to:

1. Place a new, reduced-strength unit (one that was previously eliminated) on the map; see 10.2 and 10.3 for placement options 10.5 for unit type restrictions, and 10.7 for formation restrictions.

– OR –

2. Flip a reduced-strength unit that is currently on the map and **In Communication** over to its full-strength side.

"Friendly Controlled" Defined: Friendly Controlled means that your units were the last ones to have entered that city. At the start of the game all cities to the west of the Start Line are considered to be "controlled" by the German side; cities to the east of the Start line are controlled by the Russian side.

"In Communication" Defined: In Communication means being able to trace a path of hexes (of any length and through any type of terrain) from the hex in question to a map border edge of the same color as your side (red for Russian and blue for German). Excluding the origin hex, this path cannot enter a hex containing an enemy unit, an EZOC, or an enemy controlled City or Major City.

Recall that friendly units do not negate the effects of EZOCs for any reason (see 7.0).

[10.1] One Step at a Time: Two replacements points may not be used during the same Player Turn to create a new full-strength unit.

Creating a new full-strength unit from one off the map requires two turns of replacements (and two total replacement steps; one received on each of those turns).

[10.2] Where Russian Replacements Appear: Newly placed Russian units (i.e., those being brought in from off the map) appear by being placed along the north or east edge of the map, along the **red border**, in any empty hex not in an enemy Zone of Control – **OR** – in any empty, Friendly Controlled city that is In Communication.

• Existing reduced-strength Russian units, to be restored to full-strength, must also be In Communication with a red border map edge hex.

• **Moscow:** As an exception, only the Russians can place or flip a reduced-strength unit in Moscow, even if it is not In Communication.

[10.3] Where German Replacements Appear: Replacements and communications work similarly for the Germans, except that they use and trace to the west or south edges of the map with blue borders.

Replacement Example: (above)

Assuming all German units in the above example are in communication, during the German Replacement Phase, either of the reduced infantry units could be flipped, or a previously-eliminated half-strength unit could be placed in either of the hexes marked **A** (Stalino or Mariupul). Hex **B** is available for placing new units if-and-only-if Taganrog is still **Friendly Controlled** (last occupied by a German unit). The Russian Replacement Phase would allow the Russian player to flip hex **C** (it is in communication with the eastern red border) or place a new half-strength unit in either of the **E** hexes. Even though hex **D** is in communication, it is not available for new placements because it is within the EZOC of the German 4th Corps. Note that even if hex **B** was last controlled by the Russians, it would NOT be available for new Russian placements because it is not in communication (hex **C** is in the German EZOC exerted by both 6th Infantry Corps units).

[10.4] Use 'Em or Lose 'Em: If a replace¬ment step is not used, it cannot be saved for later turns. It is permanently lost.

[10.5] Replacement Types: Replacements are further defined as either Infantry Replacement Points (IRP) or Armor Replacement Points (ARP), and must be used to replace those types of units respectively

(Shock units use IRP). If a unit of that type of replacement point is not available to be replaced, those RPs are lost.

[10.6] Negative Replacements: On some turns, the Germans will have a red, negative number of replacement steps on the Turn Track. This means that the German player is required to reduce that number of steps from those types of In Communication units (German player's choice). Depending on the Posture chosen by a given side (see 12.0) and the amount of Replacements they will receive that turn, a player may have a deficit number of replacements, and will similarly be required to remove steps. If needed, the procedure is to first receive positive replacement steps, and then reduce negative steps. Thus, it would be possible for a player to strengthen an important part of the line with incoming replacements, while weakening a quiet sector with outgoing units. This simulates the inter-front transfer of smaller units, which both sides did on a regular basis.

