

# WINTER THUNDER

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

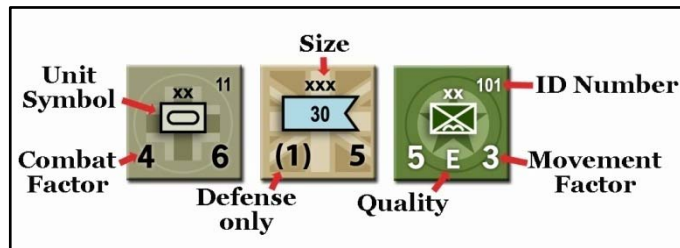
*Winter Thunder* is a simulation game of the German last-ditch offensive through the Ardennes forest region in December 1944.

## 2.0 GAME COMPONENTS AND CONCEPTS

The game includes the following: a set of 176 counters, one map, charts and tables, and these rules. Players will also need one ten-sided die (d10, in the parlance: a "0" rolled on the die means "zero", not "ten").

### 2.1 Counters

Most of the counters supplied with the game represent military units. See the Unit Identification Chart. Each counter (unit) has the following features:



- **Combat Factor (CF):** Denotes its relative power in battle. *A number in parentheses means the unit is not a combat unit and cannot attack by itself.*
- **Quality:** An "E" mark in between the two factors denotes that it is an Elite quality unit; a "P" means it is a Poor quality unit.
- **Movement Factor (MF):** Denotes how fast it can move.
- **Unit symbol:** A box containing a special symbol in the centre of the counter tells you what type of unit the counter represents, and what type of troops predominate in the formation.
- **Identification numbers:** Most units are also marked with identification numbers in the upper left or right corners. A number in the left corner means that the unit is a grouping of artillery or cavalry assets attached to a corps or army. A number or abbreviation in the right corner denotes a division or independent sub-divisional unit (brigade or regiment).
- **Full- or reduced-strength:** A division-size unit will be at either full strength (still fresh and able to attack with full effectiveness) or reduced strength (after the unit has taken significant casualties, is understrength or has suffered disruption). To denote the reduced strength status of a division, flip it over to show the lower CF (notice also there is a white stripe on the counter). Non-divisional units do not have a reduced strength side.

- **Colour:** Troops from different countries or armed forces are present in the game, denoted by the following color key:
  - ❖ Grey = German Army
  - ❖ Blue = German Air Force
  - ❖ Magenta = German Schutzstaffel (SS)
  - ❖ Green = United States (US)
  - ❖ Khaki = Britain (UK)
- **Information markers** (EXPLOIT, STRATEGIC MOVEMENT, OUT OF SUPPLY, IP, BLOCK) are also supplied. The number of IP and BLOCK markers is limited by the counter mix, reflecting the finite capacity and ability of engineer assets; you can make more of the other information markers if you need to.
- Finally, there is a set of **Mission Chits** for the attacker and defender to resolve combat (7.0)

### 2.2 Map

The game is played on a simplified map of the Ardennes forest area, encompassing parts of Germany, Luxemburg, and Belgium. A hexagonal ("hex") grid has been superimposed on the map to regulate movement and positioning of the playing pieces. One hex on the map equals 10 kilometres or about 6 miles.

### 2.3 Concepts and Definitions

**Sides:** The game is for two players, the Allied and the German. The Allied player controls all US and UK units; the German player controls all German Army, Air Force and SS units.

**Combat Unit:** any unit with a non-parenthesized CF.

**Control:** At the beginning of the game, all sides control all towns and cities on the respective side of the line on which they set up. During the game, the side that last moved a unit (combat or not) through a particular town or city controls it.

### 2.4 Starting the Game

The two Players agree which side each will play. Both players set up their starting and reinforcement forces on the map as directed by the Scenario Setup Guide. Note that five Allied units start the game with Improved Position markers. Both players then take the activation chits corresponding to the headquarters (HQ) units set up on the map and place them in a Dunnigan Ceramaceous Randomizer (i.e. a dry, clean coffee cup - or you could use an upended steel helmet for verisimilitude). Finally, players should review 9.4 to remind themselves of the special rules in effect during the first two turns of the game.

**2.41 Game Options** Before the game, players may decide to use one or more optional rules (see 11.0). It is recommended that the players have at least one run through the historical situation before using any options.

### **3.0 SEQUENCE OF PLAY**

Each Game-turn represents two days (except the first Game-turn, which represents one day only). In each Game-turn, players follow this sequence of Phases:

#### **3.1 Initial Phase**

- If required, the German player rolls the die and halves the result (round up) to determine how many of his corps HQ units are Out of Supply this turn (see 8.11).
- Reinforcement units may enter the game (4.2); activation chits corresponding to any newly entered HQ units are placed in the Randomizer.
- Some reduced strength divisions may be returned to full strength with Replacements (4.4).

