

MAN-TO-MAN COMBAT DURING WORLD WAR II

OFF the LINE



RULES OF PLAY



Relative Range

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GAME DESIGN BY MIKE NAGEL

1.0 Game Components	3	8.0 Fire Combat	17
1.1 Geomorphic Maps	3	8.1 Spotting	17
1.2 Action Cards	4	8.2 Fire Effectiveness	17
1.3 Game Pieces	5	8.3 Reaction Fire	19
1.4 Reference Cards	7	8.4 Crewed Weapons	19
1.5 Scenario Cards	7	8.5 Traversing Fire (Optional)	19
1.6 Player Aid Card	7	8.6 Crewed Weapon Rate of Fire (Optional)	20
2.0 Terrain Types	7	9.0 Area Attacks	20
2.1 Bridge	7	9.1 Spotting Marker	20
2.2 Building	7	9.2 Area Effect	20
2.3 Bunkers	7	9.3 Resolution	20
2.4 Clear	7	10.0 Melee Combat	20
2.5 Crops	7	10.1 Melee Initiation	20
2.6 Marsh	8	10.2 Melee Strength	20
2.7 Scrub	8	10.3 Melee Resolution	20
2.8 Water	8	10.4 Melee Continuation	20
2.9 Woods	8	10.5 Mutual Destruction	21
2.10 Walls	8	10.6 Pinned Soldiers	21
2.11 Crests	8	10.7 Desperation	21
2.12 Foxholes and Improved Positions	8	10.8 Demolition Charges	21
2.13 Smoke	8	11.0 Rally	21
3.0 Line of Sight	8	11.1 Squad Élan	21
3.1 Determining LOS	8	11.2 Rally Attempt	21
3.2 Terrain Height	10	11.3 Rally Modifiers	21
3.3 Blocking Terrain	10	11.4 Rally Location Exception	22
3.4 Walls	10	11.5 Clearing Jams	22
3.5 Soldiers	10	12.0 Random Events	22
3.6 Hillocks	10	12.1 Rules Contradictions	22
3.7 Hexspine LOS	11	12.2 Random Hexes	22
4.0 Range Attenuation	11	12.3 Border Hexes	22
4.1 Determine LOS	11	12.4 Heroes	23
4.2 Terrain Effects	11	13.0 Scenarios	23
4.3 Effective Range	11	13.1 Background	23
4.4 Combination Terrain	11	13.2 Map Diagram	23
4.5 Elevation Effects	12	13.3 Troop Disposition	23
4.6 Night Effects	12	13.4 Multi-Player Scenarios	23
5.0 Morale Checks	12	13.5 Solitaire System	23
6.0 Sequence of Play	12	14.0 Design Your Own	25
6.1 Draw Cards	12	14.1 Squad Organization	25
6.2 Determine Initiative	12	14.2 Quality	25
6.3 Activation Cycle	12	14.3 Scenario Type	25
6.4 Random Event	14	14.4 Terrain	25
6.5 Marker Adjustment	14	14.5 Time	26
6.6 Turn Marker	15	14.6 Winter Effects	26
6.7 Automatic Victory	15	15.0 Bibliography	26
7.0 Movement	15	16.0 Designer's Notes	26
7.1 Movement Points	15		
7.2 Leader Movement	15		
7.3 Movement Process	15		
7.4 Minimum Move	15		
7.5 Changing Building Levels	16		
7.6 Move Requirement	16		
7.7 Melee Initiation	16		
7.8 Groups	16		
7.9 Placing Smoke	16		
7.10 Firing Flares	16		
7.11 Assault Fire	16		
7.12 Prone Position	17		
7.13 Hesitation (Optional)	17		
7.14 Hex Control	17		
7.15 Exiting the Map	17		

DESIGN CREDITS

Game Design: Mike Nagel
Graphics: Mike Nagel
Proofing: Audrey M. Nagel, Jean-François Lefier
Play Testing: Joe Fernandez, Bill Alderman, Buck Karpowicz
Publication: Relative Range and Blue Panther

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0.0 AN INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of an operation, the commanding officer determines the point from which the operation will begin. This is referred to as the “line of departure.” In this game, players discover what happens once the soldiers under their command move ... Off the Line.

Off the Line is a wargame depicting man-to-man combat during World War II. Each combat unit represents a single soldier. Games are won through the completion of mission objectives. Although players are open to maneuver their forces as they wish, they’ll soon find that traditional tactics are the best bet to achieve goals and to keep their forces alive.

These rules are organized into broad topics. Each is organized numerically with more specific details organized into numbered sub-cases. Players are encouraged to read through the rules prior to play to get a sense of how the game is played. It is not necessary to memorize the rules as the game is quite straight forward, so memorization follows as the game is played. Rules marked with a star (★) symbol have been updated since the last updating of the rules.

1.0 GAME COMPONENTS

This section of the rules lists the various components that are included with the game.

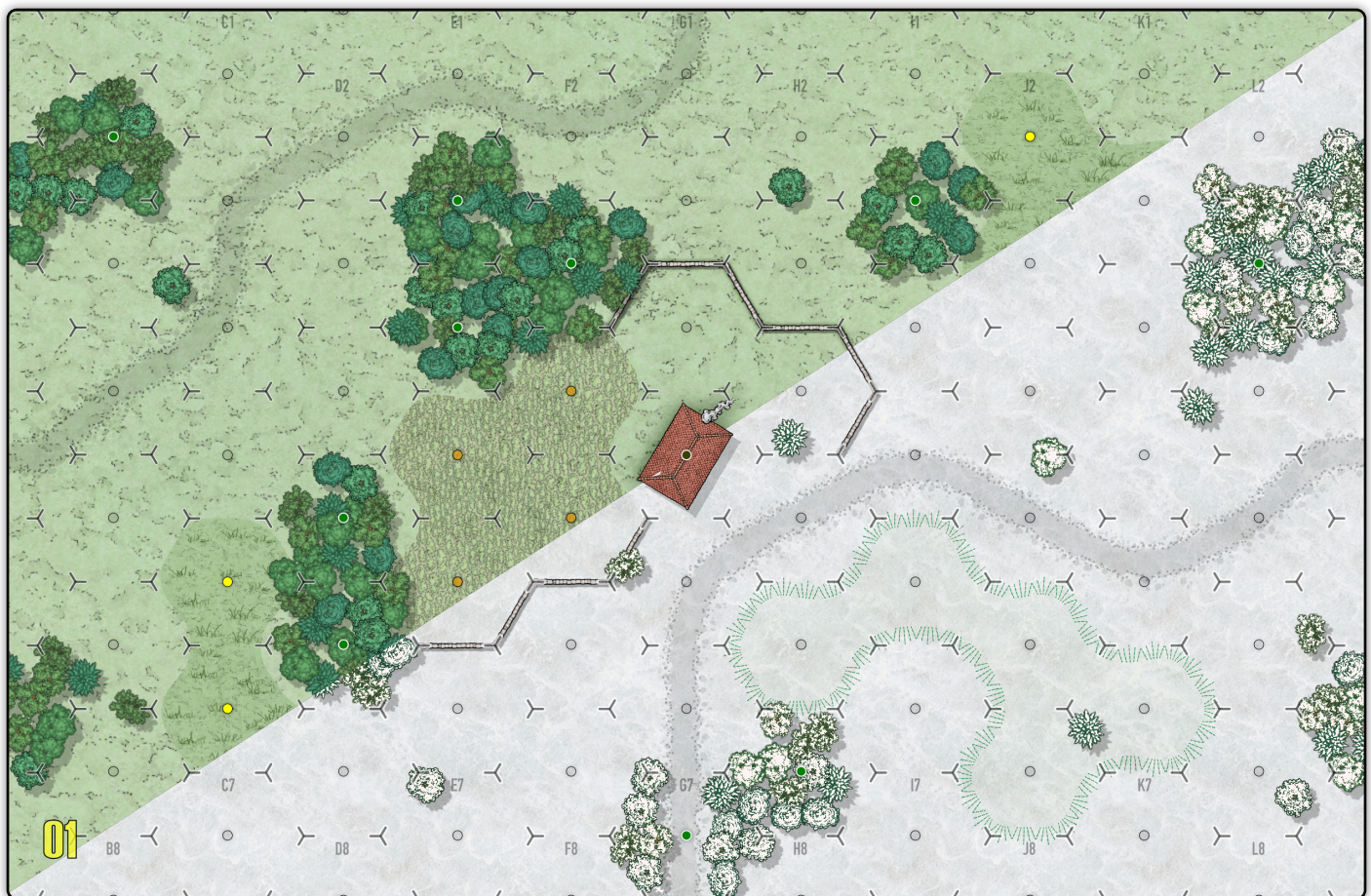
1.1 GEOMORPHIC MAPS

The game includes an initial count of twelve 11 by 17 inch, geomorphic maps. The geomorphic quality allows the maps to be placed side-by-side or end-to-end, along long or short edges to create a large variety of different battlefields. Each panel is double-sided, with the reverse showing a “winterized” version of the map.

1.1.1 Map IDs – At the lower left corner of each map section is an identification number. A chosen scenario indicates which maps are used by their ID numbers.

1.1.2 Map Layouts – The scenario chosen indicates how the map sections should be set up. Use the Map ID to determine if a map should be set up inverted relative to other maps used.

1.1.3 Hex Grid – Overlaid upon each map is a grid of hexagons that is used to regulate movement. The hexes are not all physically numbered, but there are few of them on each map section, so it is not hard to determine which hex is which. The left-most column of half-hexes is column “A” while the right-most column of half-hexes is column “M.” The uppermost full hex in each column is numbered “1” while the bottom-most



hex in each column is numbered “7.” The hex in the center of each map section is “G7.”

1.1.4 Half-Hexes – The half-hexes found along the periphery of each map section are always in play. When half-hexes are made whole, where two map sections are joined, the hexes are considered the “A” column of the map to the right (rather than the “M” column) and the “7” hexes of the map positioned at the top of the map layout. The half-hexes at the top of a map layout are considered the “1” hexes of their respective columns (B1, D1, F1, etc.).

1.1.5 Map Scale – Each hex on a map section is roughly 15 meters from side-to-side.

1.1.6 Sighting Dot – At the center of each hex is a sighting dot. This dot represents the middle of each hex and is used to determine if a soldier has “line of sight” to another hex for targeting purposes. Each dot has a specific color to assist in determining the predominant type of terrain found in a hex.

***Note:** Due to the vagaries of the printing process, it's possible that the sighting dots along the map edges are cut off. In these instances, note that the hexes along those edges are always either clear or wooded. Use the center of the hex for sighting.*

1.1.7 Hex Terrain – Each hex is made up of a specific type of terrain. The type of terrain is indicated by the color of the hex's sighting dot. Types of in-hex terrain include: Bridge, Building, Clear, Crops, Marsh, Scrub, Water, and Woods. Any ancillary terrain that might occupy a hex in contradiction to the sighting dot's color is decorative.

1.1.8 Hexside Terrain – A hex may also include terrain along its hexsides. These may be Crests or Walls (and possibly both).

1.1.9 Combination Terrain – When a hex includes both in-hex terrain as well as hexside terrain, specific rules indicate which terrain takes precedence under different circumstances.

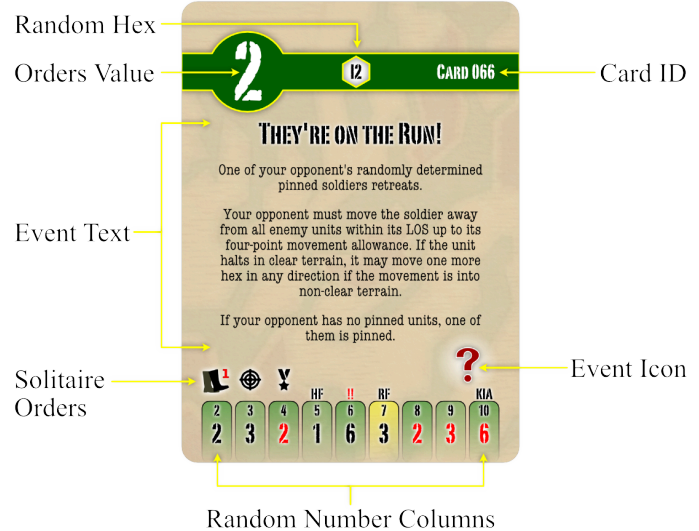
1.1.10 Terrain Effects Chart – The Terrain Effects Chart (TEC) provides an easy reference to understand how terrain affects movement, combat mechanics, and soldier morale.

1.1.11 Stacking – There is no limit to the number of soldiers (enemy or friendly) that may occupy a single hex. The same applies to building levels, unless the scenario stipulates otherwise. Soldiers may occupy different levels within the same hex, if a building is noted as having multiple levels.

1.2 ACTION CARDS

Unlike most other wargames, *Off the Line* does not use dice to determine random outcomes of player actions. Instead, a deck of cards (the Action Deck) is used. Each

ACTION CARD DIAGRAM



card includes a variety of values that are used *in lieu* of dice under specific situations. The layout of the cards is described in this rules section. How the cards are actually used is described in other game mechanics sections.

The components of each Action card are as follows (clockwise from upper left):

1.2.1 Orders Value – The large number in the upper left corner indicates how many hexes (or, possibly) soldiers receive orders at the beginning of a turn when that card is played to activate soldiers.

1.2.2 Random Hex – This number indicates a randomly determined hex location. If the background of the value is yellow, draw a different result if the hex indicated straddles two map sections. If the value is a red star, a special effect of some kind may have occurred.

