

OP COM

Operational Map Combat in World War II

PLAYERS GUIDE

Version 26 October 2004

1. Scales, Level and Resolution

The smallest represented unit is the Battalion (or equivalent)

Players represent the staff at Divisional level or higher.

Each game turn is half a day.

Map scales etc. will vary with the map used, but counter sizes must match the map scale. Assume a counter frontage of around 1km per battalion or the equivalent.

2. Sequence of Action

Each full turn should take no more than about 25 minutes to adjudicate, preferably much less. For games with just one divisional team a side a game turn should take around 15 minutes to adjudicate.

Control Actions	Max Time Taken
1. Team Control takes players written orders for the turn on a standard proforma, reads them, clarify unclear points and prepares to work out the results.	2-3 minutes
2. When Control are ready, the Team Controls move all counters on master map, and then assess the results of combat.	No more than 5-10 minutes
3. Team Control orally brief the players on the outcome of combat. (This can be concurrent with 2. above if telephones &/or radios are available).	2-3 minutes
4. Map Control position new reinforcement and supply counters on the main map for the coming move.	3-5 minutes
	Total 12-21 minutes

Player Actions:
5. Clarify orders when requested by Control.
6. While Control are working out the update, prepare as much of next orders as possible and communicate with other HQs and superiors/subordinates. Carry out map updates.
7. Be prepared for battle updates as they occur.

3. Orders

Each turn players will issue orders for units or groups of units with the same task (i.e. battlegroups, regiments, brigades). An order sheet is then passed to the team Game Control person who check they can understand it, before going to the main map and implementing the orders.

Game control then annotate the order sheet as the combat is resolved and return to the players to report.

A typical sheet might look like this:



Order Sheet – Team		<i>Guards Armd Div</i>		Game Date <i>18 Sept 44</i> am / pm		
Unit / Grouping	Orders	Supporting elements	Logistics allocated	General Intentions (circle one in each col.)		Game Control Notes
				Action	Posture	
<i>32nd Guards Brigade Group</i>	<i>Attack towards Valkenswaard</i>	<i>2 Field regts plus 2 Med regts allocated from 30th Corps + air support</i>	<i>18 Ammo 4 Fuel</i>	Breakthrough Attack Probe Hold Move Prepare	Tact Non-Tact Rest	<i>Used 14 ammo and 8 fuel. Light losses</i>
<i>5th Guards Bde Group</i>	<i>Move up behind 32nd Guards Bde Gp</i>	<i>none</i>	<i>4 fuel</i>	Breakthrough Attack Probe Hold Move Prepare	Tact Non-Tact Rest	<i>Move completed, 4 fuel used</i>
				Breakthrough Attack Probe Hold Move Prepare	Tact Non-Tact Rest	

The headings are mostly self-explanatory, except 'general intentions' which are:

Action	
<i>Breakthrough</i>	This is only available to armoured units. An all out attack intended to break through the enemy formations and continue movement on the other side. This can mean the units fight more than one action during the turn, and will wear out units faster.
<i>Attack</i>	Attack the units in the direction indicated in orders, with the intention of dislodging or destroying them and taking an objective.
<i>Probe</i>	Intensive patrolling to determine the location and extent of units to the front. The unit will advance until it makes contact then conform to the enemy's deployment, when found. This also give some unit identification of the facing units.

Action	
<i>Hold</i>	Dig in and remain in current positions. If specified in orders this might be a 'stand fast' or 'hold at all costs' in which case the unit might take additional casualties rather than be pushed back.
<i>Move</i>	Move from 'A' to 'B'. If enemy encountered, the unit stops and does not attack.
<i>Prepare</i>	Prepare for an attack. This is essential if an attack is to be successful.
Posture	
<i>Tact</i>	Tactical – ready for combat deployed and expecting trouble.
<i>Non-Tact</i>	Non-Tactical. Not ready for combat, not expecting trouble. Ammunition stowed, weapons slung. But allows faster movement.
<i>Rest</i>	In some cases units can recover fighting effectiveness by resting. Typically this needs to be for several days before any improvement is felt.

4. Unit Movement

Movement

As a guide, the ABSOLUTE MAXIMUM movement distance, in kilometres, on the map are shown below.

Individual unit movement will almost always be much less than this maximum, especially the road movement rates which can be affected by weather, congestion, choke points and other road conditions

REMEMBER, THESE FIGURES REPRESENT THE UNINTERRUPTED MAXIMUM MOVE.