For example: Suppose at the start of Turn 1, the German player has selected the Engage posture and the Russian has chosen to Deploy. Referring to the Turn Track, we see that the Germans are scheduled to receive 1 Infantry Replacement Point (IRP), and 7 Armor Replacement Points (ARP) for this turn. On the German's Posture Track, it indicates that an Engage posture modifies these values further with -1 IRP and -1 ARP. Adding everything together for the Germans gives us a net of IRP: 1 + (-1) = 0; ARP: 7 + (-1) = 6. Therefore, the Germans will receive no Infantry Replacement Points for Turn 1 but will have 6 armor steps to use during the German Replacement Phase. Similarly, the Russian's Posture Track shows a -2 ARP for a Deploy posture (note: each side's Posture Track has different adjustment values from the other). Calculating the Russian's replacements for Turn 1 results in … IRP: 3 + 0 = 3; ARP: 2 + (-2) = 0. This means that during the Russian Replacement Phase the Russian player will have 3 infantry steps, but no armor steps to use.

Turn 2 will function in the same manner, however the Turn Track indicates that the Germans start with 1 IRP and -1 ARP. If they remain in an Engage posture, the Replacement Point calculation would look like … IRP: 1 + (-1) = 0; ARP: -1 + (-1) = -2. Therefore, during this turn's German Replacement Phase, the German player would have to remove 2 steps from existing armor units on the map.

[10.7] Formation Integrity: When bringing a replacement unit onto the map, it must be placed in the qualifying location (board edge or city) as close as possible to another unit of the same formation (same interior color). If there are multiple closest possible locations, the owning player may choose. If there are no other units of that unit's Front or Army on the map, then the arriving unit may be placed in any qualifying location.

[11.0] MUD
General Rule
Turns A, C and 7 are "Mud" turns (others are "clear" and have no additional effects). On Mud turns, the following rules apply:

[11.1] Mud Effect on Movement: All movement, except Infantry Rail Movement, is reduced to one hex per unit, per Phase.

[11.2] Mud Effect on Combat: The Com¬bat Strengths of Armor units are totaled and then halved when attacking (defending Armor units are unaffected). Retain fractions when halving (e.g., half of 9 is 4.5). The Strength of Infantry (including Shock) units is unaffected.

For example: In the previous Combat Example 5, if it were a Mud turn, the three German units would be reduced to a total Combat Strength of 7.5 (i.e., losing 2.5 from the 39th Armor). That would make the odds 1:1 before adjusting for terrain effects and "below 1:1" after the

left shift for the fortification, stopping the attack from happening.

Note that if an Exchange combat result occurs on a Mud turn, the attacker's losses are based on the units' printed strengths, not their halved Mud Effect values.

[11.3] Mud Die Roll (Optional): For players that prefer not to have their weather effects scripted in advance, instead roll a die at the beginning of the Posture Segment of each turn indicated to determine if Mud conditions exists as follows:

Turn	Die Roll
A	1 – 3
B	1 – 2
C	1
D thru 5	*(no chance of mud)*
6	1
7	1 – 2
8	1 – 3

[12.0] POSTURE TRACK
General Rule
During the **Posture Selection Segment** of each turn, players secretly choose what their posture will be for that turn using the Posture markers provided and placing them on the **Posture Track** under a closed hand, and then simultaneously revealing them when both players are ready.

Procedure
1. Take note of your sides' **Previous Turn Posture**, as indicated on your **Posture Track** and place the **Previous Turn Posture** marker there.

2. Using the Current Turn Posture marker, chose a new posture for this turn that is the same as, lower, or one box higher (to the right) of your Previous Turn Posture. A player may choose a posture greater than one box to the right by expending an **Offensive Marker** for each box greater than one (if available). Both players do this secretly and reveal the location of their **Current Turn Posture** marker at the same time

3. **Emergency Reaction:** If one player chose Engage and the other player chose Pause, the player choosing Pause may immediately spend one available Offensive Maker to move their posture marker to Reposition.

4. The posture selected by the players will describe what activities each side may perform and its impact on Replacements received in Phases 2 and 6, as shown below. **Resulting effects may be different for each side.**

Note that colored letters are used on the Phase Sequence boxes on the map to show which segments are active based on the posture chosen. Once the Current Posture is selected for this turn, players will use the back of the Previous Turn Posture marker to track the current phase.

a. Pause (**P**): +1 Infantry Replacement Point (IRP) for the German side, if selected by the German player; +2 IRP for the Russian side, if selected by the Russian player.