1.2.3 Card ID – This value uniquely identifies a card. There is a total of 120 cards in the Action Deck.

1.2.4 Event Text – When a random event occurs, resolve the event per the text printed on the card. This text may contradict the standard rules. In these instances, the card text takes precedence.

1.2.5 Event Icon – Half of the cards include a special icon above the random number columns. These icons are used to determine the occurrence of random events or a required reshuffling of the deck.

1.2.6 Random Number Columns – At the bottom of each card are nine columns numbered 2 through 10. Each of these columns reference a number that is equal to or less than the column heading. There are an equal number of each value within each column throughout the deck (e.g., there are the same number of 1s, 2s, 3s, and 4s in the 4 column). These columns drive much of the action

within the game as various mechanics require that a card be drawn and a value be checked under a specified column. The lower the column number, the more likely the result is successful (i.e., there are more 1s in the 6-column than in the 9-column). If a draw is made against the 7- or 9-column, there's a small chance that an 'R' (re-draw) result is drawn. If this happens, draw a new card. Some of the result numbers are red. These values typically mean a "kill check" is in order. Yellow columns indicate a possible jammed weapon. Additionally, mnemonic codes are listed atop the 5, 6, 7, and 10 columns to help players more easily find result columns for Held Fire (HF), Hesitation (!!), Reaction Fire (RF), and KIA checks (respectively).

- 1.2.7 **Solitaire Orders** – These icons are used when playing solitaire. Up to three icons indicate the orders that may be issued to "automated" hexes.
- 1.2.8 **Hand Size** – The number of cards a player may hold is equal to the sum of their unpinned leaders' command values, plus one. If a hand size decreases due to a pinned or killed leader, a card may not be drawn at the beginning of the next turn if doing so would exceed the current hand size.
- 1.2.9 **Card Play** – Throughout the game, many cards will be drawn from the deck to resolve a variety of game mechanics. However, if the result of an outcome is predestined (such as drawing a card to determine initiative if the result of that check is already clear), there is no need to draw a card from the deck.

1.3 GAME PIECES

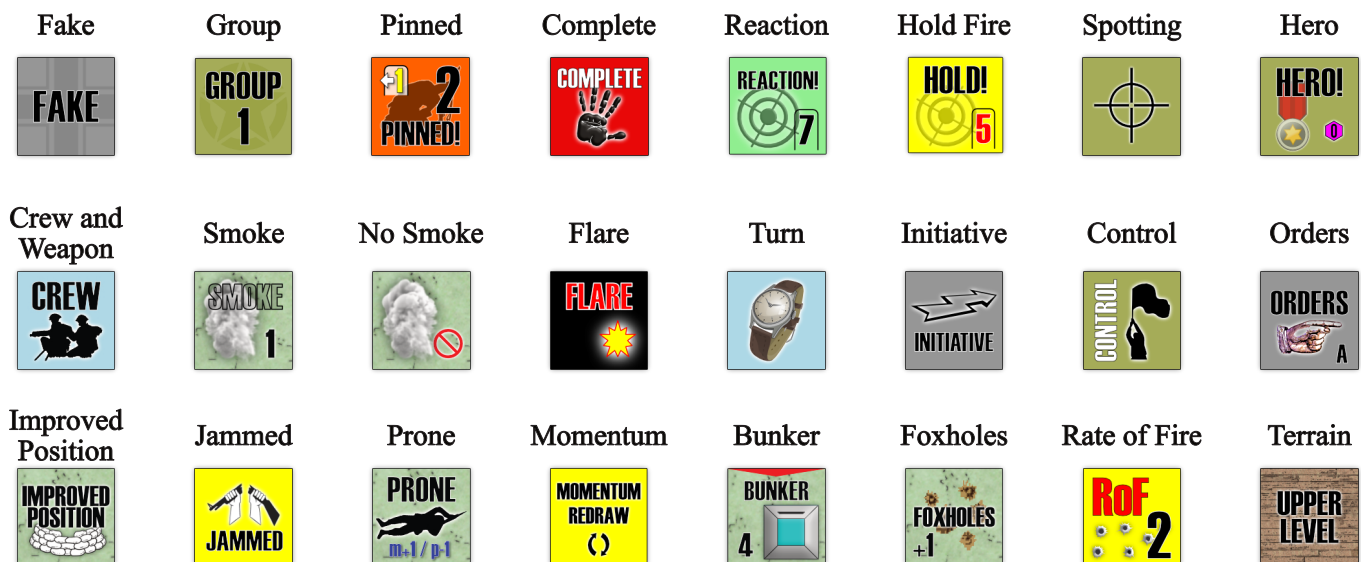
Several different types of game markers (also referred to as "counters") are used in play. This section of the rules describes each type of counter.

- 1.3.1 **Combat Units** – Combat units represent the soldiers involved in combat. Each combat unit represents an individually named soldier. Each combat unit is printed with the following values:



- 1.3.1.1 **Morale** – The ability of a soldier to keep his head while under fire. A calm soldier is an accurate soldier, and therefore morale has a direct impact upon the soldier's combat ability. A red morale value indicates a penalty when the soldier is fired upon.
- 1.3.1.2 **Melee** – The soldier's ability to perform close-quarters combat.
- 1.3.1.3 **Soldier Name** – The name of the individual soldier. This provides some narrative value to the gaming experience.
- 1.3.1.4 **Unit ID** – This numeric value uniquely identifies each combat unit. These values are used to select the appropriate units for use in a scenario.
- 1.3.1.5 **Command** – This value is only printed on combat units that represent squad and assistant

GAME MARKER EXAMPLES



squad leaders. Squad leaders have a yellow value, while assistants have a white value. The number represents how many orders the leader may provide to hexes within his command range. *A squad leader has a command range of two, while an assistant squad leader has a range of one.*

- 1.3.1.6 **Weapon** – This is an abbreviation of the weapon with which the soldier is armed. This value is used to look up combat results on the nationality's Weapon Attributes Table (WAT).
- 1.3.1.7 **Reverse** – The reverse of a combat unit shows a generic soldier icon. Soldiers are set up on their reverse side and remain so until they occupy clear terrain, move, or fire within the line of sight of an enemy soldier.
- 1.3.2 **Fake Units** – These units are used to create fog-of-war during play, as the reverse of these units is marked with the same symbol as the reverse of the regular combat units. Each scenario stipulates how many fake units are included in the order of battle.
- 1.3.3 **Group Units** – These units are also used to create fog-of-war in that they represent multiple soldiers in a single hex with only one counter. Place the combat units on the Group Control display on the Reference Card within the appropriate box. This also helps cut down on counter clutter on the map.
- 1.3.4 **Pinned Markers** – When a combat unit fails a morale check, it becomes pinned and is marked with one of these counters as a reminder. Pinned markers are placed initially with their 'Pinned 1' sides showing. These are flipped to their 'Pinned 2' sides at the end of the turn if they are not removed via rally attempts during the turn. The Pinned 2 side also includes a mnemonic to adjust the terrain protection value.
- 1.3.5 **Complete Markers** – Once a soldier has completed a successful order, place a Complete marker with the combat unit to indicate that it may not receive an order again during the current turn.
- 1.3.6 **Reaction Markers** – A soldier that completes reaction fire (successfully or not) is marked with a Reaction marker to distinguish it from a Complete marker. The "7" indicates the column used to check for a successful reaction.
- 1.3.7 **Hold Fire Markers** – A leader or hex may receive a hold order to either do nothing or perform reaction fire during a turn. These units are marked with a Hold marker. The "5" indicates the column used to check for a successful reaction.
- 1.3.8 **Spotting Marker** – Each side has one of these markers to assist in resolving randomly occurring mortar strikes or sniper fire.

- 1.3.9 **Hero Markers** – A soldier may randomly be turned into a hero with the ability to command other combat units as if he were a squad or assistant squad leader.
- 1.3.10 **Crew and Weapons** – A crewman that acquired a LMG or HMG from a dead soldier of that type is marked with the appropriate Weapon marker.
- 1.3.11 **Smoke** – Smoke may be played by soldiers to help mask their movement. Smoke markers have two sides, indicating that they last for two turns.
- 1.3.12 **No Smoke** – If a side loses its ability to play smoke, place one of these markers in a convenient spot as a reminder of this condition.
- 1.3.13 **Flares** – Flares are played in the same fashion as smoke, when night conditions are in effect per the scenario instructions.
- 1.3.14 **Turn** – Use this marker to keep track of the turn by placing it on the Scenario card's Turn Track and advancing it at the end of each turn (or if required by a random event).
- 1.3.15 **Initiative** – Use this marker to keep track of who currently holds the initiative. The marker advances along either player's Status Track when the initiative holder attempts to force the retention of the initiative.
- 1.3.16 **Orders** – Use this marker to keep track of the expenditure of order points during a player's turn. The letter indicator specifies the side's player if doing a multi-player scenario (Player A or B).
- 1.3.17 **Control** – Use these markers to indicate a hex that remains under a nationality's control after any soldiers of that side have vacated the hex.
- 1.3.18 **Terrain** – These markers represent temporary terrain that are not printed on the map boards themselves and whose location can change based upon scenario setup or random events. Terrain markers include Clear terrain, Upper Level, Bunkers, Foxholes, and Improved Positions. See the rules sections below on how these markers affect play.
- 1.3.19 **Prone** – These markers indicate a soldier that is in a prone position. The marker includes a reminder to adjust the soldier's morale checks.
- 1.3.20 **Momentum** – Use this marker to track the number of momentum points a player has earned through random events.
- 1.3.21 **Jammed Weapon** – These markers are used to note a soldier with a jammed weapon.
- 1.3.22 **Rate of Fire** – These markers are used to note a machine gun that may continue to be activated during the current turn.

1.4 REFERENCE CARDS

Each player receives a nation's Reference Card during a scenario's setup. This card includes a track to keep note of initiative and orders received, spaces to hold soldiers organized into groups as well as soldiers that exited the map or enemy soldiers killed or routed, and the nation's Weapon Attribute Table. The reverse of this card displays a listing of soldiers available to that nation and the design value of each.

1.5 SCENARIO CARDS

Each one of these cards outlines the engagement to be fought between opposing squads. The cards include a description of the forces engaged and a track to note the current and last turn.

1.6 PLAYER AID CARD

This large card includes the Terrain Effects Chart in addition to several game mechanic summaries for easy reference.

2.0 TERRAIN TYPES

This section of the rules describes each different type of terrain found on the various map sections. These rules are summarized on the TEC. The terrain within a hex should be self-explanatory. However, if there is any question, the color of the sighting dot within a hex indicates its type.

2.1 BRIDGE

This terrain represents a small stone or metal bridge over a stream, creek, or small river. The terrain provides less protection when incoming fire runs along the length of the bridge rather than hitting it from its sides. Bridge terrain is indicated by a gray sighting dot.

2.2 BUILDING

This terrain represents a single- or multi-hex structure. Unless noted in special scenario rules, all buildings are assumed to only have a single, ground level. Building terrain is indicated by a dark brown sighting dot.

2.3 BUNKERS

Bunkers are terrain represented by a marker. Bunkers are treated in the same fashion as building terrain with the following exceptions:

- 2.3.1 **Limited Fire** - A Bunker marker is positioned so that its top edge faces a hexside. A red triangle is printed at the top of the Bunker marker to indicate its facing. Units in a bunker may only draw line of sight (3.0) through the hex directly in front of

the bunker hex as well as the two hexes to the right and left of the front hex.

- 2.3.2 **Protection** – The protection value of a bunker is noted on its marker (either a value of four or five), as noted by the scenario rules. Soldiers outside of the bunker use the protection value of the hex that contains the bunker.
- 2.3.3 **Placement** – A Bunker marker may be placed in clear, crops, scrub, or woods terrain.
- 2.3.4 **Stacking** – A bunker constitutes a separate location within the hex in which it has been placed. This means that opposing soldiers can exist within the hex without initiating melee if one of the opposing groups is in the bunker while the others are outside of the bunker. A bunker can hold a number of soldiers equal to its protection value. Place soldiers in the bunker beneath the Bunker marker. Soldiers on top of the Bunker marker are considered to be outside of the bunker.
- 2.3.5 **Entry and Exit** – It costs two movement points to enter or exit a bunker. Place soldiers in a bunker beneath its marker. Soldiers entering a hex that contains a bunker must first pay the cost to enter that hex. If soldiers enter a hex that contains a bunker, and have sufficient movement points remaining to enter the bunker (and the bunker is vacant or occupied by friendly soldiers), these soldiers may enter the bunker immediately. Otherwise, they must remain outside of the bunker until their next turn.
- 2.3.6 **Morale Effects** – Soldiers inside a bunker increase their morale value by +2. Soldiers outside of the bunker use the morale benefits of the hex containing the bunker.
- 2.3.7 **Melee** – Melee only occurs once friendly soldiers enter an enemy-occupied bunker location. Opposing soldiers may exist inside and outside of the bunker indefinitely without triggering melee, until one group either exits the bunker or enters the bunker.

2.4 CLEAR

This is open terrain that provides no cover to soldiers that occupy it, but is easier to traverse. Clear terrain is indicated by a transparent sighting dot.

2.5 CROPS

This terrain represents cultivated fields. Depending upon special scenario rules, crops may have been harvested during a specific time of year, and therefore have less of an effect on lines of sight. Crops terrain is indicated by an orange sighting dot.

2.6 MARSH

This terrain represents soggy or muddy ground that is difficult to traverse. Marsh terrain is indicated by a light blue sighting dot.