Troops	Ground	Tactical	Non-tactical	Road Column	River Crossing
Horse drawn Infantry & Paras.	All terrain	15	25	30	Possible
Mech. or motorised	Close	18	28	64	impossible
	Open	30	32	64	impossible
Tanks or SPGs	Wood/ Town	18	28	64	impossible
	Marsh	8	18	64	impossible
	Open	30	32	64	impossible
Motor towed arty	All terrain	-	-	75	impossible
Recce and lt. tanks	Close	18	28	100	possible
	Open	30	35	100	possible

Obviously, movement can be interrupted for combat. Units which have moved for more than half a turn cannot fight in that turn (i.e. they fight in the next turn).

Armoured units which are *breaking through*, may move on after a combat - depending upon how fierce the fighting was.

Examples of things that slow down unit movement

- Moving down narrow, twisty lanes
- Coming under fire
- Traffic jams
- Bad weather
- Preparing for an attack

River Crossing

On the operational maps only river obstacles of major importance are marked. There are numerous minor obstacles that have been factored into the movement rates.

These river obstacles can only be crossed at a bridge by units indicated above as 'River Crossing = impossible'.

Other units may cross canals and minor rivers, but not major rivers without a marked bridge (using minor unmarked footbridges and locks or otherwise improvising).

Most bridges have a weight classification. For most purposes we are interested primarily in whether tanks can cross. Therefore there are only two classifications of bridge/Ferry:

a. Light bridge/Ferry - equates to the Class 9, and is only passable for infantry and transport units (but not loaded tank transporters).



b. Heavy bridge/ferry - equates to a class 40 Bailey bridge (or larger) and is passable to all types of unit

Rail Movement

It takes one turn to embark an infantry unit, two turns to embark a unit with tanks or trucks.



It takes half a turn to disembark an infantry unit, or a whole turn for others.

Embarkation must be done at a town or village on the railway line.

Disembarkation can be done anywhere for infantry – but must be at a town/village for vehicles.

A train is given a lift capacity in Unit Points, typically around 5-10.

Once embarked the unit may move down the rail network freely, taking one complete turn to go as far as it likes.

The availability of trains to move troops will be laid don in the scenario.

Passing By

There are circumstances when units may wish to pass through the enemy, or between units where there appears to be a gap. This needs careful treatment, because this sort of infiltration or exfiltration did sometimes happen.

As a general rule of thumb, it is not possible to pass by an enemy unit closer than 2km in the open. The movement is stopped, as if they had bumped into the unit directly (unless they have orders to attack, of course).

If the movement is through woods, or at night, then the passing distance is 1km.

Units in contact cannot 'rub past' an enemy unit they are in contact with, without fighting it. They must break contact first.

Night Movement.

The first part of the morning turn, and the last part of the afternoon turn are, obviously, night-time.

If orders explicitly require night movement, then movement is limited to a ceiling around $\frac{1}{4}$ of the maximum moves permissible.

5. Traffic

Unit Points

At any major crossing, the bridge or ferry will be given a capacity in terms of **'Unit Points Per Turn'**

Each unit is given a score (indicating its size in vehicles). During any major troop movement, bridges will form the main choke points for traffic, and this will be reflected in the game.

The unit points are marked on the counters concerned.

The capacity of typical river crossings and choke points, in points per phase, will be:

Crossing type	Capacity in points
Civilian Ferry	4
Main road bridge	up to 120
Minor road bridge	20-50
Bailey bridge	40
Rail bridge	15-25
Light military bridge	5-25
Military ferry	5

Other choke values:

Route type	Capacity in points
Town with "crowds of cheering civilians"	50
Main Road, double lane	up to 120
Main road, single lane	up to 60

The capacity rating for each area will be marked on the main umpire map, and the information should be available to defenders who have been in the area for a while, or to units that conduct a terrain recce of the area.

None of these figures are hard and fast, of course.

Circumstances can dramatically alter the capacity of a given river crossing. The above figures must be regarded as only a general guide and game control may vary these as the game progresses.

6. Blowing Bridges

It was common for the German army to prepare bridges for demolition, and for the various airforces to destroy bridges without reference to ground forces.

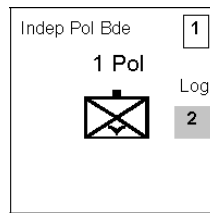
Often the destruction of a bridge was out of the hands of commanders at the player level, bridge destruction regarded as a random event. You may find that bridges get destroyed at the least opportune moment.

7. Combat

Example Player Map Counter

The players are never be given data on the exact status of their units.

Where players use map counters at all, they should look like this:



Support Units

Some units have a primarily support role. This means that the unit can only be used in attack or defence in conjunction with another unit of a reasonable size. This will include anti-tank, flak and some sorts of artillery.