Sides that select this posture perform the Replacements Phase only, for this turn (neither Movement Phases nor the Combat Phase occurs).

b. **Reposition (R):** No impact on scheduled Replacements. Sides that select this posture receive both the Replacements Phase and the normal Movement Phase (neither the Armor / Rail Movement Phase nor the Combat Phase occurs).

c. **Deploy (D):** -1 Armor Replacement Point (ARP) for the German Player; -2 ARP for the Russian player. Sides that select this posture participate in all Phases except for the Combat Phase.

d. **Engage (E):** -1 IRP and -1 ARP for the German player; -2 IRP and -2 ARP for the Russian player.

Sides that select this posture participate in all Phases of the turn sequence.

Note that the actual turn-by-turn Historical Postures chosen by each side turn-by turn is provided in the Designer's Notes at the end of these rules.

[12.1] Strategic Objective: Prior to the German player selecting the Engage posture for the first time, if the German player chooses Deploy, they may move the Strategic Objective Marker from its current location (it begins the game in Kursk) to any other City or Major City on the Russian side of the Start Line. The German player may continue to reposition the Strategic Objective Marker each turn they select Deploy. Once the German player selects Engage for the first time, the marker is locked in place.

If the German player does not select Engage on Turn 1 or any turn prior, then the Strategic Objective Marker is flipped to the Russian side and immediately moved to Kiev. This signifies the Germans ceding the summer offensive initiative to the Russians.

If the Strategic Objective Marker is flipped to the Russian side, and the Russian player has chosen Deploy on Turn 1, they may reposition it to any other City or Major City on the West side of the Dniepr, or to Vitebsk or Gomel. The Russian player may continue to reposition it as long as they select Deploy, but once they choose Engage (on Turn 1 or later), the Strategic Objective marker is locked in place.

Should the player whose side is face-up on the Strategic Objective Marker ever occupy the space where it is located, they immediately gain 1 Victory Point in their favor, and the marker is placed on the VP track to signify this.

[13.0] BATTLE FOR KURSK GAME CREDITS

Battle for Kursk was designed in 2020 by Trevor Bender; he proposed the basic game idea, researched the information, drafted the game rules and drew the map. The game mechanics were heavily influenced by Frank Chadwick's **Battle for Moscow**, and **Battle for Kursk** and can be considered an evolution and expansion upon that previous system. The game was developed by Harold Buchanan; he found the play-testers and tested, polished the game system. Ben Schomp provided the examples of play and edited the rules into their final form. Playtesting was performed by friends and colleagues of the designer as noted below; they played the game and pointed out flaws and problems that needed to be fixed. Charlie Kibler was graphic designer for the game; he organized the components into a final product based on input from the designer, to include the pieces and map artwork. **Battle for Kursk** is the first of a new series of **C3i Magazine** games entitled **Combined Arms** that cover topics and of a similar scale, and allows the exploration of strategic issues and operational options in a quick playing and competitive format.

Battle for Kursk: The Tigers Are Burning, 1943
Designer's Notes

By Trevor Bender

In March of 2020, right at the beginning of the quarantine period of COVID-19, I approached Rodger about an idea of rapidly publishing, a free **C3i e-Magazine** scenario for the popular boardgame **Pandemic** that would use that cooperative game platform as a way to teach the ramifications of Social Distancing in game terms. We felt that with so many kids home from school, and parents wanting to help their children understand what was transpiring globally, that a scenario like this could aid in that process. This **C3i scenario**, which was conceived, designed, play-tested and published in all of about three weeks, turned out to be both a successful teaching aid and a very challenging scenario for players to defeat! In fact, the COVID-19 **C3i Scenario** was featured in the electronic version of the **Wall Street Journal** on June 29, 2020.