2.7 SCRUB

This terrain represents low vegetation such as small shrubs, bushes, and trees that may assist in concealment, but offer little protection against incoming fire. Scrub terrain is indicated by a yellow sighting dot.

2.8 WATER

This terrain represents water obstacles such as creeks, small rivers, ponds, and small lakes. Generally, water obstacles can only be crossed at bridge hexes. However, special scenario rules may indicate that water obstacles (particularly streams and creeks) are fordable. Water hexes are indicated by a dark blue sighting dot.

2.9 WOODS

This terrain represents sufficiently dense copses of trees that impact both movement and lines of sight. Woods hexes are indicated by a green sighting dot.

2.10 WALLS

This is hexside terrain that exists between hexes rather than filling a hex. It represents stone walls that provide protection to soldiers crouching behind them (in the hex touched by the wall terrain) and blocks line of sight to hexes beyond those touched by the wall terrain. Morale benefits for wall terrain only apply if all enemy soldiers within LOS (3.0) are on the opposite side of the wall.

2.11 CRESTS

This is hexside terrain that represents increases in elevation. Generally, crossing into a hex that encompasses the crest art indicates moving to a higher elevation. This is

clarified by clear terrain at higher elevations becoming darker shades. Other terrain hexes often exist at higher elevations (such as woods on a hill). Treat these terrain types normally, adding other effects caused by movement or line of sight crossing the crest hexside.

2.12 FOXHOLES AND IMPROVED POSITIONS

Foxholes and improved positions are temporary terrain represented by a marker placed in clear, crops, scrub, or woods terrain. The presence of these markers increase a soldier's morale value by +1 for foxholes or +2 for improved positions. Foxholes and improved positions may only be placed through scenario setup instructions or random event.

2.13 SMOKE

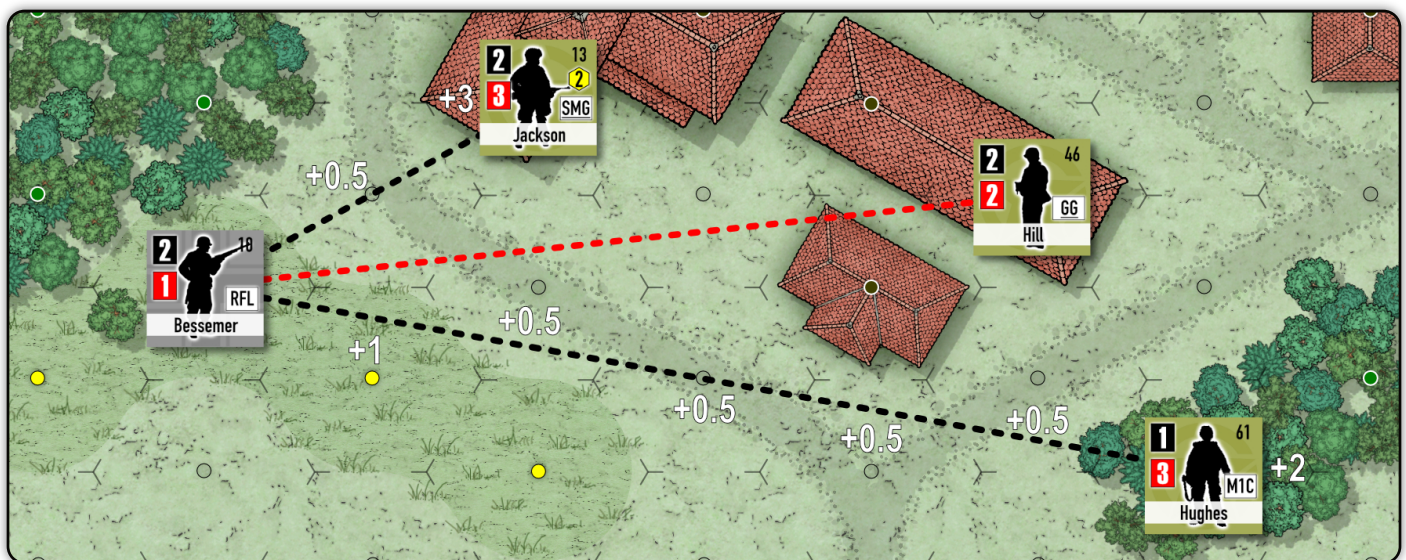
Smoke is placed by moving soldiers. Smoke completely fills a hex as well as its hexsides. Smoke creates a +2 attenuation modifier to a line of sight crossing out of, through, or into it as well as a one-column shift to the left for protection. Entering a smoke hex costs an additional movement point.

3.0 LINE OF SIGHT

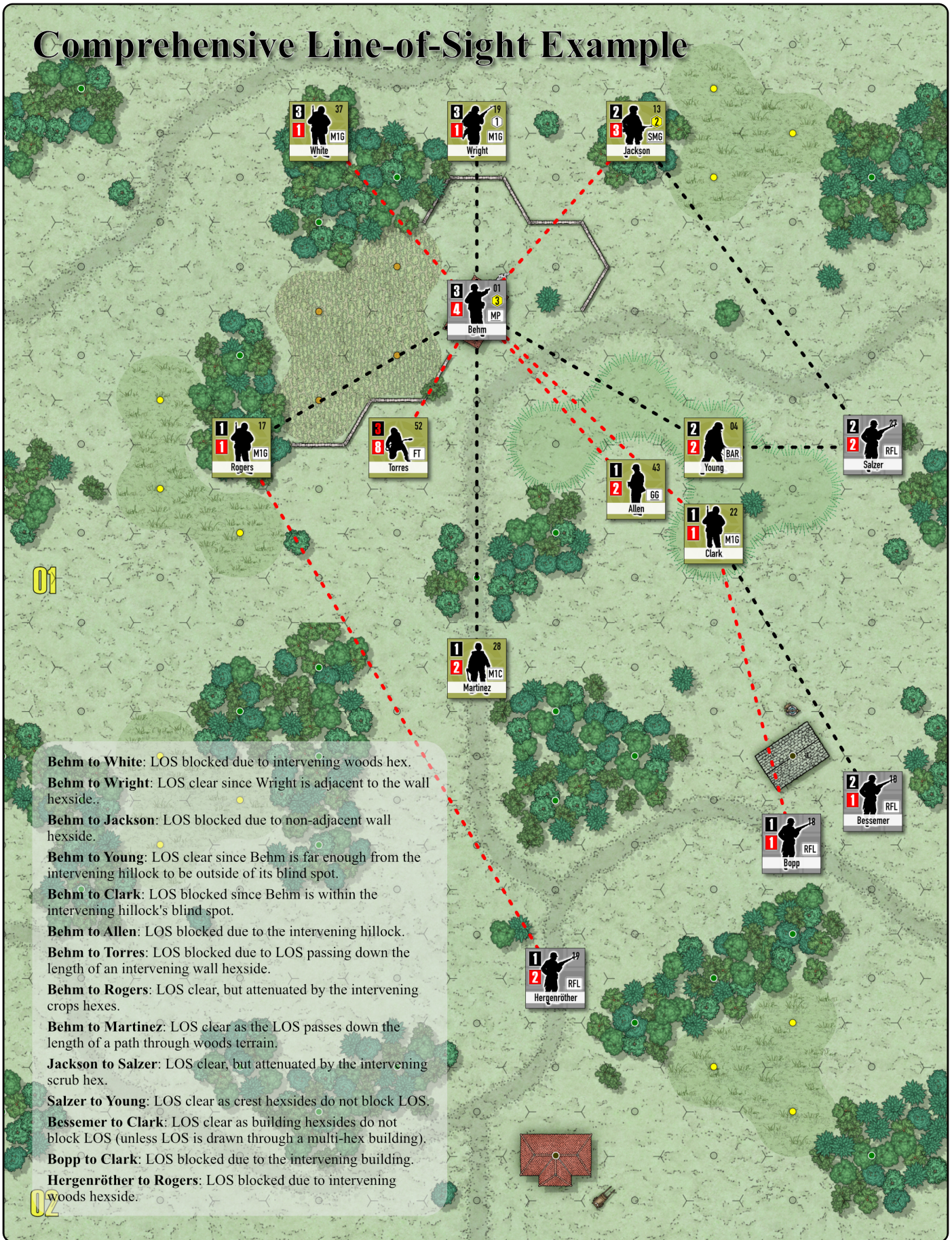
In order to fire upon the enemy, a soldier needs to be able to see the target. The straight line from the soldier to the intended target is referred to as the soldier's line of sight (LOS). Determining its clarity is a key element to a successful attack. This rules section describes how to determine lines of sight and the effect of terrain upon them.

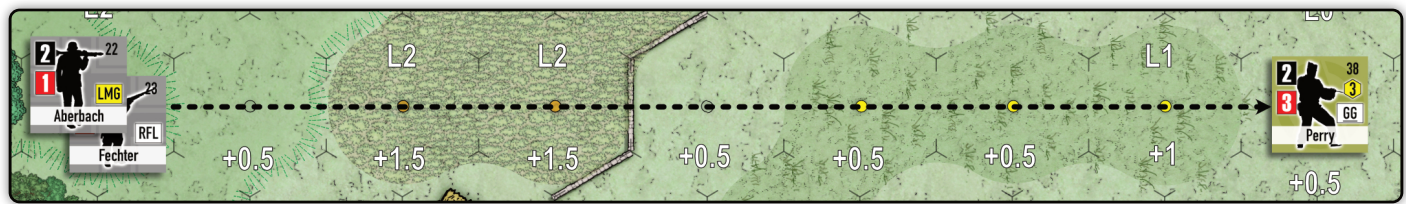
3.1 DETERMINING LOS

Each hex on the map includes a sighting dot. To determine the LOS between a soldier and a target hex, draw a straight line from the sighting dot in the soldier's hex to the sighting dot in the target hex.



Comprehensive Line-of-Sight Example





***Note:** This process is made easy through the use of a physical thread or rubber band, stretched from point to point. If a target hex straddles two map boards and those maps don't abut together exactly in a fashion that splits the sighting dot in the target hex, and the players are of the argumentative type, use the half of the target hex's sighting dot that lays upon the map occupied by the attacking soldier for the purpose of determining LOS.*

Each hex that is crossed by the LOS may have an impact on how well the target can be seen (if at all). Note that LOS is reciprocal. If the attacking soldier can see the target hex, the soldiers in the target hex can see the attacking soldier as well.

3.2 TERRAIN HEIGHT

***Note:** One of the most difficult concepts in tactical gaming is the depiction of three-dimensional terrain in a two-dimensional space. Therefore, pay close attention to the rules noted here when playing scenarios that involve hillocks or buildings with more than one level.*

Different terrain types rise a number of levels from the base level depicted on the map. This base level is referred to as "Level 0" and all soldiers occupying hexes at this base level are considered to be at Level 0, regardless of the terrain in the hex (excepting hillocks).

Each terrain type rises from this base level a number of levels at noted on the TEC. For instance, scrub rises to Level 1, while woods rise to Level 3.

3.2.1 Hillock Levels – When terrain exists within a hillock hex (i.e. across a crest hexside), the level of the hillock is added to the level of the terrain. For example, woods on a Level 2 hillock would rise to Level 5.

3.2.2 Building Levels – Generally, buildings only have one level, regardless of their height. Soldiers on the ground level of a building are at Level 0, plus the height of a hillock on which the building is located. A scenario may stipulate that one or more hexes within a building are at a higher level (such as a church steeple). Soldiers may only occupy upper building levels noted in the scenario.

***Example:** A scenario stipulates that a church steeple hex is at Level 3. Soldiers may occupy Level 0 of that hex and/or Level 3. Levels 1 or 2 may not be occupied.*

3.3 BLOCKING TERRAIN

Buildings and woods terrain automatically block LOS to any targets that are beyond (not in) the terrain hex, regardless of the terrain occupied by the attacking soldier or target hex, provided that the terrain rises to a level equal or greater than that at which the attacker and defender reside.

3.4 WALLS

Wall hexside terrain blocks LOS if neither the attacking soldier's hex nor the target hex include the intervening wall hex-side. Walls are considered to occupy their terminating vertex where adjacent hexes come together.

3.5 SOLDIERS

Soldiers, both friendly and enemy, block LOS passing through their hex unless all soldiers in the hex are under a Pinned 2 marker or lower than both the firing soldiers and target hex.

3.6 HILLOCKS

In most instances, continuous crest hexsides form an elevated "hillock" upon which other terrain might exist. Clear terrain hexes that are part of a hillock become darker as their elevation increases. Each darker level indicates an increase of the terrain's level by +1. Soldiers that occupy a hillock hex are assumed to be at the level of the hillock, regardless of the height of the terrain in the hillock hex.

3.6.1 Blocking LOS – If a hillock exists between an attacking soldier and the target hex and neither occupy a hillock hex, LOS is blocked.

3.6.2 Blind Spots – Both crest hexsides and intervening terrain that rises to a level equal to or lower than that of the terrain occupied by a soldier on a hillock may cause a number of blind spots by intervening blocking terrain. The terrain hex immediately adjacent to the intervening terrain hex always creates a blind spot (if blocking terrain) or causes attenuation.

3.6.2.1 Crest Blind Spots – If either the attacking soldier or target occupy a hillock hex, the intervening crest hexside creates a number of blind spot hexes at the lower level, equal to the distance in hexes between the crest hexside and the soldier on the hillock, with the first such blind hex being the one adjacent to the crest hex-side. An attacking soldier in a blind spot hex cannot see the target hex (and vice versa).