#### **3.2 Operations Phase**



One player (it doesn't matter who) draws one chit from the Randomizer blindly. The corresponding HQ unit on the map can then put a certain number of units "under command", enabling them to move and conduct combat.

When the player who controls the forces commanded by the chosen HQ unit has finished their operations, the activation chit is placed to one side and another chit is drawn. This continues until all chits have been drawn or both players agree they no longer want to perform any operations with any units on the map.

#### **3.3 Turn End Phase**

All activation chits are put back in the Randomizer. Remove all STRATEGIC MOVEMENT, EXPLOIT, and OUT OF SUPPLY markers from units on the map. Remove any Improved Position markers from hexes that are empty of units (9.1). Replace on the map all HQ units that were eliminated in the previous turn. Players note the passage of one Game-turn. The next Game-turn then begins with the Initial Phase.

**3.31 Replacing HQ units** Army HQ units are placed before corps HQ units. An eliminated army HQ may be replaced in any road hex that can trace a line of supply of no more than TEN tactical MF to the appropriate map edge (east for any German army; north for the US 1st Army, south for the US 3rd Army). A corps HQ is placed with a friendly army HQ. Don't forget to replace the corresponding activation chits in the Randomizer.

### **4.0 INITIAL PHASE**

This phase is skipped in the first Game-turn.

#### **4.1 Reinforcements**

In this phase, players select the new units that enter the game in this turn and place them in one or more hexes on the indicated side of the game map. The activation chits of any HQ units that enter the game are placed in the Randomizer for selection later in the Operations Phase.

#### **4.2 Entry of Reinforcements**

Any hex on the appropriate map edge that contains a road leading off the map may be chosen for reinforcement units. The hex must be empty of enemy units and may not have been used by enemy units to leave the map. The "North" and "Northwest" edges are indicated on the map.

### **4.3 Special Cases**

**4.31 British Units** British (UK) units are restricted to moving in hexes north and west of the Meuse River and may not cross the Meuse unless *released*. British units are automatically released from this condition if the German player ever occupies any city adjacent to a Meuse River hexside.

**4.32 German Conditional Reinforcements** On the 19-20 December Game-turn, the German 11 Panzer and 10 SS Panzer Divisions become available. If the German player manages to move at least one unit across the Meuse River, they enter the game automatically in the Initial Phase of the following Game-turn. Otherwise, at their option the German player may enter one or both divisions on the east edge of the map after awarding Victory Points to the Allied player (10.0).

#### **4.4 Replacements**

When units are eliminated in the game, it does not mean that everyone represented by the eliminated counters has been killed or wounded. Remnants can be regrouped and reorganized to bring reduced strength divisions still on the map back to full strength.

In the Initial Phase of each Game-turn, for every SIX eliminated divisions in their "dead pile" (round all fractions down), a player may bring ONE reduced strength division back to full strength (flip it back to its full-strength side). The division must be in supply to take replacements (8.0), and in the succeeding Operations Phase, the division may not move or attack (turn it 90 or 180 degrees to indicate this, or simply remember).

**4.41 Limitations and Exceptions** Completely eliminated divisions and non-divisional units may not be rebuilt. The German player may not return motorized divisions to full strength. The Allied player may not return British divisions to full strength.

## **5.0 THE OPERATIONS PHASE**

### **5.1 Activating units**

During the Operations Phase, one player (it doesn't matter who) draws one activation chit from the Randomizer. The chit will indicate a specific HQ unit. Note that there are differences in procedure depending on the level of the HQ unit picked, to reflect differences in role.

A selected HQ may now undertake operations with friendly units within its command range that have not already conducted operations. Any friendly non-HQ unit that can trace a line of hexes free of enemy units no longer than FIVE tactical MF (ignore the effects of rivers) from the HQ may be "brought under command" by that HQ and used to move and/or conduct combat. The units brought under command by a given HQ now conduct operations in the following order (see the appropriate rules sections following for exact procedures and exceptions):

- designate units for exploitation or strategic movement by placing EXPLOIT or STRATEGIC MOVEMENT markers respectively;
- conduct tactical movement and strategic movement (6.2, 6.3) (at this time, the HQ unit may also itself conduct tactical or strategic movement (note that HQ units may

move only along roads), and may also remove or place BLOCK markers (see 9.6));

- conduct combat with units that did not move or conducted tactical movement only (7.0);
- conduct exploitation (a second round of tactical movement and combat) with previously designated units (6.4);

(As a memory aid, it would be useful to turn all friendly units that have just finished conducting operations 90 degrees so they are not used twice in the same Game-turn, and to flip the HQ unit over to its "DONE" side.)