A couple months later, still in the period of quarantine, Rodger reached out to me to see if I had any suggestions for a magazine style game that could be published in **C3i** in an upcoming issue. I was in the process of penning a negative reply, when the thought occurred to me that the **Battle for Moscow** game system that appeared most recently in 2011 in **C3i Nr.25**, and which is still available as a free **C3i e-Magazine** download on the **C3i Ops Center**, could easily be expanded to explore other campaigns from WWII. I suggested that we might adopt this system for either the Battle of the Bulge, or Kursk. Rodger loved the idea and said we should do Kursk first. He gave me full latitude to both change the system and expand the scope if needed (which I did), creating the **C3i Combined Arms** series in the process.

Why Kursk?

For such a pivotal engagement during WWII, the Battle for Kursk has received little attention from game designers, especially when compared to its Western Front equivalent, the Battle of the Bulge (a favored topic in our community). Perhaps this is because Kursk is a set-piece battle and there is little players can do to influence the outcome. Yet the battle was about as decisive as Midway in determining the outcome of the war on the Eastern Front; no more would the Germans be able to mount the offensives that gave them success in the preceding years. With the largest tank battle of the war (Prokhorovka), the first large scale use of the *Panther, Tiger* and *Elephant* tanks, and with the potential to explore some significant "What-ifs," I thought this battle deserved another look.

The Pregame

Guderian: "How many people do you even think know where Kursk is? It is a matter of profound indifference in the world whether we hold Kursk or not. I repeat my question, why do we want to attack at all in the east this year?"

Hitler: "You are quite right. Whenever I think of the attack my stomach turns over."

So how does a designer introduce player decision making into a set-piece battle? By beginning the game before the battle was fought – and that's what we did here. The military formations start in their historic locations for the July 5th, 1943 start of the Kursk offensive, yet they are at strength levels of nearly four months prior, right as German General von Mainstain completed his famous back-hand blow (recapturing both Kharkov and Belgorod and thus creating the Kursk bulge in the German line). During preparatory turns A-D, players have the opportunity to reposition their forces to focus on different objectives, and use different time-tables. They can pause to build up their strength, or they can launch an earlier offensive right away, in a different direction or not at all. And it is the Soviet player who must ultimately shoulder the burdens and opportunities of a major summer offensive to capture the ground that was done historically during the Race to the Dniepr.

The German player must decide if he will fight the historical battle, or purposely focus on a different objective, such as shooting for Moscow (a mere 150 miles away from the German line), building up the Orel salient for the Soviet offensive that must come, or pulling the Panzers out of line and building a strategic reserve that can catch any Soviet offensive in the flanks. All of these (and more) can be explored through the variable starting options present in **Battle for Kursk: The Tigers Are Burning, 1943.**

The Map: Why Velike Luki?

I decided early on that I wanted to cover all of the Russian actions against Army Groups Center and South during the summer and fall of 1943. Army Group North essentially had the year off compared to the activity of its sisters to the south. Part of this was because with the "stepped-up" activity in the Ukraine, neither the Russians nor the Germans could spare any offensive material in the North. Another part of it was due to the fact that the Russians captured Veliik Luki (hex 1200) in December 1942, thus severing the most direct rail connection between Army Groups North and Center, hindering their ability to coordinate actions and share emergency reserves.

The Counters: Where is the German Infantry?

During my research, the number one overriding concern on the German side was the lack of infantry. Much of their operational planning was determined by how much (or how little) frontage could be defended; German generals were constantly trying to find ways to "straighten the front" so they could pull units off the line. This will be an overriding concern for the German player, who at the start will only have three extra units not on the front line with which to form a reserve, while the Russian player has 19 more than that. If the Russians can make multiple penetrations of the German line, and maneuver them out of their fortifications, this lack of infantry will be pronounced.

Armor Silhouettes

The weaker German formations show Mark IIIs, the medium formations show Mark IVs, and the units which had the preponderance of *Tigers*, *Panthers*, and *Elephants* have those depictions. In reality, over half of each German formation was made up of the lighter Panzers.