***Example:** A soldier on a Level 1 hillock is two hexes away from a crest line to a lower level. Therefore, two blind spot hexes extend from the lower side of the crest line. Any soldiers that occupy these hexes cannot be seen.*

- 3.6.2.2 **Other Terrain** – If either the attacking soldier or target hex occupy a hillock hex, intervening terrain at the same level as the higher terrain continue to affect LOS normally. Other terrain at a level in between that of the attacking soldier and the target hex only affects LOS if adjacent to the lower hex.

***Example:** A soldier occupies a Level 2 hillock crest line. Between the soldier and his target are two crops (Level 2) hexes and three scrub hexes (Level 1) the last of which is adjacent to the target hex. In this instance, only the two crops hexes and the target-adjacent scrub hex affect LOS.*

- 3.6.3 **Other Terrain** – Other terrain may occupy hexes on a hillock. Blocking effects of these terrain types are unaffected (e.g. Buildings and woods always block LOS, regardless as to where they're located).

3.7 HEXSPINE LOS

There are likely to be instances where LOS is drawn directly between two hexes, along their hexspine. There are a few exceptions to take into consideration when this occurs.

- 3.7.1 **In-Hex Terrain** – Hex terrain is assumed to completely fill the hex that it occupies (including the hex-sides), even though the artwork may not appear to do so. Therefore, with a few exceptions noted below, impose the worst effects upon LOS of any in-hex terrain to a hexspine.

***Example:** If a hexspine has crops terrain on one side and woods, on the other; LOS would be blocked due to the woods terrain. If a hexspine had crops on one side and marsh on the other; while wall terrain occupied the spine itself, LOS would be blocked due to the wall.*

- 3.7.2 **Hexside Terrain** – Wall terrain blocks LOS when LOS is drawn down the length of the spine or through a hex vertex at the end of a wall. If LOS is drawn down a spine and the end of a wall occupies either tip of that spine, LOS is blocked.
- 3.7.3 **Non-Blocking Terrain** – Crests do not block LOS along a hexspine. Building terrain does not block LOS along a hexspine unless the building art occupies more than one hex, in which case the hexspine between the two building hexes is obviously blocked. If separate building hexes exist on both sides of the hexspine, the LOS is attenuated by the building terrain's attenuation value, instead.

4.0 RANGE ATTENUATION

In order to determine the effectiveness of a soldier's weapon, the range to the target must be determined. In completely clear terrain, this would involve counting the hexes from (but not including) the attacking soldier's hex to (and including) the target hex. However, terrain has a way of interfering with a weapon's effectiveness. This range degradation due to intervening terrain is referred to as *range attenuation*. Each terrain type has an attenuation value. Calculating a soldier's attenuation (or effective range) is dependent upon an unblocked LOS into the target hex.

4.1 DETERMINE LOS

To determine the attenuated range from an attacking soldier to a target hex, first determine the LOS to the target. Each hex crossed (even along a hexspine) that does not block LOS may attenuate the range in some fashion.

4.2 TERRAIN EFFECTS

Count the fewest number of hexes touched by the LOS that are between the firing soldier's hex and the target hex (ignoring the former, but including the latter). For each hex counted, check the Attenuation column on the Terrain Effects Chart (TEC). The Attenuation column notes the range points for each terrain type. Add the points together for each hex (use the higher attenuation value when LOS passes along a hexspine).

***Note:** Remember that if LOS to a target is blocked, there is no point in determining attenuation. This being said, determining attenuation may result in hexes touched by the LOS being "skipped" as part of the firing process. Always count the fewest number of hexes.*

4.3 EFFECTIVE RANGE

Determine a soldier's weapon's effective range by cross-referencing the total range attenuation value (rounded up, if necessary) in a Range column with the weapon type on the Weapon Attribute Table for the appropriate nationality (short, medium, or long).

***Example:** In the diagram on page 8, the German rifleman Bessemer has an effective range of four (a half-point for the clear hex plus three for the building, rounded up to four) to US soldier Jackson and an effective range of five (one point for the scrub, a half-point each for four clear hexes, and two points for the woods) to US soldier Hughes. This works out to medium range to Jackson and long range to Hughes. Bessemer does not have line of sight to US soldier Hill because of the intervening building hex.*

4.4 COMBINATION TERRAIN

In cases where a defending soldier occupies terrain where line of sight enters a hex across its hexside terrain (e.g. a wall that's part of a building hex), use the terrain with the best protective value.

4.5 ELEVATION EFFECTS

When attacking a soldier at a different elevation, attenuation is only affected by terrain equal to or higher than the higher of the attacker and target hex, as well as any terrain adjacent to the lower of the two hexes. All other hexes are considered clear terrain.

Example: In the diagram above, the German LMG is firing on the American soldier from a Level 2 hex to a hex at Level 0. The attenuation is only affected by the two Level 2 crops hexes and the scrub hex adjacent to the target. The LOS passes above the other terrain, so the attenuation effects are the same as a clear hex.

4.6 NIGHT EFFECTS

When a scenario stipulates that night conditions are in effect, one-half of an attenuation point is added to each hex when determining attenuation (e.g. clear terrain costs one point, scrub costs one and a half points, etc.), unless a hex is within five hexes of a Flare marker.

5.0 MORALE CHECKS

A soldier's morale is the key to his survival in combat. Nearly every action a soldier takes requires an evaluation of his morale, whether attacking, defending, avoiding or fixing a jammed weapon, and even moving in some circumstances. The act of a morale check involves drawing a card and checking to see if the number in a particular column (per the situation requiring the check) is equal to or less than the soldier's modified morale value (typically due to terrain and the proximity of a leader), in which case the check is successful. Otherwise, negative effects may be applied to the soldier, such as the soldier being pinned or his weapon becoming jammed. Examples of how morale is used are included with descriptions of the various game mechanics.

6.0 SEQUENCE OF PLAY

A scenario is made up of a series of turns. Once the last turn has been completed, the victor is determined if not evident by the end of the scenario. Each turn is comprised of a series of steps that must be completed in the order defined below.

6.1 DRAW CARDS

At the beginning of the turn, each player *may* draw one Action card as long as current hand size is not exceeded *or* draws an entire hand if no cards are held (at the beginning of a game, neither player holds cards and therefore both players draw full hands). The player holding the initiative draws first (the scenarios define who holds the initiative at the beginning of a scenario). If there are insufficient cards to draw, shuffle the Action Deck. **Reminder:** *When drawing an entire hand, a player draws a number of cards equal to the command ratings of their available, good order leaders, plus one.*

6.2 DETERMINE INITIATIVE

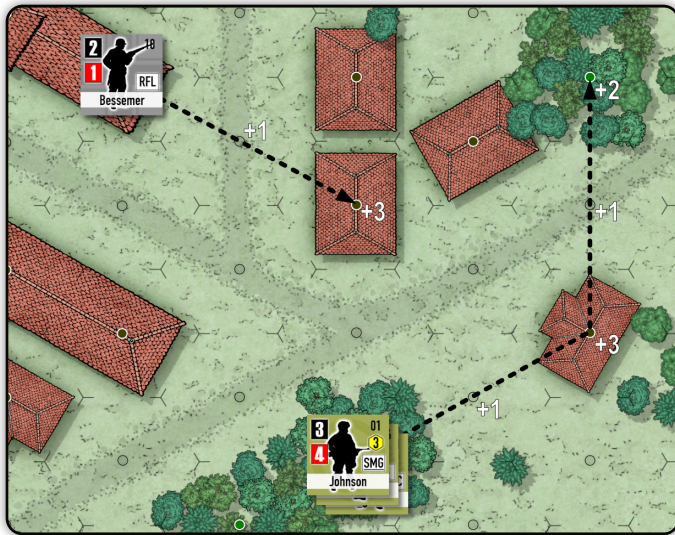
The player that holds the initiative is referred to as the "first" player, while the other player is the "second" player. The first player either draws the top card from the draw pile or chooses a card with a non-zero Command value from his or her hand. The second player may only draw from the draw pile. Each player checks the random number under in the column that corresponds to their squad's élan value (11.1). The first player increases this value by the current initiative number (where the Initiative marker is on the Status Track). If the second player's value is less than the initiative player's value, the second player obtains the initiative. Otherwise the first player retains the initiative. If the first player played a card from his or her hand to retain initiative, advance the Initiative marker forward one space on his or her respective Status Track. If the second player gains the initiative, that player becomes the new "first" player, flips the Initiative marker to the appropriate nationality side and returns it to the first space on their Status Track.

6.3 ACTIVATION CYCLE

Both players complete an activation cycle with the first player having the option to select a hex for activation first or second. At the beginning of the cycle, each player secretly selects one or more non-zero valued cards for their orders value, which indicate how many hexes and/or soldiers receive orders during the activation cycle. The first player makes this selection first, but both players reveal their selection simultaneously (note, the second player will know how many cards the first player selects, but not their values). If a player selects a card worth zero points or has no card to play, the player must immediately discard any remaining cards without providing any orders (this is known as *regrouping*, see 6.3.3). At the beginning of the next turn a new hand may be drawn.

Example: The first player selects three cards that have a combined total of five orders points. The second player selects one card worth six orders points. Both players simultaneously reveal these card and set their Orders markers on their respective Status Tracks. The first player then notes which player must activate a hex first.

6.3.1 Cycle Completion – During the cycle, players alternate selecting hexes that contain inactive soldiers and expend orders points to activate those soldiers. The first player has the *option* to make the first hex selection. A player that has expended all of his or her orders points or has no inactive soldiers to select, must pass. A player may not voluntarily pass, but note 6.3.3 below. The other player may then play all of his or her remaining orders in sequence, without interruption. Note that "Reaction Fire" takes place out of sequence, during one of the other player's activations. Also, note that selecting a hex with a leader may result in additional hexes being selected as part of that original orders points expenditure.



6.3.2 Orders Cards – When playing a card, refer to the orders value in the upper left corner of the card. This value represents how many hexes may receive orders (note that when selecting hexes that contain leaders – squad or assistant squad leader – additional soldiers may be ordered in excess of this number). When playing more than one card, the total of the orders values may not exceed six points. For instance, a player may play three two-value cards, but not a five- and a two-value card. Note, however, that playing multiple cards temporarily reduces a player’s hand size as only one card is drawn at the beginning of the next turn.

6.3.3 Regrouping – A player may opt to pass through the play of a zero-value orders card (or may have no cards to play by not drawing an Action card), and not declare any orders during a turn. That player must immediately discard their *entire* hand and regroup. When regrouping, each pinned soldier may attempt to rally once and each good order soldier with a jammed weapon may attempt to repair it at no orders cost.

6.3.4 Activation Types – Soldiers are activated through the play of orders, and may be activated either as a group when activating a hex or individually when activating a hex that is within the command radius of a leader.

6.3.4.1 Spending Orders – The orders that a player assigns to their squad at the beginning of the activation cycle may be spent either singularly or in batches, depending upon the squad’s situation and according to the limits described below. The number of orders spent need not be declared in advance (the result of an order may be determined before spending another). Although not necessarily ideal, it is feasible that a player spends all of their orders during a single activation.

6.3.4.2 Active vs Inactive – A soldier that is activated is marked with a Complete marker when his action is completed. Any soldiers not marked in this fashion are considered *inactive*.

6.3.4.3 Outside of Command Range – A single order point activates all good order, inactive soldiers within a hex to complete the *same* order. Pinned soldiers may receive a separate order to rally. Therefore, a hex with both good order and pinned soldiers may receive one order to rally the pinned soldiers or activate the good order soldiers to take the same action, or two orders to do both.

6.3.4.4 Within Command Range – A hex that is within a leader’s command range (including the leader’s hex) is activated as described above. Additionally, *individual* soldiers may receive *different* orders from that given to the activated hex at the cost of an additional order point each.

Example: A player opts to spend three orders. The player expends an order to assign a move order to a hex within a leader’s command radius that contains three good order soldiers and one pinned soldier. Ordinarily, the three good order soldiers would have to move, while the pinned soldier remains in place. The player then expends an additional order to fire one of the soldiers prior to the other two moving. The third order is spent to attempt to rally the pinned soldier. Once the attack and rally attempt are resolved, the remaining two soldiers are moved. Note that the ability to spend additional orders within a hex allows for one soldier to provide “covering fire” while other soldiers advance during the same impulse. It’s a more “expensive” option, but one that might provide an immediate benefit.

6.3.4.5 Leader Orders – If a hex is activated that includes an inactive leader, that leader receives a number of additional order points equal to his command value that he can assign to *individual* soldiers within his command radius (as above), including himself. These orders may be assigned and completed either immediately before or after the leader completes his own order. Other soldiers in a leader’s hex may complete their order(s) before or after the leader completes his own.

Example: A hex containing a squad leader with an orders value of two is assigned a move order. Activating the hex allows the squad leader to provide two additional orders that may be used to activate soldiers within his command radius. These soldiers may act independently of the order given to their hex(es). The leader orders one of the soldiers in his hex to fire. The leader then advances with the other soldiers in his hex.

From his new location, the leader provides a rally order to a pinned soldier now within his command radius.

- 6.3.4.6 **Order Chaining** – If a squad leader uses one of his orders to activate an assistant squad leader within his command radius (but not vice versa), the assistant squad leader adds his additional order points to the order pool to order a soldier within his own command range.