Attacking

A unit may make two attacks in a day, provided it has the time and the supplies. No more than one attack per turn will normally be permitted (*except* - see Overrun Attacks below).

Combat is assessed in terms of attacks. It takes one turn to prepare an effective attack.

Orders to prepare for an attack must be made on the order sheet.

Ammunition Supplies

Units cannot attack unless their formation is **Supplied**.

Supplies are only used up in the attack and as a result of adverse combat results.

In order to be *Supplied*, the brigade/regiment or the equivalent must have at least one supply counter with it's HQ unit.

In order for artillery to be *Supplied*, there must be at least 1 supply counter per unit.

Fuel Supplies

Most Allied units, and some German units require significant quantities of fuel to operate. These units may not move unless they are **Fuelled**.

In order to be *Fuelled*, a unit must have a Fuel Counter on its brigade HQ unit at the start of the day. One Fuel Counter lasts for 1 day.

Combat Assumptions

- Combat is extremely wearing on all troops. Even if they win a battle, the winner's attacking units will take many casualties, often more than the defenders. It is important for commanders to ensure that they do not exhaust their entire force by continually using, say, their entire division to attack.
- Paratroops and some German infantry formations lack substantial numbers of heavy weapons, and are therefore disadvantaged in the attack, or facing tanks in open country.
- Infantry have an advantage over tank formations when defending built-up areas or closely wooded country.
- Preparation is everything. All attacks need at least one game turn of preparation (i.e. waiting, or moving up a short distance) if they are to stand the best chance of success. Obviously, sometimes attacks must be hastily organised and immediate – but be warned, success is less likely in hasty attacks.
- Co-ordination in battle is very hard. Units from the same Brigade / Regiment / Battlegroup are used to working together – but additional units, especially from another command or division make the task of battle co-ordination harder. So in a single fight, two brigades from the same division will be more effective than two brigades from different divisions.
- Tactical air power in the close support role can be decisive in an attack. But it does require several squadrons of effort to do so.
- Artillery is essential to both attack and defence. Attacking without artillery support is a definite disadvantage.
- Combined arms attacks – making good use of infantry, armour and artillery in the same attack – increase the chances of success considerably.
- Tank units are quite potent in battle, but have limits. A well deployed infantry battalion can hold up tanks, especially in close country.
- It takes time to do anything. For the vast majority of units, the following timings apply:
 - a. To prepare a brigade/battalion for an attack **takes 1 turn**.
 - b. Attach a battalion to a different division **takes 1 turn**.

Players must have **explicitly** allowed for these timings in their orders.

Supporting Artillery

Unit	Effective Range (km)	Long Range (km)
Field Artillery	8	12
Medium Artillery	12	20
Rocket Artillery	6	n.a.
Infantry Guns	6	n.a.

Defending artillery specifically allocated to the task can be counted for the defenders and use ammo in the process.

Artillery units can be moved and fired, but obviously their effect is reduced in proportion to how much of the turn they spend moving and what part of the turn they move in.

For example, an artillery regiment moving up during the first half of a turn could not, obviously, support an attack commencing at the beginning of that turn.

Air-Ground Attacks (Close Air Support)

Close air support (CAS) of a ground battle is very difficult to organise successfully.

This can only be done in prepared attacks (i.e. those having spent the previous turn with 'prepare' orders)

Also the effectiveness of the attack is influenced by the presence of specialised air liaison units - in the case of Allied forces called 'Tentacle' or Germans, 'FLIVO'.

German doctrine seems to have been to use their limited air power to hit rear areas and vulnerable targets - so most of the time they will use the interdictions rules (see later).

Air attacks are always by squadrons or the equivalent

The various bomb-loads and tactical doctrines have been averaged out in the interests of simplicity.

All allied air attacks by Typhoons, Mosquitoes, Spitfires and all the rest of the tactical airforces are treated as 'Ground Attack'.

Long range heavy and medium bombers are the only type treated differently.

Cab Rank. This was a system whereby a number of squadrons would be in the air and on call for 'immediate' CAS missions. This option is only available to the Allies.

A Cab Rank has to be allocated to a specific formation for an entire day (2 turns), and takes 2 squadrons to provide 1 squadron's worth of cover.

Only Europe-based air units can participate in Cab Rank.

The main effect is that by using Cab Rank CAS is made available for prepared attacks and can be allocated to defence.

Bombing/Interdiction

When carrying out interdiction attacks or flak suppression either by aircraft or long range artillery, the rules are different.