For the Russian armor, the Western Allied Lend Lease tanks are shown on those units that historically had the most of these types, but as with the Germans, a preponderance of the Russian armor was composed of lighter T-60 and T-70 types, and the T-34/76. There were no Shermans at Kursk, though they did participate later in the crossings of the Dniepr. Note that the T-34 is only depicted on the Guard units, which for the purposes of this game, represent the "desant" infantry that would ride into battle on the decks of the T-34 and jump-off in close combat. In reality, any infantry (including Airborne) were called upon to do the job, I just have the Guards showing this capability to give the proper ratio of track versus leg borne infantry. The 5 movement value represents the coordination required with the infantry element of the unit, not the cross-county speed of the T-34, which is superior to any other vehicle in the game.

The System

The overriding decision the players will have to make each turn is what Posture to choose (Pause – Reposition – Deploy – Engage). In most wargames, one automatically gets a movement and combat phase. Not so in this game – these must be purchased by expending would-be replacements to earn greater freedom of action. What, I lose strength just by moving? Yes!

There were several 200 to 300 kilometer road marches by Russian armor units recorded during this campaign, and even the mechanically reliable T-34 would typically suffer 20%+ breakdowns over that distance. The new Panther would suffer many times that rate for lesser distances! So, if you put the front in motion, there will be a cost. It does not necessarily mean that men and machines are destroyed in the act, but total combat power across the line is indeed weakened through movement, shattered by combat and restored by rest, replacements and training. This game makes you want to choose Pause every turn; the experienced commander will know when to expend power to maneuver for position, or to push for objectives.

The Russian Offensives

Although the game is called Kursk, it is primarily about the three Russian Offensives that followed (with Kursk being the pre-game show). In chronological order, they are:

Operation Kutusov (12 July – 18 August, 1943): Bryansk and Western Fronts vs. 2nd Panzer Army, resulting in the capture of Orel and collapse of the Orel bulge.

Operation Rumyantsev (3 – 23 August, 1943): Voronezh and Steppe Fronts vs. 4th Panzer Army, resulting in the recapture of Kharkov and

beginning the race to the Dniepr.

Operation Suvorov (7 August – 2 October, 1943): Kalinin and Western Fronts vs. Army Group Center, resulting in the capture of Smolensk, Roslaval and Bryansk.

Historical Posture

The table below gives the posture chosen by the historical combatants each turn as a collective average across the front:

Turn	Date	German Historical Posture	Russian Historical Posture
A	March 18	Pause	Pause
B	April 12	Pause	Pause
C	May 3	Reposition	Pause
D	June 12	Deploy	Pause
1	July 5	Engage	Reposition
2	July 12	Pause	Engage
3	August 3	Reposition	Engage
4	August 23	Pause	Reposition
5	September 15	Deploy	Engage
6	October 1	Engage	Engage
7	October 15	Deploy	Deploy
8	November 3	Engage	Engage

For Further Reading

Some of the best books to aid in game design are the Campaign Series by Osprey Publishing. Four titles were invaluable in the design of **Battle for Kursk, The Tigers are Burning, 1943**. All of them are by Robert Forczyk, and are listed below, north to south geographically speaking:
• Campaign 331 – Smolensk 1943: The Red Army's Relentless Advance
• Campaign 272 – Kursk 1943: The Northern Front
• Campaign 305 – Kursk 1943: The Southern Front
• Campaign 291 – The Dnepr 1943: Hitler's Eastern Rampart Crumbles

As for books focused exclusively on Kursk, and the lead-up to it, the following two were helpful:
• Classic Battles – Kursk 1943: The Tide Turns in the East,
   by Mark Healy, Osprey Military, 1997, 96pp.
• The Battle of Kursk, by David M. Glantz &
   Jonathan M. House, University of Kansas Press, 1999, 472pp.

Lastly, **Strategy & Tactics** Number 225 has an excellent article by William J. Sariego Jr., entitled "Greatest Tank Battle: Kursk, Summer 1943", with supplementary maps and Order of Battle by Joseph Miranda

For Further Playing

Kursk played host to some of the largest tank battles of the war, thus there are a number of tactical games covering those engagements. In addition to over two dozen scenarios in **Advanced Squad Leader** (**ASL**), I am also impressed with these two combined arms battle games:
• **SS Panzer: Bloodbath at Kursk**, XTR Corp., 1996,

by Ty Bomba, which covers Prokhorovka.
• **Blood & Steel Collector's Set**, L2 Design Group, 2009,
   by Paul Rohrbaugh, which covers the clashes at both Ponyri and Prokhorovka.