***Example:** A squad leader whose hex has been activated has an assistant squad leader within his command radius of two hexes. The squad leader uses one of his additional orders to activate the assistant squad leader. The assistant squad leader then uses one of his additional orders to activate a soldier within his own command radius.*

***Note:** When assigning multiple orders to a single hex, assign the first order to the most soldiers that will be taking the same action and individual orders to the other soldiers.*

- 6.3.4.7 **Pinned Leaders** – A pinned leader may not provide his orders points to units within his command radius, nor may he allow the use of multiple orders within a hex. A pinned leader must be rallied before he can provide any benefit.

- 6.3.5 **Hidden Orders (Optional)** – Rather than reveal the number of orders selected, if both players agree, the number of orders selected remains hidden. As orders are expended, note the total on the Status track. Once the last order has been expended, a player reveals and discards the chosen orders cards.

- 6.3.6 **Order Options** – There are four orders that can be given to soldiers in a hex: move, fire, rally or hold. A hex may only be given one type of order unless the hex is within the command radius of a leader. *Exception: A hex may receive a rally order in addition to a non-rally order if any pinned soldiers occupy the hex along with unpinned soldiers.*

- 6.3.6.1 **Move Order** – All good order soldiers in a hex that receives a move order must exit that hex per the movement rules described below. All the good order soldiers in the hex must move at least to an adjacent hex (not necessarily the same hex). Place a Complete marker on these soldiers after they have moved.

- 6.3.6.2 **Fire Order** – Good order soldiers receiving a fire order resolve combat individually and in the order determined by the active player as described in the combat resolution rules below. Place a Complete marker on all soldiers that fired.

- 6.3.6.3 **Rally Order** – Soldiers receiving a rally order must be under a Pinned marker. Pinned soldiers complete the rally process per the rally process

described below. Soldiers that successfully rally are removed from under the Pinned marker. Place a Complete marker on soldiers that successfully rally. Any pinned soldiers that fail a rally check may continue to receive rally orders during other activations, regardless of the completed status of other soldiers in their hex.

***Example #1:** A hex holds three pinned units. An order point is spent to rally the hex, but only one soldier succeeds in rallying. That one soldier received a Complete marker. An additional order may be spent on that hex during the next activation to attempt to rally the other soldiers that failed their first attempt.*

***Example #2:** A hex holds one good order soldier and two pinned soldiers. An order point is spent to fire the good order soldier, who receives a Complete marker. An additional order may be spent on that hex to rally the two pinned soldiers as well.*

- 6.3.6.4 **Hold Order** – A hex, or soldier (activated by a leader order) may receive a hold order. A soldier receiving a hold order (including the leader himself) may opt to do nothing when the hex or soldier is ordered. Mark the hex or soldier with a Hold marker rather than a Complete marker. Placing a hold order on a hidden unit does not reveal it. A soldier under a Hold marker may only use reaction fire or receive an order to fire during the current or a later turn. Once a soldier marked with a Hold marker has fired, replace the marker with a Complete marker (or optionally remove it at the end of the turn).

- 6.3.6.5 **Order Limits** – A soldier may only receive one order per turn with the exception of rally orders. A soldier may receive any number of rally orders during a turn until a rally attempt is successful.

6.4 RANDOM EVENT

The player holding the initiative draws the top card from the Action Deck. If an event icon (red question mark) is displayed on the card, a random event occurs. The player holding the initiative draws another card from the top of the Action Deck and resolves the event text described. If the card indicates a reshuffle of the Action Deck is necessary, reshuffle the discarded cards with the remaining cards of the Action Deck into a new deck. If the drawn event cannot be resolved, ignore it as if no event had been drawn.

6.5 MARKER ADJUSTMENT

Flip Pinned 1 markers to their Pinned 2 side. Remove Smoke 2 and Flare markers. Flip Smoke 1 markers to their Smoke 2 side. Remove all Complete and Reaction markers. Place or remove Crew markers. Players may optionally remove Hold markers, noting that any soldiers in a hex retaining a Hold marker during the next turn may only fire.

6.6 TURN MARKER

Advance the Turn marker to the next space on the Turn Track.

6.7 AUTOMATIC VICTORY

Each nationality in a scenario is noted with a break level that indicates at what point a side's force runs away. This level is the number of casualties (KIA or routed) that a side must take prior to running away. Victory occurs immediately upon the enemy suffering sufficient casualties to equal this break level. If both sides break simultaneously (during melee), refer to the standard victory conditions to determine a winner at that point.

7.0 MOVEMENT

To achieve their goals, soldiers must move around the map to capture objectives. To assist in movement, the map is overlaid with a grid of hexagons (also referred to as a hex or hexes). Soldiers are moved from hex to adjacent hex, paying a cost in movement points per the terrain in each hex entered. The following rules describe the movement process.

7.1 MOVEMENT POINTS

Soldiers may move individually or in groups. When a soldier receives a move order, it receives four movement points (three if playing in winter conditions). If a soldier receives a move order in a hex that includes a squad or assistant squad leader (or hero), and the ordered soldier(s) move in a group with the leader, the available movement points are increased by the command value of the leader.

7.2 LEADER MOVEMENT

Leaders also receive a base four movement points increased by their individual command values, unless ordered by another leader in a group. In these cases, the squad leader's command value is used. For instance, an assistant squad leader with a command value of one gets five movement points, but if ordered with a squad leader (as a group) with a command value of two, the assistant squad leader would get six movement points.

Additionally, a leader may pick-up and/or drop off inactive soldiers as he moves. For instance, a leader with six movement points may spend two points to enter a hex with inactive friendly soldiers and then move those soldiers another four movement points. Also, a leader may pick up another leader, but may only expend the number of movement points that he started with, even though the picked-up leader might have a higher command rating.

7.3 MOVEMENT PROCESS

When an individual or group of soldiers receives a move order he (or they) receive a pool of movement points. The soldier or group then moves from their hex into or



through a series of contiguous adjacent hexes, paying the cost for each hex entered. The cost in movement points to enter a hex according to its terrain type is noted on the Terrain Effects Chart. If a soldier or group has insufficient points to pay the cost for a hex, that hex may not be entered.

Example: In the diagram above, German soldier Bessemer is moving alone and with four movement points. He moves across clear terrain at a cost of one point and into the building at a cost of three more points. The stack of US soldiers is leader-led and therefore receives three extra movement points due to the command rating of the leader, for a total of seven. The move through two clear terrain hexes for one point each, a building hex for three points and finally a woods hex for two points.

7.4 MINIMUM MOVE

Regardless of the cost, an ordered soldier or squad may always enter an adjacent hex (or change level in a building) as long as the hex or crossed hexside does not comprise prohibited terrain.

7.5 CHANGING BUILDING LEVELS

If a scenario stipulates that a building has upper levels that can be occupied, it costs one movement point to traverse each higher level, even if a scenario does not stipulate that a level may be occupied. For instance, a steeple hex at Level 3 may be occupied, but the two levels between it and Level 0 may not, so it costs 3 movement points to move between Level 0 and Level 3 in that hex. Use an Upper Level marker to note units in that location.

7.6 MOVE REQUIREMENT

A soldier or group receiving a move order must move at least one hex (even if this is into melee), unless the soldier is pinned. Pinned soldiers are ordered separately from good order soldiers.

7.7 MELEE INITIATION

Moving a soldier or group into an enemy-occupied hex immediately initiates melee between the enemy soldiers and the moving soldier or group in that hex. See the Melee rules (10.0) for the melee resolution process.

7.8 GROUPS

Group markers are used to enhance fog-of-war in the game. Remove soldiers from a hex and replace them with a Group marker. Place the soldiers on the off-board holding box referencing the group unit's number identifier. Like Combat units, the Group markers also remain in-

verted (hidden) until one or more soldiers in the group performs an action that would otherwise make it visible (movement or fire combat).

7.9 PLACING SMOKE

When receiving a move order, a good order soldier may spend a movement point without moving to place a Smoke marker in his own hex or up to two hexes distant. After placing the marker, draw a random number card and check the value in the column corresponding to the squad's élan value. If the value is red, that side may no longer play smoke grenades (they have run out).

7.10 FIRING FLARES

When night conditions are in effect during a scenario, a good order soldier may spend a movement point without moving to place a Flare marker in a hex up to two hexes away from the soldier's position. After placing the flare, draw a random number card and check the value column corresponding to the squad's élan value. If the value is red, that side may no longer fire flares (they have run out).

7.11 ASSAULT FIRE

Soldiers that have an underlined weapon type may fire their weapons while moving. A soldier that employs assault movement must declare so prior to moving. The movement value of a soldier using assault movement is halved and his morale value is reduced by one.



7.12 PRONE POSITION

Soldiers may assume a prone (laying down) position at any time (at no cost) in non-building terrain during movement and may be set up in this fashion. Place a Prone marker on soldiers that are prone to indicate this status.

- 7.12.1 **Movement** – A Prone marker may be removed from a soldier at a cost of two movement points. A prone soldier may move one hex only when given a movement order and may enter or exit any non-prohibited terrain type except into or out of a building or across a wall hexside. A soldier exiting prone status may not assume it again during the same impulse.
- 7.12.2 **Combat** – A prone soldier cannot spot any hex at a lower position, unless he occupies a hex that includes a crest hexside through which line of sight is drawn to the target hex. A prone soldier decreases the protection column of his hex by one. This shift is cumulative with foxholes or an improved position. A prone soldier does not block LOS.
- 7.12.3 **Morale** – A prone soldier increases his morale by one when determining fire effectiveness.

7.13 HESITATION (OPTIONAL)

If a soldier or group attempts to move into a hex with a protection value of eight or more, that is within the LOS of a spotted enemy soldier, draw a card and check the random result in the sixth column. If the result is a one, the hex may not be entered and all movement stops.

Note: This rule is included to assist in solitaire play. Using it with face-to-face play could slow things down a bit, but will add a little more chaos to the game. Your mileage may vary.

7.14 HEX CONTROL

Some scenarios may stipulate that victory points are earned through the control of one or more locations on the map board. Control of a hex is granted to the side that was the last one to occupy the hex with at least one soldier. Use a Control marker to note control when an important location is vacated.

7.15 EXITING THE MAP

A soldier may exit the map by paying one additional movement point to leave a half-hex or full hex that is adjacent to the map edge. A soldier that leaves the map may not return.

8.0 FIRE COMBAT

The following section describes how to resolve fire combat between an attacking soldier and his targets upon receiving a fire order. To summarize, the firing soldier determines if his fire on a visible target is on-target and if so, the number of enemy soldiers affected, and the result

upon each of those enemy soldiers. Each soldier in a hex that receives a fire order resolves his attack fully and individually in the order desired by the active player. However, each soldier in a hex activated by a *single* orders point must declare his target in advance of any fire attack resolution.

8.1 SPOTTING

In addition to having a line of sight to a target hex, the enemy units within that hex must be spotted. All units begin a game on their reverse or hidden side. A hidden unit may not be attacked until it either becomes adjacent to an enemy soldier, within the LOS of an enemy soldier while within *five* attenuation points, or any unit within its hex fires upon an enemy soldier. If any of these cases are true, flip the unit over to its front (visible) side. Additionally, a hidden leader that uses his command value for any purpose must be revealed.

8.2 FIRE EFFECTIVENESS

Fire effectiveness is dependent upon the weapon being fired, range attenuation, and the soldier's own coolness under fire.

- 8.2.1 **Active Weapon** – Check the soldier's counter to determine the type of weapon with which he is armed. Find this row on the relevant nationality's Weapon Attribute Table under the ID column.
- 8.2.2 **Range Attenuation** – Per the Range Attenuation rules (4.0), determine the number of range points to the target. Note that if the line of sight to the target hex is blocked, the enemy hex may not be fired upon.
- 8.2.3 **Fire Effect** – Determine if the fire is effective by cross-referencing the weapon type with the range points under the Range columns in the Weapon Attribute Table. To the right of the Range column, that includes the range points, is a Col (column) reference number. Draw the top card from the Action Deck and find the random number under the specified column. *If the result is less than or equal to the soldier's modified morale value, the attack is effective (also note 11.3.4).* If the attack is not effective, the fire combat process ends. Otherwise, continue to determine the outcome of the effective attack.
- 8.2.4 **Morale Bonuses** – A firing soldier's morale is enhanced by several factors. Increase the soldier's morale value by the morale modifier indicated on the TEC. Increase the soldier's morale by +1 if in command by a good order leader, if a Hero is in the soldier's hex, or if Prone.
- 8.2.5 **Assault Movement** – A soldier that is performing assault movement reduces his morale value by one (to a minimum of one).

8.2.6 Targets Hit – When an attack is effective, cross-reference the weapon type with the Hit column on the Weapon Attribute Chart. The number indicated specifies how many soldiers within the target hex are hit. If this number is less than the number of soldiers within the hex, use the random number columns to randomly select a number of soldiers to match the number of targets hit (see the example under 8.2.11.3). Note that it may be easier to determine how many soldiers are not hit, rather than those that are (use your judgment).

8.2.7 Target Status – Each target that was hit must make a morale check against the type of terrain occupied. Determine the terrain's protection value from the Terrain Effects Chart. This value represents which random number column to use. Beginning with any squad or assistant squad leaders, draw the top card from the Action Deck and compare the soldier's morale to the value in the protection column. *Only morale adjustments for leaders, heroes, and assault fire affect these rolls.* If the value is less than or equal to the soldier's modified morale, the soldier is unaffected by the attack. Otherwise, he is pinned. Place a Pinned 1 (or Pinned 2 if prone) marker on the enemy soldier if he is not already marked as pinned.