When the player who controls the units activated by the chosen HQ unit has finished their operations, the activation chit is placed to one side and another chit is drawn. This continues until all chits have been drawn or both players agree they no longer want to perform any operations with any units on the map.

### 5.2 Army-level HQ units



If an army-level (XXXX) HQ chit is drawn, then the controlling player may immediately move by tactical or strategic movement that army HQ unit and any friendly units that have both not yet moved and cannot currently be brought under command by any friendly corps HQ. He may then immediately activate one corps-level (XXX) HQ that has not yet been activated and could hypothetically draw supply from the corresponding army HQ (a line of hexes free of enemy units up to TEN tactical MF long along connected road hexes). Either remove that corps HQ chit from the Randomizer (to be replaced in the Turn End Phase) or just remember, when it is drawn later, that that corps has already been activated and pick another. Note that though army HQ units can command units to move, they cannot command them to conduct combat or exploitation.

### 5.3 Limits of Command

Units may only be commanded and supplied by HQ units of their own nationality (US, UK or Germany). A given HQ unit can command no more than SIX divisions (reduced strength or not) at the same time. There is no limit on non-divisional units.

## 6.0 MOVEMENT

### 6.1 Stacking

In most cases, more than one friendly unit may be located in a hex; see the Terrain Effects chart. HQ units do not count for stacking. Generally, up to two divisions (full or reduced strength) and any number of non-divisional units (that is, any unit that is not marked XX on the top of its symbol box) may be present in a non-forest hex. In forest hexes, the limit is one division and two non-divisional units.

**6.11 Traffic Control** It is important to note that stacking limits apply at ALL times during the Operations Phase: you could not move a division through a non-forest hex that already has two divisions in it, or a forest hex that already has a division in it. Timing is everything.

### 6.2 Tactical Movement

In this form of movement, units move from hex to hex on the map, expending factors from their MF as indicated in the

Terrain Effects Chart, up to their total MF. Units may not enter hexes containing enemy units.

**6.21 HQ units.** HQ units may move only along roads.

**6.22 Motorized Units** Motorized units may not move into forest hexes, except when moving or attacking across a hexside crossed by a road.

### 6.3 Strategic Movement



Units moving by strategic movement may travel only on road hexes, at the faster rate indicated on the Terrain Effects Chart (note the difference in rates between German motorized and non-motorized units, and all Allied units).

Place a "STRATEGIC MOVEMENT" marker on top of such a unit (it will be removed in the Turn End Phase). Units using strategic movement may not start, end or move adjacent to an enemy unit, and will incur a disadvantage if attacked while in this state.

**6.31 Allied air interdiction** Due to general Allied air superiority during the campaign, the German player may not use strategic movement in clear weather turns.

**6.32 First Turn Surprise** Allied units may not use strategic movement on the first turn of the game.

### 6.4 Exploitation



This is a special class of tactical maneuver that takes place after combat. When a given HQ unit has been activated, it may place an "EXPLOIT" marker on top of any eligible unit or units before conducting any "regular" movement (tactical or strategic) or combat. After combat has been conducted by units that either did not move or conducted tactical movement before combat, and all resulting advances or retreats have been resolved, units designated for exploitation may now conduct tactical movement and combat.

**6.41 Exploitation-eligible units** Only motorized combat units capable of being placed under command by that HQ unit may be designated for exploitation.

## 7.0 COMBAT

### 7.1 Combat Procedure

After all tactical and strategic movement for the units under command by the activated HQ has been completed, the controlling player may have combat with those active units that are adjacent to enemy units. Combat is voluntary between units. Units may attack only once, but units may be attacked several times in separate battles over the course of the Game-turn.

To conduct combat, follow these steps:

- The active player declares which of their units are attacking and which enemy unit or units are the target of the attack. Not all units in a given hex need attack as one combined attack. Individual units may not "split up" their CF to attack more than one unit, and all units in a given hex under attack must defend as one combined force.
- The Allied player may now allocate one or more Air Points to the battle (9.2).

- The attacking player now secretly chooses one of the four red Attack Mission chits and the defending player secretly chooses one of the six blue Defend Mission chits.
- The two chits are matched on the Mission Matrix Table, which will indicate any advances or retreats for the units involved and whether one or both sides has to check for casualties, and if so with what modifiers.
- Both players then simultaneously conduct casualty checks (7.31), and then conduct advances or retreats with any units that are left (7.32).

## 7.2 Combat Limitations and Modifiers

See the Mission Matrix Table.