In terms of games focused specifically on Kursk and covering both fronts on the same map, there are two that stand out in my mind:
• **Kursk: Operation Zitadelle, 4 July 1943**, SPI, 1971,
   by Sterling S. Hart.
• **The Battle of Kursk, 1943**, Strategy & Tactics #253, SPI,
   Nov/Dec 2008, by Ty Bomba.

There are also several games covering a greater portion of the Russian Front, that showcase Kursk as a scenario or mid-war starting point, including:
• **Panzerkrieg: von Manstein & Heere Gruppe Sud**, Avalon Hill
   Game Co., 1983, by John Prados.
• **The Dark Valley: The East Front Campaign, 1941-45**, GMT Games,
   2013, by Ted S. Racier.

There are far fewer games covering the Russian Counteroffensives after Kursk, with my favorite being:
• **Ukraine '43: The Soviet Summer Offensive Against Army Group South** (2nd Edition), GMT Games, 2015, by Mark Simonitch.

Battle for Moscow: What's New?

For those of you familiar with Frank Chadwick's **Battle for Moscow**, GDW Games, which **Battle for Kursk** is heavily based upon, the following rules sections are the most important to read to transition from that game into this one:
• 5.0 Victory Conditions
• 6.0 Setting up the Game
• 9.2 Combat Odds and Offensives
• 10.5-10.7 Replacement Types, Negative Replacements
   and Formation Integrity
• 12.0 Posture Track
• 12.1 Strategic Objective

Note familiarity with **Battle for Moscow** is not required to play **Kursk**, though it is a simpler presentation with far fewer counters, if one wanted an easier introduction to East Front wargaming. This and related games can be found at **https://www.c3iopscenter.com/pages/wargame-room-store/**
• **Battle for Moscow, C3i Nr.25**, RBM Studio
   (available as a free download)
• **Objective Kiev, C3i Nr.26**, RBM Studio

By Sam Sheikh

C3i/Sam Sheikh: You've been invited onstage for a wargaming **TED Talk**. How would you introduce yourself and what you do?

Trevor: Hi, my name is Trevor Bender, and in the next 16 minutes I am going to teach you how to accurately predict the future. Yes, that is right … predict the future! I design political-military simulation games, and I use them to test **counterfactual-history** theories from the past.

C3i: What were your early favorites games and designers?

TB: AH's **PanzerBlitz** and **Panzer Leader** were my favorite games, taking me naturally into AH's **Squad Leader** and all its successors. As a result, my teenage brain was trained to solve tactical tank puzzles, and I still find great joy in playing **ASL**.

As I kid I never really paid attention to who the game designers were. I was more interested in the topic covered in the game, with anything on WWII being a natural draw for me. I guess I am still that way; I would much rather talk and write about the historical period being covered, how accurate the game is in portraying that period, and any possible "what-ifs" inherent in the design than I would about the novelty of the mechanics of the game or the designer's choices.

C3i: What about your favorite games and designers today?

TB: As an adult I gravitated towards card-driven games (CDGs) generally because they were easy to play via the Automated Cards Tracking Systems (ACTS) and were well supported by tournaments at the World Boardgame Championships (WBC). As such I really enjoy Mark Herman and Volko Ruhnke designs. I still enjoy operational-and theater-level wargames as well, and in that specialty, I closely watch what Mark Simonitch and Ted Raicer are doing.

C3i: You played **PanzerBlitz** with your buddy when you were 11 years old. Have you kept in touch? What does he think of you as an accomplished game designer today?

TB: Haha! My friend was David Delgado. We lived in Kingwood, Texas, and played **PanzerBlitz** in 6th and 7th grade. Shortly thereafter I moved to San Diego and we lost touch. I have frequently wondered what David would think about the impact he had on me and our hobby when he placed that phone call to invite me over to play a new game that has "tanks, men, and planes." David, if you're reading this interview, look me up and let's catch up!