***Note:** When checking the status of a pinned soldier, only a red result is necessary to see if the soldier is KIA (see 8.2.9). Pinned soldiers remain pinned.*

8.2.8 Jamming – If the result column background is yellow when determining status of a target soldier (even if an 'R' result), a jam may have occurred. The current attack ends at the current target, with no other soldiers needing to check their status. The attacking player draws a card and compares the firing soldier's modified morale against the column equal to the weapon's Jam column value. If the result is less than or equal to the soldier's modified morale, the result is a *misfire or reload* rather than a jam. Otherwise, place a Jammed marker on the soldier. The target soldier draws another card and resolves the attack with a -2 deduction to both the Protection and KIA values of the occupied terrain.

***Example:** A German soldier is firing a LMG at a hex containing three enemy soldiers. The attack is successful, but the second soldier struck draws a yellow "Jam" result when checking morale. A card is drawn, comparing the firing soldier's modified morale against the six column (the LMG's jam value) to determine if the result is a misfire or a jammed weapon. The result is less than the soldier's modified morale, so the result is a "misfire" rather than an actual jammed weapon. The attack ends immediately, but the soldier may still fire his weapon next turn.*

8.2.9 KIA Check – If the morale check random number used to determine the target's status is also red, the soldier may have been killed out-right. Immediately draw another card and check the 10 column. If the result is less than or equal to the terrain's KIA value, the soldier is killed and removed from play. If a pinned soldier survives this KIA check, but the result is red, the soldier routs instead.

***Note:** Generally, a player always wants to draw a low number in a result column. Checking for KIA and routing is the sole exception to this rule. A player can assume that his or her opponent wants the low value.*

8.2.10 Red Morale Value – If a soldier that is hit in combat has a red morale value, shift the random number column one column to the right. Additionally, check for a KIA result when drawing a value equal to that of the resolution column regardless of color, in addition to any red result.

8.2.11 Pinned Effects – Soldiers that are pinned have hit the dirt and remain that way (mostly) until they have been rallied. A pinned soldier cannot fire or move, with one exception.

8.2.11.1 Crawling – A pinned soldier may be moved to an adjacent hex only if the terrain in that hex provides a higher protection value than the one currently occupied. Moving a pinned soldier in this fashion requires the expenditure of a single order separate from other orders given to other soldiers in the pinned soldier's hex. The crawling soldier need not be in command to spend this order.

8.2.11.2 Pinned Protection – Pinned soldiers are doing their best to hide from incoming fire. This means that they are naturally harder to hit. Therefore, pinned soldiers decrease the protection value of the hex they are in when resolving combat by one when marked with a Pinned 2 marker.

8.2.11.3 Routing – A pinned soldier that draws a red KIA result that does not kill the soldier routs him instead (regardless of the result's value). A routed soldier earns fewer points than a soldier that is killed (retaining fractions) for victory point purposes, but counts fully toward a squad's break level.

***Example** – Using the diagram on Page 8, the German soldier Bessemer is armed with a Mauser Gewehr M1898 (RFL) and may fire upon US soldier Hughes at an effective range of five points. Examining the German Weapon Attribute Table, the rifle at a range of five indicates the use of the eighth column. The German player draws a card and compares the soldier's modified morale value of three (two plus one for the scrub terrain occupied) to the value in the eighth column. Assuming the value is a three (or less) the attack is effective. The US player now determines the status of the soldiers in the target hex. The Ger-*

man rifle can hit up to two targets. Although the diagram only indicates one target, assume there are four US soldiers in the target hex. The US player draws a card and checks the fourth column and gets a result of three, indicating that the third soldier is struck. Another card is drawn, checking the third column and finding another three result. Since the last soldier struck is ignored (his status is already known), the “new third soldier” is struck. The US player now draws a card for each struck soldier and checks the seventh column (the protection value of woods terrain). The first soldier draws a result that is higher than his morale and is therefore marked with a Pinned 1 marker. The second soldier draws a result that is less than his morale (so he is not pinned), but the result is red so he must make a KIA check on the tenth column. The result is a one, which kills the soldier outright. Bad luck!

8.3 REACTION FIRE

A good order soldier that is inactive or under a hold order may fire upon a hex within his line of sight during the opposing player's turn *following* an enemy's soldier's movement into that hex or a fire attack from that hex.

- 8.3.1 **Resolution** – To determine if reaction fire is possible, a card with an orders value greater than zero must be discarded. A random number card is then drawn with the value in the seventh (RF) column compared to the orders card discarded. If the result is less than or equal to the discarded card's orders value, the selected soldier completes a fire attack using the process described above. Mark the attacking soldiers with a Reaction marker.
- 8.3.2 **Multiple Reactions** – The number of soldiers that may fire upon a hex is limited only by the availability of cards that can be played. A soldier that reaction fires may do so again during the same turn at a different hex, provided cards are available, but may take no other actions.
- 8.3.3 **Hold Effects** – A soldier under a Hold marker may attempt reaction fire, but the result is checked against the fifth (HF) column, rather than the seventh column.

8.4 CREWED WEAPONS

Soldiers with weapon types printed with a yellow background are crewed weapons. To fire these weapons effectively, a second soldier must be stacked in the same hex with the firing weapon. Mark this soldier with a Crew marker at the beginning of a scenario or during the turn's Marker Adjustment Phase. This second soldier must take the same action as the crewed weapon's soldier unless the crewed weapon's soldier is pinned. Failure to follow these guidelines results in the crewed weapon being operated by a single soldier, which suffers penalties:

- 8.4.1 **LMG** – A non-crewed light machine gun deducts one from the terrain protection value or two if the crewman is operating the weapon. A soldier mov-



ing a non-crewed LMG receives one less movement point.

- 8.4.2 **HMG** – A non-crewed heavy machine gun deducts two from the terrain protection value or three if the crewman is operating the weapon. A soldier moving a non-crewed HMG receives two less movement points.
- 8.4.3 **Operator KIA** – If the soldier marked as owning a LMG or HMG is killed, the crewman may take ownership of the weapon by placing an LMG or HMG (as appropriate) with the Crew marker. This marker overrides the weapon marked on the crewman's counter as if he were originally noted with that weapon. The new owner of the weapon forfeits his original weapon for the duration of the scenario. The only effect upon the new owner of the weapon is a reduction of his melee value to zero.
- 8.4.4 **Independent Crewman** – A soldier marked with a Crew marker may fire his own weapon if the crewed weapon is jammed or its owner pinned. When firing independently, shift the fire resolution column two columns to the right.
- 8.4.5 **Adding/Removing Crew** – When a hex or individual soldier is given a move order (or when a hex becomes visible), a Crew marker may be added to or removed from a soldier before any movement points are expended. Adding or removing a Crew marker does not trigger reaction fire.

8.5 TRAVERSING FIRE (OPTIONAL)

Weapons that have an # Hit value of 'All' may also employ “traversing fire” where multiple contiguous hexes within the LOS of the firing weapon are all attacked in sequence. The attacker must declare that traversing fire is being employed. The number of contiguous locations (hexes, levels, bunkers) that are attacked cannot exceed the firing soldier's modified morale value. For each hex following the first being attacked, reduce the firing soldier's morale value by one prior to resolving any of the attacks. Contiguous hexes need not be enemy-occupied.

After each hex is attacked (including unoccupied hexes), draw a card and check the value in the column corresponding to the number of hexes attacked. If the value is red, the weapon has misfired and the attack is ended. If the value is red one, the weapon has jammed and the attack is ended.

Example: A soldier with a morale of two, armed with a light machine gun, and located within a building hex may fire at up to four contiguous hexes with a modified morale value of one (his morale of two is increased to a four due to the building terrain, and reduced by one for each hex beyond the first targeted, or three, to a total of one).

8.6 CREWED WEAPON RATE OF FIRE (OPTIONAL)

Crewed weapons (those with yellow background) may be able to be activated to fire more than once during a turn. When activated to fire, if the result of the fire effect is not red, place a Rate of Fire 1 marker on the firing soldier instead of a Complete marker. If already marked with a Rate of Fire marker, flip the marker to its 2 side. A soldier marked with a Rate of Fire marker may complete a fire order when other soldiers receive orders for any reason. Each subsequent fire order performed in this manner reduces the soldier's morale check by the value on the Rate of Fire marker (1 or 2). The Rate of Fire marker is replaced by a Complete marker when a red fire effect result is drawn or if the Rate of Fire marker value exceeds the weapon's RoF notation on the Weapon Attribute Table.

Example: A German soldier armed with an MG42 fires his weapon and does not get a red fire effect result. A RoF 1 marker is placed on the soldier. During the next activation, a different hex receives a move order. The MG42 may immediately fire as if it had received a fire order, but at a -1 morale penalty. If this fire effect is not red, the marker is flipped to its RoF 2 side. The next time the MG42 fires, it will be marked with a Complete marker.

Note: This rule adds a little more power to fully automatic weapons, but also adds some more complexity to the fire resolution process. Your mileage may vary.

9.0 AREA ATTACKS

There are random events that result in an off-board mortar or bomb from a passing aircraft dropping into the battle area and possibly affecting friendly or enemy units. Follow the process outlined below to resolve these area attacks.

9.1 SPOTTING MARKER

Each nationality has its own Spotting marker. This marker is either placed in a randomly determined hex or within the line of sight of a squad or assistant squad leader or ignored if a star is drawn when resolving the random location.

9.2 AREA EFFECT

An area attack affects the hex that contains the Spotting marker as well as each adjacent hex. Any units in those hexes (enemy or friendly) are subject to the incoming attack.

9.3 RESOLUTION

During the Random Events Phase of the following turn, prior to drawing a new event, every soldier within an affected hex or hexes makes a status check based upon the terrain occupied (as if they had been hit successfully by incoming fire), noting that some terrain types use their parenthetical protection value (e.g. woods).

10.0 MELEE COMBAT

Moving a soldier or group into an enemy occupied hex immediately initiates melee (hand-to-hand) combat. The following rules outline this process.

10.1 MELEE INITIATION

Melee occurs as soon as a soldier or group enters an enemy occupied hex and must be completed before another order can be given.

10.2 MELEE STRENGTH

Each soldier counter is noted with a Melee value. A soldier carrying an acquired LMG or HMG has a melee value of zero. The values of each player's soldiers are summed and compared as a ratio, rounding in favor of the defending force. For example, four points to two would result in a 2:1 ratio. Five points to two would also result in a 2:1 ratio, while six points to two would result in a 3:1 ratio. If the soldier's weapon is jammed, halve the soldier's melee value (rounding up). Assign the higher number in the ratio to the force with the higher combined melee values and the one value to the weaker force. These values represent melee to-hit values for each force.

10.3 MELEE RESOLUTION

Both players draw a card from the Action Deck with the player holding the initiative doing so first. Each player examines the column equal to the higher melee strength, plus two (to at most the 10 column). The moving side shifts one column to the right on the first resolution draw if moving into terrain with a protection value of six or less. If their melee to-hit number is less than or equal to this random number, one of the enemy soldiers has been eliminated (KIA). Use another card draw to determine which soldier has been killed.

Note: If the resolution column is an 11, 12, or 13 use the 10 column, but add +1, +2, or +3, respectively, to the drawn resolution value.

10.4 MELEE CONTINUATION

If soldiers remain on both sides following the first round of combat, recalculate melee strength and repeat the process until one side has been eliminated. Note that terrain has no effect on melee following the first round. Place a Complete marker on the hex at the conclusion of the melee.

Example: A German stack of three soldiers with a total melee value of five enters a building hex containing a single US soldier with a melee value of two. This translates to a two to one ratio, giving the Germans a melee strength of two and the US soldier a melee strength of one. The attack is resolved on the four column (the higher melee strength of two, plus two). Since the Germans are moving into a building with a protection value of six, they must use the five column for the first round of combat. The Germans draw a three result on the five column and cause no damage. The US player draws a one result on the four column and kills one German soldier. Since both sides still have soldiers, another round is played. The Germans now draw a two result on the four column and kill the lone US soldier. The US soldier draws another one result and kills a second German soldier. The Germans have won the melee, but at a high cost!

10.5 MUTUAL DESTRUCTION

It is possible for both sides to mutually destroy each other.

10.6 PINNED SOLDIERS

Soldiers that are marked as pinned may not participate in melee and are ignored during the resolution process. Any pinned soldiers belonging to a side that has been eliminated are automatically *routed* (even if the opposing force is eliminated).

10.7 DESPERATION

Pinned soldiers in a hex being attacked in melee have the option to attempt a desperation rally prior to melee resolution. A pinned soldier makes an unmodified morale check against their squad's élan value. If successful, the soldier may participate in the melee. If the check fails, the soldier immediately routs.



10.8 DEMOLITION CHARGES

The scenario instructions may stipulate that a side is armed with one or more demolition charges. These need not be assigned to individual soldiers, but are simply used when desired. When a soldier armed with a demolition charge enters melee, there is a "pre-attack" against the defending force. Each enemy soldier must make three KIA checks against the protective value of the terrain occupied. Soldiers are immediately killed on a draw of a one or two. A soldier is pinned if the result is red, regardless of the number value. If more than one soldier entering melee is armed with a demo charge, the active player must declare the number of charges being used and resolve the effects of each prior to melee beginning.

11.0 RALLY

Pinned soldiers may be restored to good order regardless of their pinned level (1 or 2) through the rally process. Each pinned soldier in a hex that receives a rally order must attempt to rally.