- **Motorized combat units** may not attack into forest hexes, except along a road (that is, the hex the unit is in and the hex under attack share a hexside crossed by a road).
- Clarification: Terrain Modifiers are cumulative (so the Terrain Modifier for a unit attacking across a river into a Town in a Rough terrain hex would be +4!).

### 7.21 Mission Limitations



To choose the Blitz Attack Mission, at least one armor unit must be attacking.



Clarification: the “Counterattack” is a Defend Mission but does not reverse the roles of the two players. However, the Terrain Modifier for the terrain in the defender’s hex is not considered by the defender when that player is conducting Casualty Checks for their units in a Counter-attack.

### 7.22 Casualty Check Modifier Definitions and Clarifications

- “outflanked”: two or more combat units are attacking the defending hex through opposite hexsides.
- Artillery units that are out of supply do not yield modifiers for Casualty Checks (however, their single CF does count in the total of involved defending CF).
- “total enemy CF”: When adding up this total, the attacker includes the CF of any HQ and artillery units (in supply or not) in the defender’s hex. The defender does not include the CF of any HQ or artillery units among the attacker’s units.

## 7.3 Combat Results

**7.31 Casualty Checks** Often the units of one or both sides in a battle will have to conduct casualty checks. The units on one side must conduct as many casualty checks as there are FULL STRENGTH divisions on the other side. There is a minimum of one check when indicated, even if there is no full strength division involved in the battle. The checking player may choose which of their units involved in the battle must check, but all combat units must be checked before they can choose a non-combat unit (EXCEPTION: in the case of a Blitz Attack Mission, the attacking player must choose to make at least one casualty check on at least one of the armor units that were involved in the attack, before choosing any other units).

Each unit that checks will roll the die and compare it to the modified Casualty Check Total (CCT). The total is made up of:

- the total enemy CF involved in the battle,
- plus or minus any modifiers as required by the Mission Matrix Table and
- other applicable modifiers listed in the charts.

If the die roll is equal to or less than the CCT (remember that a “0” is a zero), then the unit must take a step loss. A full strength division that takes a step loss is flipped over to reveal its reduced strength side (with the lower CF and white stripe). A reduced strength division or a non-divisional unit that is required to take a step loss is placed in the “dead pile”.

- Non-combat units: HQ and artillery units are not subject to casualty checks but are automatically eliminated if all combat units in their hex are eliminated. A stack made up only of HQ and/or artillery units cannot attack but does have the total CF of the units available for defense; however, the entire stack is automatically eliminated if it must make a casualty check.
- Eliminated HQ units: when a corps or army HQ unit is eliminated in combat, the counter and its activation chit are temporarily removed from the game, to be replaced in the Turn End phase of the following Game-turn. See 3.31.

**7.32 Advances and Retreats** Advances and retreats are indicated on the Mission Matrix Table, and are indicated in numbers of hexes, not Movement Factors. The owning player conducts any retreats or advances required of their units. The defender conducts all their retreats or advances before the attacker. In retreating or advancing, the units involved must move to hexes that are not occupied by enemy units and to which they could move in the course of tactical movement.

- Retreats are compulsory with one exception: units defending in an Improved Position can take an automatic step loss instead of retreating (9.1). A unit that cannot retreat the full distance indicated for any reason (impassable terrain, edge of the map, stacking limits, enemy units) retreats as far as it can then takes an automatic step loss.
- Advances are voluntary and possible only if the defender’s hex is now empty due to retreats or step losses. The first hex advanced into must be the defender’s newly vacated hex; subsequent advances may be in any direction. At the owning player’s choice, HQ and artillery units may advance with the units they were stacked with at the moment of battle (but the HQ units could only advance into a connected road hex).

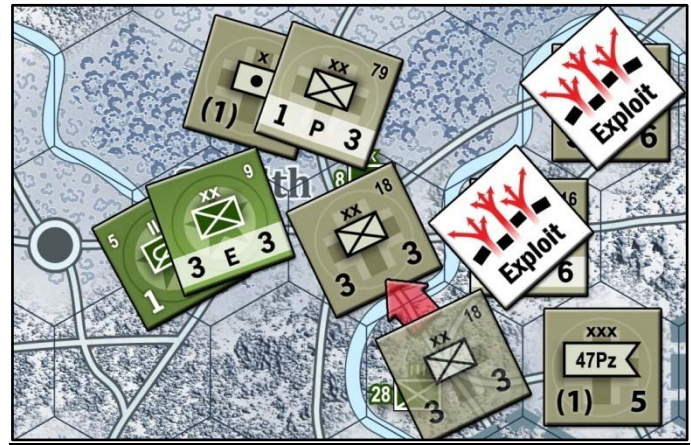
## 7.4 Exploitation

As noted in 6.4, after all combat conducted by activated units that were not designated for exploitation has been resolved, any activated units that were designated for exploitation may now conduct tactical movement and combat, using the same procedures.