C3i: What games do you play with your family?

TB: Why **Pandemic** of course! Actually, my wife Sally loves **Rummikub**, and that is our favorite pick-up game, though she also likes **Lost Cities**. And since I earned second place in that game at the last WBC, she likes to tease me whenever she wins that she now needs to go take on the kid that beat me in the final round to take first place! Now that we have two kids in college, we have found an interesting way to keep in touch with them via Board Game Arena, with our go-to on-line games being **7 Wonders**, **Through the Ages: A New Civilization**, and **Puerto Rico**.

C3i: What does your family think of your passion for consim gaming and design?

TB: This I have found most fascinating. We have four children, and none of them have gravitated towards game play as a primary hobby, though my oldest son and youngest daughter are very competitive game players! Instead they have each chosen their own pursuits and we support them in those arenas. But, they have each told me how my passion for gaming and game design has inspired them to new heights in their own chosen fields.

C3i: You said your design goal is realism. What do you want players to think or feel after playing one of your designs?

TB: Thanks for asking. Let me share a few observations. The latest ideas in game design are heavily influenced by the Eurogame phenomenon which began in 1995 and continues strongly today. As such, game designers and manufacturers feel a tug to respond to market demand by baking more "Euroness" into their designs. This really fun genre, which is attractive to such a wide audience (my family included), will frequently distort reality or a theme and force-fit it to match a game mechanic. Frequently when playing these games I find myself thinking, "Just because you chose the role of Merchant, why can't I choose that as well?" Or, "How does this game have anything to do with the theme of ancient Egypt?"

My personal preference is to design a political or military simulation as close to reality as possible, so that players actually feel as if they are in the decision-making seat with all the pressures that role entails. I also like games that allow for the exploration of historical "what-if's," or more specifically the testing of counterfactual theories. This level of detail requires more game rules and flavor than a typical Eurogame can support, so I will likely continue designing in the CDG and historical wargame genre for some time. Nevertheless, my mother-in-law has challenged me to design the perfect family game that can be played after dinner by eight people in less than a half-hour, followed by dessert!

One other comment about the game design process: there seems to be a view in the hobby among producers that game designers are artists that can't be rushed; give them the time they need to build their masterpiece. I am just the opposite—give me a deadline and I will get you a solid product by that time. I will work backwards from that date and calculate how many hours I need to focus at each step in the game design process to make it happen.

C3i: You realized you could design your own games instead of spending $6 at the hobby store. How does the hobby attract young players and the next generation of designers when games today are so much more expensive and complex?

TB: Excellent question! The GMTGames free game promotions to new attendees at the Weekend at the Warehouse is a start, as are the free

e-Book downloads from RBM Studio, such as **C3i Nr. 25** which has the introductory wargame **Battle for Moscow**. Each of us can share items from our collection with new players too. But a larger barrier to entry than cost is really time and support. When possible, we can each share more of our time helping new players enjoy this hobby by helping to develop their gaming skills, including pointing out good moves to fellow gamers that might actually weaken our own chances of winning the game in progress.

C3i: Your designs focus on flashpoints in the world and depict civil wars, unrest, and even pandemics. Your recent design expansion is even called **Labyrinth: The Forever War**. What fears and hopes do you have for your young family growing up in such times?

TB: Actually, I have a high degree of hope for a peaceful future. Though the headlines are filled with examples of conflict and turmoil today, aside from the Syrian Civil War, nothing in this century compares to the operational intensity of the major wars we saw in the 1900s. The main power actors of today have realized that limiting friendly force casualties is key to fighting a sustained war with continued home-front support. They have moved away from attrition-based warfare to a precision-based model.

C3i: Could you talk a little about **Labyrinth: The Forever War**?