11.1 SQUAD ÉLAN

Each scenario defines a side's squad élan value, which represents their general quality. This value indicates the random number column to use when resolving rally checks, determining initiative, and other checks.

11.2 RALLY ATTEMPT

When receiving a rally order, a card is drawn from the top of the Action Deck for each pinned soldier in the hex. If the value of the random number in the squad élan column is less than or equal to the selected pinned soldier's morale, remove the Pinned 1 or Pinned 2 marker from the soldier and mark the soldier with a Complete marker. A soldier rallying from Pinned 2 status may be marked with a Prone marker.

11.3 RALLY MODIFIERS

There are several modifiers that might cumulatively alter the rally result.

- 11.3.1 **Terrain** – Increase the soldier's morale by the morale modifier indicated on the TEC for the terrain occupied. Use the highest morale modifier if the LOS to all spotted enemy soldiers cross hex-side terrain.
- 11.3.2 **Leaders** – If the hex receiving the rally order is within the command range of a good order leader, increase the soldier's morale by one. Multiple leaders provide a cumulative benefit. A SL may not receive this bonus. An ASL may only receive this benefit from an SL.
- 11.3.3 **Heroes** – If the soldier is in a hex with a hero, increase the soldier's morale by one.

- 11.3.4 **Elite Soldiers** – If the modifications increase a soldier's morale to equal to or exceed the result column used, the check only fails if the drawn result equals the column value and is red.

11.4 RALLY LOCATION EXCEPTION

Recall that pinned soldiers receive orders separately from other good order soldiers within their hex. This means that successfully rallying one or more soldiers in a hex does not preclude other soldiers within the hex from taking an action later during the turn or possibly during the same impulse if within the command range of a leader.

11.5 CLEARING JAMS

When receiving a rally order, a good order soldier with a jammed weapon may attempt to clear the jam. A jam is cleared by making a morale check using the squad's élan column. Shift this column one column to the right if attempting to clear a crewed weapon that is not crewed. Remove the Jam marker and mark the soldier with a Complete marker. Note that a soldier may not both rally and clear a jam during the same turn. A hex that has both a jammed weapon and pinned soldiers may complete both of these tasks from a single rally order, noting that no single soldier can complete both. Note that if such a hex received a move order, the soldiers with jammed weapons must move (as they are not pinned).

12.0 RANDOM EVENTS

Following the completion of the action cycle of the game turn, the player holding the initiative draws a card from the top of the Action Deck. If a random event icon (red question mark) is printed on the card, draw another card from the Action Deck and resolve the event text, noting the following:

12.1 RULES CONTRADICTIONS

It is quite possible that the text of the event runs contrary to the rules as printed. In these cases, the event text takes precedence.

12.2 RANDOM HEXES

Printed at the top of each card is a small hexagon that surrounds either a star or a hex coordinate. When an event requires the selection of a random hex, draw an Action card and check this value. If the value is a star, the event text stipulates how the hex is selected. Otherwise, use the noted location. Draw an additional card to randomly select a map panel.

12.3 BORDER HEXES

When two map panels abut, the row of half-hexes at the bottom of the upper map or right edge of the left map are



assumed to be part of the adjoining row or column. If a random location in one of these row or column locations is selected (they are distinguished by a yellow hex on the Action card), ignore the draw and draw another card to determine the location.

12.4 HEROES

A soldier may be turned into a hero through a random event. When this event is triggered, randomly determine a non-leader soldier and place a Hero marker on that soldier. Heroes have a command radius of zero, meaning that different orders may be issued to soldiers within their hex. A hero also doubles his printed morale value (which may result in attacks being automatically effective). Heroes do not provide any additional orders, but soldiers rallying within a hero's hex deduct one from the rally result. Finally, heroes are killed on a KIA check of 1, 2, or 3. If another random hero result occurs for the same player, simply remove the existing Hero marker and place it on the new (or possibly the same) soldier.

13.0 SCENARIOS

Each play of the game constitutes the completion of a scenario that describes the details of the situation faced by the players. Set the scenario up per the instructions. Each scenario includes the following details.

13.1 BACKGROUND

The scenario background provides a brief description of what's going on to provide some historical context, such as the scenario's date and location. This section also includes the number of turns and which side has the initiative at the outset of the scenario.

13.2 MAP DIAGRAM

A diagram indicates which map panels are being used in the scenario and how they should be aligned. Use the map identifier to properly set up the map. An arrow indicates the north side of the map, which is important for unit setup.

13.3 TROOP DISPOSITION

Each nationality involved in the scenario is noted in its own section. Each section describes the following characteristics:

- 13.3.1 **Squad Élan** – The squad's élan value.
- 13.3.2 **Units** – The ID numbers of the soldiers used in the scenario.
- 13.3.3 **Break** – The number of soldiers a side can lose (killed or routed) before it breaks automatically and forfeits the scenario.
- 13.3.4 **Setup** – The location where the units may be initially placed. The side that starts with the initiative sets up second.

- 13.3.5 **Victory** – What the side needs to accomplish to win.

- 13.3.6 **Turn Track** – Place the Turn marker on the first space of the Turn Track. The black space on the track indicates the last turn. A shaded space indicates the arrival of reinforcements or other scenario effect on that turn.

13.4 MULTI-PLAYER SCENARIOS

If two scenarios use unique orders of battle (the soldiers used in a scenario) and equivalent setup areas (map edges), they may be played side-by-side to create a multi-player scenario. When doing so, place the map panels from one scenario adjacent to those of the other scenario and play the scenarios normally. Draw randomly to determine the sides on which the scenario maps abut, if necessary. Units from one scenario may be moved onto the other map to interact with the other scenario's units (both friendly and enemy), but only the owning player may move their own units (per the Order of Battle). Only one initiative draw needs to be made per side. Teams alternate activating hexes, with players alternating actions (i.e., Axis Player A, Allied Player A, Axis Player B, Allied Player B), with each team determining who takes the first action for their side each turn. The game should be able to support up to two scenarios operating simultaneously (three, if stretched to the limit). If the scenarios chosen share units, select a similar unit (in armament and morale) to replace duplications as necessary. Use the Turn Track of the scenario with the longest duration. At the end of each turn, both sides (regardless of initiative) should make a random event draw (but only one per side). Finally, the winner is the side that wins both or the majority of their individual scenarios through scenario-based victory conditions or through breaking the enemy. Any other result is a draw.

13.5 SOLITAIRE SYSTEM

Although *Off the Line* was designed as a two-player game, the following guidelines are provided for those players who might not have easy access to an opponent. The goal of this system is not to fully implement artificial intelligence for the opposing side, but to eliminate many (but not all) of the decisions a solo player must make on the enemy's behalf. It still requires that the player make rational decisions for the opposing side and to take its goals seriously.

Note: The automated "player" is referred to as the "Artificial Enemy Player" (or AEP) to keep things clear.

- 13.5.1 **Solitaire Actions** — Near the lower left area of each Action card are one or more solitaire action icons. These icons are used to determine what a randomly selected enemy hex does when activated. If more than one icon is present, the actions are taken from left to right. If the first action cannot be completed (i.e., a fire action when no targets are within the AEP force's LOS), the next

action is taken instead. If the second action cannot be completed, the third is taken. The action icons are:

13.5.1.1 **Reticule** (*Fire Action*) — When drawn, soldiers in the selected hex perform fire attacks against the nearest enemy hex (per attenuation) within LOS. Soldiers attack in order of their rate of fire ('All' first, '1' last), and in order of morale, highest first. If all soldiers in the target hex are KIA, remaining attackers may target the next nearest hex. To resolve decision ties (two nearest hexes, two soldiers with the same morale, etc.), either choose one, or draw randomly.

13.5.1.2 **Boots** (*Move Action*) — When drawn, the soldiers in the selected hex must move as far as possible (first) toward the nearest uncontrolled victory point hex (if any) or (second) toward the nearest enemy occupied hex. Soldiers must avoid hexes that are within an enemy's LOS, if possible, or remain within protective terrain. Soldiers may move into melee if their melee total exceeds that of any defending soldiers. Hidden soldiers have a movement value of six, regardless of whether they are accompanied by a leader. Hidden soldiers remain hidden until they fire at an enemy position or move within an enemy LOS.

Note #1: *If this symbol includes a red number, the units in the hex must make a morale check to complete the order. The red number is the morale value used if the units are hidden. Failure to pass this check means the move order is ignored by the individual soldier or stack of hidden soldiers and the next order listed is used, instead. Soldiers passing the check must still move, despite what other soldiers might do.*

Note #2: *The optional Hesitation (7.13) rule is in effect for both sides of a scenario. This means that moving out of protective terrain into clear terrain while in the LOS of an enemy soldier requires a morale check for each moving soldier.*

13.5.1.3 **Medal** (*Rally Action*) — When drawn, any pinned soldiers in the selected hex attempt to rally. If there are no pinned soldiers in the selected hex, select a hex at random that does hold at least one pinned soldier and attempt to rally soldiers in that hex, instead.

13.5.1.4 **No Order** — If the selected hex cannot perform a selected action, but includes good order soldiers, place a Hold marker on the hex. These soldiers perform reaction fire as if an orders card with a value equal to the AEP's base order value (7 minus élan) had been discarded.

13.5.2 **Sequence of Play** — Playing solitaire requires some important changes to the sequence of play, as outlined below.

13.5.2.1 **★ Card Drawing** — The AEP does not draw any cards at the beginning of a turn. Instead, the AEP receives a base number of orders equal to seven minus the AEP's élan value, plus the orders value of a single drawn card. *Reduce this value by one for each pinned or eliminated leader. The total may exceed the standard limit of six.*

13.5.2.2 **Initiative** — The AEP always draws a card for initiative as it does not keep a hand of Action cards during a turn. The player may still play an initiative card if holding the initiative, as per the standard rules.

13.5.2.3 **Activation Cycle** — When selecting a hex for activation, randomly select a hex from the three inactive hexes closest (in hexes, not attenuation) to enemy soldiers. If more than three hexes fall within this distance (i.e., a fourth or fifth hex shares the same distance as the third), include those hexes in the selection. Draw a random order for the selected hex as noted in 13.5.1, above.

13.5.2.4 **Leader Commands** — If an exposed leader occupies a selected hex, expend the commander's orders, one at a time, before applying the randomly drawn order to the hex, per the following hierarchy:

1. Activate an assistant squad leader within range to use his command orders as noted in 2-4, below.
2. Spend command orders to *automatically* rally pinned soldiers within the leader's command radius (no morale check required). If there are more pinned soldiers than available orders, randomly determine the rallied soldiers. If orders remain ...
3. Spend command orders to fire at enemy soldiers within LOS. If orders remain ...
4. Spend command orders to move soldiers per the following hierarchy:
 - a. Into a victory point hex, if it can be reached.
 - b. Into a hex that provides LOS to an enemy soldier.
 - c. Into a hex offering better protection.
 - d. If none of the above are possible, the command order is wasted.

13.5.2.5 **All Pinned** — If all (or remaining) AEP soldiers are pinned and the player has no orders left to play, select a pinned AEP hex at random and *automatically* rally the soldiers within it. The turn then immediately ends.



- 13.5.2.6 **Random Events** — Random events are handled normally, noting that the AEP “draws” a card when holding the initiative. Additionally, if the AEP draws an event, reshuffle the Action Deck at the end of the turn.

Note: The Action Deck is reshuffled a lot more when using the solitaire system owing to the increase in card draws to determine what the AEP does.

- 13.5.2.7 **Marker Adjustment** — Marker adjustment is handled normally, except that any Hold markers on AEP soldiers are removed (they never carry over).
- 13.5.3 **Reaction Fire** — When the player moves an enemy soldier within three hexes of a hex containing inactive AEP soldiers and within their LOS, each AEP soldier performs reaction fire as if an orders card with a value equal to the AEP’s base order value (7 minus élan) had been discarded.
- 13.5.4 **Scenario Setup** — There are no fixed ways in which an AEP’s soldiers should be setup within the guidelines of a scenario. Players must use their best judgment in providing the AEP an initial setup that makes sense and provides a challenge for the player. A player should randomize the selection of AEP soldiers and place them face-down on the map (hidden).
- 13.5.5 **Crewed Weapons** — When setting up an AEP squad that includes one or more crewed weapons, draw a random soldier for each weapon from the set of non-leader and non-crewed weapons. Once these soldiers have been selected and set aside, setup the remainder of the squad normally. Add a fake unit, if available, to the squad setup for each soldier placed aside. Once the crewed weapon armed soldier is revealed, place a set aside soldier in the hex with the crewed weapon and mark him with a Crew marker.

- 13.5.6 **Victory Conditions** — If the scenario played awards victory points for enemy soldiers killed or routed, double the awards given to the AEP (triple them for a real challenge). If only the player receives victory points, halve the amounts awarded. Additionally, increase the break level of the AEP by one or more to enhance the scenario’s challenge.

- 13.5.7 **Other Considerations** — It’s likely that unexpected situations arise during play that are not strictly covered by these guidelines. Players should use their best judgement in providing a challenge to themselves as if they were playing a breathing opponent.

14.0 DESIGN YOUR OWN

It’s quite easy to create your own scenarios for *Off the Line* given the large number of individual soldiers and the geomorphic maps included with the game. The dozen scenarios included should provide an ample example of what can be done. Here are a few additional guidelines to assist in scenario design.

14.1 SQUAD ORGANIZATION

Each nationality had different ideas as to how a squad should be organized. The American squad was a twelve-man unit comprising of a three-man fire team that included a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR), with the remaining riflemen acting as a maneuver or support element. The German squad was a ten-man unit, similarly built around a light machine gun (LMG). The actual size of a squad may vary depending upon the situation at hand, but these squad sizes are a good place to start.