**7.5 Operations Phase example**

The German 47 Panzer Korps activation chit is picked. There are five units that it may bring under command (i.e. are within 5 tactical MF): the full strength 18 Infantry Division (CF=3) and Lehr armor division (CF=3e), reduced strength 79 Infantry Division (CF=1p), reduced strength 116 Panzer Division, (CF=3e), and an artillery brigade (no offensive CF but it will add a +1 modifier in any subsequent enemy casualty checks). A stack consisting of the reduced strength US 9 Infantry Division (CF=3e) and an armored cavalry regiment (CF=1) is in a forest hex blocking the road to Vielsam. The German player places an EXPLOIT marker on the 116 Panzer and Lehr. He uses tactical movement to move the 18 Infantry into contact – the 79 Infantry and artillery were already adjacent.



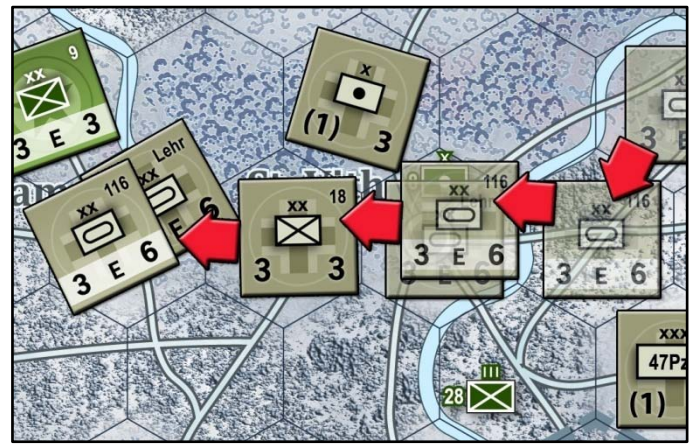
The German player chooses “Balanced Attack” and the Allied player chooses “Defense in Depth”. The result is

0/+1  
a1/r2

This means both sides must conduct casualty checks (with no modifier for the attacker, and +1 for the defender, due to the missions chosen) and when the checks are done, all remaining defending units must retreat two hexes and the attacking units may advance one hex.



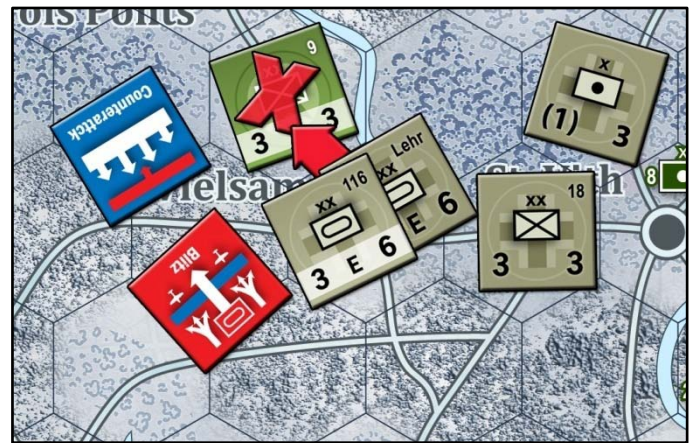
Both players must make one casualty check simultaneously. The German player chooses to have the reduced 79 Infantry make the check; its CCT will be 7 (4 total enemy CF with a +2 modifier for the forest terrain in the defender's hex and +1 for being a Poor unit). The player rolls a “6” so the 79 Infantry takes a step loss, and is eliminated. The Allied player chooses the cavalry regiment to make the check: its CCT is 4 (4 total enemy CF, +1 for the combat mission result, +1 for the enemy artillery and -2 for the Terrain Modifier). He rolls a “3” so the cavalry regiment is eliminated and the only unit left in the hex is the reduced strength 9 Infantry. This unit must retreat two hexes, it retreats to a light woods hex. The remaining German units may now advance one hex into the defender’s hex.



Now the German player can conduct exploitation with his two motorized units. The 116 Panzer and Lehr move adjacent to the reduced strength 9 Infantry and attack it again. The German player chooses “Blitz” and the desperate Allied player chooses “Counterattack”. The result is

+2/+2  
a1/r2

Both sides must now make one casualty check with a +2 modifier: because the Allied player chose Counterattack, he does not get the benefit of the terrain in his hex. The German player chooses the 116 Panzer to do the check: the CCT is 6 (3 enemy CF, +2 for the Terrain Modifier, +2 for the combat mission result, -1 for being an Elite unit). The German player rolls a “7”, so the 116 Panzer is OK. The Allied CCT is 7 (6 enemy CF, +2 for the combat mission result, -1 for being an Elite unit). The player rolls a “1”, so the reduced 9 Infantry is eliminated. There are no defending units left to retreat and the two German divisions may advance one hex into the defender’s hex.