Interdiction can be a point on a road, or a bridge or similar choke-points. The effect is on every unit that tries to pass through.

Counter-Battery

CB Units must be stationary and allocated to CB for the entire turn. If any enemy artillery is used within range of the CB forces there is a chance of a successful 'fix' on the unit's location.

8. Supplies

Supplies are usually represented by coloured counters, indicating:

Red counters	= British Ammo
Green counters	= American Ammo
Blue counters	= German Ammo
Yellow counters	= Fuel

The Brigade/Regimental HQ units are used as the focal point for unit-held supplies. The HQ unit has a limit to the number of supply counters it can carry about – marked on the counter.

Units can be treated as **Supplied** so long as their Bde/Regt HQ is within 5km and has a Supply Counter on it.

In normal circumstances Game Control should assume the HQ unit follows the main units during an advance and positions itself appropriately to be able to supply its sub units – even if players forget to issue specific orders for the HQ.

Divisional Troops, such as the Div Artillery, get their *Supplied* status from the Div HQ.

Supply Counters need to be delivered to the HQ units and this is done in one of three ways:

- Using the resources of a divisional supply dump to deliver locally. This is usually up to a distance of about 10 km, but it does vary (i.e. it is a bit less for an airborne division's dump). This facility is also limited in the number of supply counters it can move, and both this and the lift range are marked on the dump counter.
- Carried in a supply transport unit (which is a separate unit counter in a given formation). This will have its capacity marked on it, in terms of the number of supply points it can carry.
- Carried with the HQ of a brigade/regiment or with an artillery unit – this represents the integral transport of the formation.

Supply counters can be simply 'parked' at any point on the map – but this is not a dump (because a dump has its own delivery capacity).

Game note: Keeping an exact track of supplies in combat is notoriously difficult. In the event of uncertainty, it is Control's view of what is available that is the definitive view.

Moving A Supply Dump

Supply dumps cannot be just ordered about like other types of unit. In order to move a dump the Division allocates a new location for the dump, and the dump counter (without it's attendant supply counters) is moved to the new location - up to the maximum move for lorries – taking a turn, but leaving it's Supply Counters behind. Supplies are then moved to the new dump using whatever transport units are available in the normal way.

Direct Supply from a Dump

Units with the delivery radius of a Dump can be regarded as *Supplied* – using one Supply Counter per Brigade/Regiment-sized formation or the equivalent.

9. Air Operations

The main missions are: Air Transport, Close Air Support (CAS), Bombing, Recce and Escort.

The map is divide up into air zones - each around 30km across. Most air deployment is by Air Zone.

a. Air Transport: delivering supplies or troops either by landing, parachute or glider. Air transport deliveries are not by air zone, but to specific locations on the map.

Air Resupply

The lift for supplies will vary according to the plan and air interference etc. The resulting of supply counters will be reported at the appropriate dropzones by the Air Control Team.

Parachute and Glider Drops

The main casualties to units being delivered by parachute or glider are as a result of dispersion or non-arrival of key aircraft.

In daylight drops most units arrived pretty well intact. Night drops were a good deal less predictable. Drops must be made into open areas or marsh or polder not less than 1km across. Drops may not be made into woods or built up areas. Or on lakes, before you ask.

b. Close Air Support: Acting as artillery support to a given ground operation. This must be pre-ordered as part of the units orders - and must appear in BOTH ground AND air orders to be effective. Only available to Allied forces.

c. Bombing: Bombing a given location or unit on the map behind enemy lines. This includes flak suppression actions. The bomb line is normally at least 2 km from the nearest friendly troops.

d. Recce: Reconnaissance of an air zone per squadron/move. Units in cover have a vanishing small chance of being spotted, so we ignore it here (unless there is an exceptionally high concentration)

e. Escort: Close air cover to protect bombers or transport aircraft. See

f. **Air Cover:** Combat air patrols to dissuade enemy air operations.

Losses from Flak

If a flak unit is the victim of a flak suppression mission – and it takes damage or is immobilised (see 'Interdiction' above) then it is also suppressed for that turn. Flak can be very damaging to nearby transport operations or on Bomber or Transport overflights.

10. Typical Unit Type Symbols

unit type	description	unit type	description
	Anti Tank		Artillery
	Transport / Logs		SP Artillery
	Mountain Inf		Armoured Engineers
	Airborne Arty		Airborne Engineers
	Paras		Glider Infantry
	AA Arty		Mountain Arty
	Engineers		HQ
	Infantry		Blank
	Armour		Bridging Column
	Mechanised		
	Recce		