TB: I was deep into my design of a six-player **COIN** game on the Syrian Civil War when events transpired such that we moved **The Forever War** up on the production cycle. It made sense to time its release by GMT Games near the same time as Playdek's release of **Labyrinth** on Steam, and so I moved **The Forever War** up to the front burner. Jason Carr was a big help on this as he found a way to export the spreadsheet I had been using to build my card list over the last four years into a card-generator program, which really helped in creating the playtest kits. **The Forever War** came together much quicker than **Awakening**, but there were no new major rules to add, other than how Iran is portrayed.

C3i: Where on the **Labyrinth** map is the most interesting place you've visited?

TB: Most recently that would be Banf, Canada. We spent a week at that National Park last summer and really enjoyed the beauty of the place and the sheer strength of the scenery.

C3i: Some measure of stability has returned to Syria now that Assad has had free reign following the withdrawal of US forces. But at what cost? What is your analysis?

TB: The Alawites have largely prevailed in the Syrian Civil War, but this was more due to their actions in the western part of the country where the primary populations centers are located. Despite the US drawdown, the eastern half of Syria largely remains a US protectorate enforced by one of the most successful air-to-ground campaigns ever; ISIS was truly dismantled from above.

C3i: I enjoyed your **Disaster at D-Day** scenario published in **C3i Nr. 31** for Mark Simonitch's **Normandy '44**. You've been published in **The General** as well as **The Boardgamer**. Where else?

TB: I had a piece in MMP's **Special Ops 4** that argued for a different employment of the Allied paratroopers in Operation Market Garden in a variety of games, then encouraged players to see if we could have done better than Monty by playing the game multiple times in sort of an operations research manner to determine if the alternative employment

would have made a difference. Ultimately we discovered that deploying the paratroopers in such a manner to seize in strength both the Nijmegen and Arnhem bridges on the first day was absolutely essential for Allied victory! I wrote the feature article **1777: Year of Decision** in **Strategy & Tactics** 316 that was nominated for a **CSR Award** for best magazine article in 2019. I have also been published in US Naval Institute's Proceedings, **Joint Forces Quarterly**, and **Defense News**.

C3i: What's next in the Bender hopper?

TB: Next up in the hopper is another game in the **C3i Combined Arms** Series as a follow-on to the **Battle for Kursk: The Tigers Are Burning, 1943** game in this issue. My **COIN** game on the Syrian Civil War is mostly complete and should be listed on the GMT **P500 List** within the next six months. The next design that I am most excited about would be a simulation of the Vietnam War using a fast-playing system similar to **Washington's War**. I have lots of ideas percolating on that one!

C3i: Tell us one of your most memorable gaming memories, whether at WBC or elsewhere.

TB: I gave a trip report in the "Harold on Games" podcast episode #23 on WBC 2019 and described the epic encounters I had in the Lost Cities and Labyrinth finals. I encourage readers to give that a listen, as well as the many other fine interviews of game designers and players that Harold has recorded. Many of us reading this magazine would rather play a single eight-hour game where we felt our victory really made a difference and that we will remember forever instead of many two-hour games we'll forget in coming weeks. Since longer games produce more lasting memories, there are fantastic struggles that I recall in 7 Ages, Empires in Arms, World in Flames, Advanced Third Reich, Historical ASL, The Dark Valley, The Napoleonic Wars, etc. that I will long treasure. But I will never forget the look on David Dockter's face, when in the first turn of 1865 during the quarterfinals of For the People at AVALONCON, he looked up from the map at me and exclaimed that mathematically he could not win!

C3i: If you could reach gamers all over the world with a 280-character message, what would you say?

TB: Haha … sounds like you are trying to get me to design an event card! Well, permit me to wax philosophical about the ever-continuing role of history, especially in light of the CDG genre:

"Truly, there is nothing ever that is a waste in history, as all events feed the collective human experience and lead to something else in the unfolding scroll of human progression. So it is in card-driven games as well, all events lead to something else, and some might even be a prerequisite for the main event!"

C3i: Dispatcher, Medic, Operations Expert, Researcher or Scientist?

TB: I think Medic is the funnest role in the game because you can see the difference you are making in removing cubes. But professionally, Operations Expert is closest to my role as a Project Manager.

C3i: Thanks, Trevor; it's been fun. Looking forward to more grist from your design mill!