## 8.0 SUPPLY RULES

In order for a given unit to be brought under command by a corps HQ and/or for it to be considered in supply, it must have a supply line open to the corps HQ. A supply line consists of a chain of hexes not occupied by enemy units or BLOCK markers that costs up to FIVE tactical MF to traverse (ignore the effects of rivers).

In order for the corps HQ unit to be in supply (and therefore give supply to the units it commands), it must itself trace a supply line to an army HQ unit up to TEN tactical MF long. However, the supply line may only be traced along connected road hexes and, as before, cannot pass through enemy units or BLOCK markers. Finally, the army HQ unit must be in supply as well, by tracing a line of connected road hexes, free of enemy units or BLOCK markers, of ANY LENGTH to the appropriate map edge. All German armies trace to the east map edge, the US First Army traces to the north map edge, and the US Third Army traces to the south map edge.

The supply status of a corps HQ unit is established when its activation chit is drawn, and its supply status retains while the units under its command are conducting operations.

Effects of being Out of Supply:

- All motorized units that are Out of Supply have a Movement Factor of 3.
- If any attacking units are Out of Supply, the defender's Casualty Check is modified by -1.
- Artillery units that are Out of Supply do not yield a +1 modifier on Casualty Checks.
- A unit that is Out of Supply cannot place an Improved Position marker in its hex (9.1).

### 8.1 Special Cases

**8.11 German Supply** Remember that being in command and being in supply are two different things, though the method used to establish them is the same. All German units, including HQ units, are considered to be in supply no matter what their circumstances during the first two turns of the game (but non-HQ units must still be in command to move and fight).

All German HQ units are considered to be Out of Supply during any turn with clear weather (but they can still put units under command and conduct operations). In other turns, during the Initial Phase the German player must roll the die, halve the result (round up) and mark that number of corps HQ units with Out of Supply markers (the remaining corps HQ units are not automatically in supply, though - they must still trace supply to an in-supply army HQ unit as described above).

**8.12 Inter-Allied Supply.** British (UK) units are considered to be in supply as long as they are west of the Meuse River. British units that cross the Meuse may only draw supply and take command from 30 UK Corps HQ, which must trace a supply line of no more than TEN tactical MF to a notional UK Army HQ unit that is assumed to exist just off the edge of the map, anywhere in the Northwest area.

## 9.0 SPECIAL RULES

### 9.1 Improved Positions (IP)



Any in-supply unit brought under command during the Operations Phase that does not move or conduct combat may place an Improved Position (IP) marker in its hex. The effect of an IP marker is to give an additional +1 to the Terrain Modifier of the defender's hex (note that the benefit would be temporarily lost if the defender chose a Counterattack defense mission, but the marker would not be removed). If the units in the hex move or attack, the marker is removed. The number of IP markers is limited to what is supplied in the counter mix.

**9.11 The Westwall** The Germans had extensive though outdated field fortifications along their front line. IP markers have been printed on the map to show these. They are permanent and may benefit only German units.

### 9.2 Air Points

Only the Allied player has Air Points. The amount available depends on the weather during the current turn (no points if overcast, two if mist, and four if clear). These points may be added to bolster any Allied attack or defence, but each point may be used only once per Operations Phase; keep track of expenditure on scrap paper. Each Air Point gives a +1 modifier on the enemy's casualty checks and are never "shot down" or eliminated in any way.

### 9.3 HQ Units

HQ units are non-combat, non-divisional units that move only on roads (6.21). They are the agency for activating units (5.1) and act as conduits for supply (8.0). When a HQ unit is eliminated in combat, it is replaced in the Turn End Phase of the following Game Turn (3.41).

### 9.4 German First Turn Surprise

On the first turn of the game, only:

- There is no Initial Phase. The weather is always Overcast.
- At the German player's choice, he may activate all German HQ units one by one in the sequence he chooses, before any Allied HQ units are activated.
- In combat, the Allied player's Defensive Mission chit is chosen at random.
- The Allied player may not conduct Strategic or Exploitation Movement.

Also, all German units are considered to be in supply for the first two turns, no matter what their other circumstances. However, they still have to be under command to conduct movement and combat.

### 9.5 Roadblocks



One feature of the battle in the Ardennes was the Allied use of battalion-size blocking detachments deployed in areas prepared by combat engineers. When the activation chit for an Allied corps HQ unit is picked, the Allied player may place one BLOCK marker in or adjacent to the HQ unit, or to a friendly unit that could be taken under command by that corps HQ (that is, it is within 5 tactical MF of it). Only one BLOCK marker may be placed in a given hex; the hex must be empty or friendly-occupied. The number of BLOCK markers

is limited to what is supplied in the counter mix. A given corps HQ unit may remove any number of markers that are within 5 tactical MF of it when it is activated, but may place only one new one. The effect of a BLOCK marker is as follows:

- An enemy unit using Strategic Movement, or a non-combat unit, may not enter a hex containing a BLOCK marker.
- A BLOCK marker is not a unit and may not be attacked. It is removed automatically when an enemy combat unit moves into its hex via tactical movement, or an advance or retreat after combat. The combat unit must pay the cost of the non-road terrain in the marker's hex to enter that hex, then stop moving (note the road in a hex is not actually cancelled, so a motorized unit could enter a forest hex where a BLOCK marker was deployed, paying 3 MF but only along a road). The BLOCK marker is then removed. The enemy unit may still attack and other enemy units may subsequently move normally through the hex, subject to stacking restrictions.
- Though BLOCK markers are not units, enemy units cannot trace supply lines through their hexes. A BLOCK marker in one of the two hexes connected by a bridged river hexside requires the enemy to treat the hexside as if it were not bridged.

### 9.6 British 30 Corps



The Bulge was mostly an American battle; one British corps was deployed north and west of the Meuse River to contain any German breakthroughs. This is reflected in several special rules:

- British (UK) units may not cross the Meuse unless the German player ever occupies any city adjacent to a Meuse River hexside.
- The British 30 Corps HQ unit may command only British units. A notional British army HQ unit is assumed to exist just off the edge of the map in any hex of the Northwest area.
- British units are considered to be in supply while north or west of the Meuse River.

### 10.0 VICTORY

Play stops at the end of the Operations Phase of the 2-3 January turn and victory is judged. Each player scores Victory Points for the following reasons:

#### Allied Player

- +1 for each enemy division completely eliminated (non-divisional units and reduced strength divisions still on the map do not count)
- +2 each German conditional reinforcement division entered into the game by choice

#### German Player

- +1 for each enemy division completely eliminated (non-divisional units and reduced strength divisions still on the map do not count)
- +1 for each town hex controlled by the German player at the end of the game that he didn't control at the beginning of the game
- +3 for each city hex, as above
- +1 each German combat unit (regardless of size) adjacent to, or north or west of, the Meuse River at the end of the game
- +2 each German motorized combat unit (regardless of size) that leaves the west edge of the map

- +4 each German motorized combat unit (regardless of size) that leaves the north edge of the map, west of the Meuse River
- If one player has more points than the other player, but less than 1.99 times as many, the game is a Draw. If he has 2.0 - 2.99 times as many points, he wins a Tactical Victory. If he has 3.0 or more times as many points, he wins a Smashing Victory.

### Optional Short Game - Home for Christmas

If you don't have all night, assume the Germans opted for a localized offensive to destroy Allied troops and gain ground for later offensive action. Begin the game on 16 December as usual and play until the end of the Operations Phase of the 25-26 December game-turn. The German player does not get any reinforcements at all during the game, including conditional reinforcements. The Allied player does not get any UK reinforcements, nor any reinforcements noted as entering on the south map edge (the US Third Army goes on with the offensive it had been planning to conduct, to the south of the area covered by the map). At the end of the game, score each side as above but the German player does not get any points for exiting units from the map or being adjacent to or across the Meuse. The German player wins if he has more points; otherwise, the Allied player wins.

### 11.0 OPTIONAL RULES

#### 11.1 Variable weather

The weather on the first Game-turn is always Overcast. Each Initial Phase thereafter, the Allied Player rolls the die and deducts 1 if the weather in the previous turn was Overcast, and adds 1 if the weather was Clear. The weather gets "worse" (Clear becomes Mist, Mist becomes Overcast) on 2 or less, "better" (Overcast becomes Mist, Mist becomes Clear) on 7 or more, or stays the same on any other roll.

#### 11.2 Allied Command Control

Restrict the Allied player in that artillery and armored cavalry units of a given corps may be ordered to attack or conduct exploitation only when they are taken under command by that same corps HQ. The units may still be moved under command of another corps HQ, or an army HQ as per 5.1.

#### 11.3 German BLOCKS

Allow German corps HQ units to remove and place BLOCK markers as Allied corps HQ units. Players will have to remember whose BLOCKS are whose (e.g. you could rotate German BLOCKS so they appear upside down).

#### 11.4 Solitaire Play

In practice, many wargames are played solo, and the process of resolving combat is not heavily affected by the fact that you are playing it alone. However, the combat resolution system in this game requires both players to exercise some judgment in choosing their respective attack and defend missions.

The simplest thing to do is to have the defender's mission chit chosen at random in every attack. This mechanic is used in the first turn of the game to show the initial confusion and uncertainty among the Allied forces (rule 9.4), but you could do it for both sides throughout the game whenever a unit or units defend, as a way of putting both sides at a slight disadvantage.

Alternatively, you could use the following sub-system in all cases where a unit or units defend (except for Allied forces in the first turn of the game – rule 9.4 still applies): roll the die to determine what the "posture" of the defending force will be (or you could simply decide this in advance), and then roll the die a second time to determine which exact Defend Mission will be used.

First Roll	Posture	Second Roll	Defend Mission
1-3	AGGRESSIVE ( <i>hooah!</i> )	1-3	Counter-attack
		4-5	Defense in Depth
		6-7	Standfast
		8	Balanced Defense
		9	Delay
		0	Withdraw
4-6	STALWART ( <i>to the death!</i> )	1-3	Standfast
		4-5	Balanced Defense
		6-7	Defense in Depth
		8	Counter-attack
		9	Delay
		0	Withdraw
7-9	RETROGRADE ( <i>run away!</i> )	1-3	Delay
		4-5	Withdraw
		6-7	Defense in Depth
		8	Balanced Defense
		9	Counter-attack
		0	Standfast
0	ROLL AGAIN		

## DESIGNER'S NOTES

There are so many wargames on the Battle of the Bulge, why is this so? I think it's because the overwhelming majority of wargamers are Americans. Next to the D-day landings and Operation Market-Garden, there is no other single battle in the European theatre that involves American forces that stands out so well in terms of definition (i.e. there was a beginning and end to the battle) and drama. And for the closet-Nazi crowd, there's the lost-cause glory of the last gasp of the SS in the West and the elusive chance of ultimate victory (or at least making it to the Meuse). I also would not minimize the effect of the hoary old 1965 movie "Battle of the Bulge", featuring Henry Fonda, Robert Shaw and Telly Savalas, climaxed by a tank battle between American M-48 and M-24 tanks on the arid plains near Segovia, Spain. Laughably inaccurate as it is, many wargamers now in their 50s and 60s saw this movie as boys... and coincidentally, the first wargame on the Bulge appeared that same year. Seriously, though, I think this battle offers a lot to players in that both sides get a chance to attack, it offers each side its own challenges to plan around and overcome, and it can be a tense contest when handled correctly.

*Winter Thunder* is a bit different from other Bulge games. For one, it is a higher-level game, in a smaller format than most. With mostly divisional counters, two-day turns and 6 mile hexes, the order of battle at this level is well established and I did not have to be too nit-picky about exact orders of appearance or terrain analysis.

For another, the Mission Matrix system of near-diceless combat sets this game apart from the others, as does the concept of HQ units taking combat units under command and giving them missions. I am indebted to Jim Stahler for the essence of the Mission Matrix idea, which I have heavily modified, from his variant article for *Blitzkrieg* in the magazine *The General* volume 18, number 6 (March-April 1982). The army and corps HQ unit aspect is also not new but hasn't been used much in Bulge games. I have also used this system in some of my other games: *Autumn Mist*, another Bulge game; *Summer Lightning*, the 1939 Poland campaign; and *Balkan Gamble*, an exploration of alternate-history invasions in Greece and Yugoslavia.

A number of other aspects stressed in lower-level, more detailed Bulge games have been abstracted in this one. The general Allied air superiority and availability of air power, when the skies are clear, is represented by Air Points (which act like artillery in combat) and in putting the German forces out of supply and forbidding them to use strategic movement. Destruction and building of bridges, creation of Improved Positions and deployment of BLOCK markers is assumed to be done or undone by the engineer units present in division-size units, or corps/army level engineering assets directed by division staffs. However, there are only so many engineer battalions available, so the number of IP and BLOCK markers is limited.



**SCENARIO SETUP GUIDE**

The map has been printed with small pictures of the units of both sides that start the game on the map. The following five units setup with improved position markers.



# WINTER THUNDER

Designed and developed  
by *Brian Train*

Based on his game *Autumn Mist*

Art and graphic design  
by *John Cooper*

## UNIT IDENTIFICATION CHART

MOTORIZED UNITS	NON-MOTORIZED UNITS	UNIT SIZE
 Headquarters (HQ)	 Infantry	<b>XXXX</b> Army (HQ only) <b>XXX</b> Corps (HQ only) <b>XX</b> Division <b>X</b> Brigade <b>III</b> Regiment
 Armor	 Airborne Infantry	
 Mechanized Infantry		
 Armored Cavalry		
 Artillery		