14.2 QUALITY

A numeric superiority can easily be countered by reducing a squad’s élan value or by increasing its break number. Doing the former allows a side to more easily recover from pinned status, while the latter keeps the squad on the field longer.

14.3 SCENARIO TYPE

The nature of the scenario dictates how to build a balanced game. If both sides are simply running into each other in a “meeting engagement” the quality of the soldiers and weaponry can be roughly similar. However, if one side is clearly attacking an entrenched defender, the attacker needs more or superior soldiers to overcome the defender’s ability to take advantage of protective terrain.

14.4 TERRAIN

As the maps can be configured in hundreds of different ways, being aware of what each squad must contend with in regards to maneuver and lines of sight is very impor-

tant. Getting to a particular hex for the purposes of control may be inherently more difficult for one squad due to terrain that must be crossed in the process. Provide a little leeway to one side or the other as needed.

14.5 TIME

Note how many turns it takes to complete the scenario. Achieving a certain victory condition becomes a lot harder when there are fewer turns available to do so.

14.6 WINTER EFFECTS

The reverse of each map panel shows “winterized” version of each map. Per the scenario background (see 13.1), the date of each scenario indicates when the battle takes place. Special rules indicate if the winter version of the map should be used.

When a winter map is used, the effects of the weather are also used. The only effects that winter causes are a decrease in the number of movement points available (three instead of four), and the attenuation caused by woods is decreased due to reduced leaf density in the trees.

For an added challenge and variety, players may simply use the winter maps, regardless of when the setting.

15.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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16.0 DESIGNER'S NOTES

The first two paragraphs of this rulebook sum up what the game is about pretty well. The purpose of the following notes are to provide a little more insight into why the game was designed, the decisions made to make the game what it is, and (along the way) a thumbnail view of how the game plays. If you’ve already purchased the game, thanks! If not, hopefully these notes spur your interest.

First, a step back ...

If there’s any truth to the adage that everything old is new again, the proof is in the design of *Off the Line*. To paraphrase the great artist Pablo Picasso: “Good designers borrow ... great designer’s steal.” Those with a broad knowledge of the wargaming hobby may recognize some of the key mechanics in the game, although their implementation may have changed to fit design goals. As I note

within the acknowledgments in the rulebook, there are three games in particular that deserve special note: Chad Jenson’s *Combat Commander* (GMT Games), Gary Graber’s *Combat Leader* (Minden Games), and Courtney Allen’s *Up Front* (The Avalon Hill Game Company).

A lot of players already know how ground breaking a design *Combat Commander* is. Although many of the game mechanics are common throughout squad-level designs, its use of action decks rather than dice to manage game flow is quite brilliant. Many have stated that the design is an implementation of *Up Front* in board game form. This is not correct as the scales of the two games are completely different. However, the heredity of the system seems undeniable. What I particularly like about *Combat Commander* is how random events are handled to inject chaos into each scenario and provide limitless replayability. Although *Off the Line* handles random events a little differently, their use in the game was inspired by *Combat Commander*.

Gary Graber is one of the unsung heroes of the wargame design set. He seems to approach design with something of a Sex Pistols attitude: Never Mind the Bollocks. His rule sets are consistently short and tight, and allow players to get on with it with little fuss, muss, or unnecessary chrome. Gary is likely best known for *Panzerschreck* magazine his *Retro* rules set that breaks down *Advanced Squad Leader* into about twenty pages of rules. It works brilliantly. It is his man-to-man *Combat Leader* game that inspired me to create *Off the Line*. I played the heck out of it and just wanted more, so I made my own. Interestingly, my *Flying Colors* game had a similar genesis. I really liked Joe Balkoski’s *Fighting Sail* and wanted more. Bad or not, this is a habit with me and probably a lot of other designers, but I digress. I was drawn to the compact nature of *Combat Leader* and snagged two key mechanics from it: Hesitation (which helps a lot with solo play) and Range Attenuation (more on this later).

Finally, *Up Front*, otherwise known as “the greatest wargame of all time.” A little histrionic? I don’t think so. *Up Front* is the best simulation of man-to-man combat out there and succeeds in its design goals better than any game I have ever played, but it continues to have serious detractors due to its nature. *Up Front* has no game board or maps. So terrain sort of appears and disappears “magically” through the play of cards as soldiers advance or retreat. The first time I played the game way back in the dark age of the 1980s, I had this conceptual problem as well. But I eventually circled back around to it with an opponent that would better describe to me what was going on. I also think he let me win my first game, which really helps! I was hooked. So why not just play *Up Front*? Someone on *Consimworld* recently asked why anyone would want to create a board game version of *Up Front*, presumably as doing so runs contrary to the beauty of the design. I suppose the best answer is to quote future Senator John “Bluto” Blutarsky from Animal House: “*belch* Why not?” Seriously though, as I’ve noted, some folks

just don't grok the mapless nature of *Up Front*. By using map panels in *Off the Line*, I provide a much different play experience while still leveraging much of what makes *Up Front* great. What really makes *Up Front* work so well is the statistical nature of its action deck. Random values on the action cards are distributed throughout the deck in a normal or simple distribution, voiding the need for dice and allowing for more varied statistical results (such as the equivalent of rolling a five- or seven-sided die). It's brilliant and so I stole it without shame or remorse.

Of course, there are several games at the same scale as *Off the Line* that have been published over the years. The closest examples might be *Soldiers* from *West End Games* or *Close Assault* from *Yaquinto*. Although these other games have their adherents, there are features within these designs that just don't grab me or the components themselves are too limiting. As I noted, I often "just want more."

That should cover the why's. If you're unaware of one or more of these games, I strongly urge you to check them out. Now, onto the what's and how's.

The Components

The first impressions of any game are the components, so let's start with those. There's a lot in the box, including twelve double-sided, tabloid-sized maps, six double-sided scenario cards, one player aid card, two nationality charts, one and a half counter sheets, and a deck of 120 cards, plus a rulebook that's 32 pages long. Taking a look at each in some detail:

Each map is created in a style that should be familiar to most fans of tactical gaming. There's a twelve by seven grid of hexagons that overlays different types of terrain including buildings, crops, marsh, scrubs, woods, walls, and other stuff that should not be overly surprising. The reverse of each map is a "winterized" version of the terrain for those scenarios where soldiers must slog through the snow. An important addition to these maps is the use of colored "sighting dots" in each hex that indicates its predominant terrain type. I first saw this done in Adam Starkweather's *Devil's Cauldron* game from *Multi-man Publishing*. It takes some of the guesswork out of determining the terrain in a hex, while providing some flexibility to me as a graphic designer to add some cool embellishments here and there. Each hex is scaled to around fifteen to twenty meters across (a hex with its six adjacent hexes is roughly equivalent to one hex in *Advanced Squad Leader* or *Lock n Load Tactical*). Since the grids are relatively small, I only include hex IDs at the top and bottoms of the maps to limit the clutter. This was important when I was first putting the design together as my plan was to make the maps half-sheets. Two maps would make a letter-sized playing area so that the game could literally be played within the box top. This worked pretty well, but as I continued testing, I realized that the maps could be easily scaled up to the tabloid-size they're cur-

rently at now. The larger size lets players spread their units out more easily within a hex. It just worked better.

The game's mechanics are driven by the 120-card action deck. Each action card includes several important features. An "orders value" indicates how many orders can be issued during a turn. These values run from zero to six in a somewhat normal distribution (there are mostly ones, then twos, and so on until only a few sixes). The zero cards don't quite fit in this distribution as their number is closer to the total of threes or fours. The zero cards are the "problem children" in the deck. They don't do much other than take up space (much like the "cower" cards in *Up Front*) and are a pain to get rid of. They do, however, serve another important function that I'll describe in a bit. At the bottom of each card are nine "columns" that note random numbers based on a columnar value. The column values run from two to ten, and each generates a random number up to its value (so, for instance, the two-column generates ones and twos, while the ten-column generates numbers between one and ten). All of these random numbers are evenly distributed within their column. This allows the columns to act like dice of sorts (the six-column is equivalent to a six-sided die, the ten-column a ten-sided die, the three-column a three-sided die, and so on). Each action that requires a random outcome requires the drawing of a card with a specific column being addressed. If the value in that column is less than or equal to a specific value (usually a soldier's morale or the protective value of a target hex's terrain), the action is successful. Some of the random values are red or yellow, indicating an additional effect that is usually bad. The use of these random number columns pretty much dictated the size of the action deck being 120 cards as most of the values of the columns divide evenly into that number. The outliers are the seven- and nine-columns that do not. In these cases there is an additional notation that indicates a need to draw another result. These random number columns can also be used to help a player select a soldier that is affected (or not affected) by a game process. For instance, if there are three soldiers in a hex and only one gets affected, a card is drawn and the number in the 3-column indicates which soldier is affected. In the middle of each card is the text of a random event. These events may be drawn at the end of each turn by the player holding the initiative. Generally speaking, random events benefit the initiative-holder. About half of the events are "good," a quarter of them "bad," and the rest affecting either player at random. To aid in determining the location of this randomness, there's also a random hex notation on each card. There are forty to fifty different events, running the gamut from a simple deck reshuffling to allowing units to take multiple actions, to a passing aircraft dropping its load into the battle zone. These provide some really interesting narrative to each game. Last, but not least, is my bending to the will of the gaming community at large. Each card has up to three small icons that are used for solitaire play. Yes, the game includes a solitaire assistant! These icons dictate what the "automated enemy player" will do with an inactive hex during its turn (move, fire, rally, or hold).

A quick note about the randomness of the action deck. Despite there being opportunities to reshuffle the deck to reset its statistical basis, some players will undoubtedly note that once a specific result is achieved, the likelihood of it occurring again decreases. This is true. But the reciprocal is also true. When one result becomes less likely, other results become more likely. What this means in practice is that luck balances out over time, making the game less random than using actual dice. A point to ponder.

So, what about the dudes? Each combat unit represents an individually named soldier from the American and German armies. Each name is unique and I really had to fight the urge to include soldier names from *Up Front* (like the venerable Sgt Diettenger or the hapless Pvt Beck). I also avoided names from movies and television shows, although there may be some unintentional cross-over there. With eighty soldiers per army, that may be bound to happen. Each soldier is also noted with the weapon with which they're armed, a unique ID for scenario setup purposes, a melee value used in hand-to-hand combat, an extra "command" rating that notes if a soldier is a squad- or assistant squad-leader, and an all-important morale value.

Let me take a moment here to discuss the concept of morale, as it's the key driver in the game and what makes *Off the Line* work the way it does. So here's my theory. One of the issues I take with many tactical games is the misuse of the term "firepower." In most games, players compare a unit's firepower to the combat environment to determine a result. I believe this is putting the proverbial cart before the horse, as if the weapon itself was attacking, and not the soldier pulling the trigger. To take a case in point, the M1 Garand has an effective range of around 500 yards or five football fields. At that range, a body can barely be recognized by the human eye as much more than a blob. The firepower of the rifle is not diminished, but the ability of the soldier is. A soldier would really need to concentrate to get an effective hit at that range. But how effective can a soldier be when he is also the target of incoming fire? As an example, I like to reference the scene in the movie *Glory* (the American Civil War, I know, but I think the point still stands) where one of the soldiers shows off his accuracy with his new rifle, until Matthew Broderick starts firing a pistol next to his head while demanding he reload and fire faster. Of course, he cannot hit anything under those conditions. This is why morale, or coolness under fire, is the focus of a soldier's abilities, rather than the technical specifications of the weapon he may be firing. Related to morale is the concept of "élan" which is provided at the squad level. This value represents the ability of a squad to work together with the understanding that "your brother's got your back." The ability of a unit to rally (comparing morale to élan) and for a squad to gain the initiative (comparing one squad's élan to the enemy's) is also a critical component. Now, back to game components.

To help keep track of the status of the game, there are close to two dozen different markers available. This may seem overwhelming, but only a few of them are used on the map whose large hex sizes make it easy to indicate the status of soldiers in each. For those familiar with my *Flying Colors* design, this is not that!

The Play's the Thing!

Time to describe the rules. The first and I believe most important decision I made was how to organize the rulebook. This may not seem like that big of an issue, but it can be critical toward players understanding how the game is played. I had something of an argument with a developer that a rulebook should start with the sequence of play, and then break things down per that process. I disagreed. It's my view that components and then key concepts be described before getting into how the game is actually played so that players have something of a frame of reference going in. Without that information, players may be required to do a lot of flipping around (see *Zones of Control*, see *Melee Combat*, etc.). Regarding *Off the Line*, I start with the component description (as I did here) and then cover some critical concepts. Specifically, line of sight and range attenuation.

The greatest commonality in tactical designs is the ability of an active friendly unit to spot an enemy unit and put fire on it. For those not familiar with tactical games, this concept is referred to as "line of sight" (or LOS). At the scale of *Off the Line*, a soldier on a map with completely clear terrain can see every other hex without difficulty (figuring a hex at fifteen to twenty meters across when measuring diagonally from corner to opposite corner is between 300 and 400 meters). Of course, none of the maps are completely clear of terrain, so soldiers need to account for protective terrain that can completely block LOS. Determining LOS is done by drawing a straight line from the sighting dot of the active unit's hex to the target's hex. If any blocking terrain exists within that line, LOS does not exist to the target. Pretty straightforward, right? Nope! Many tactical games at the squad level require that LOS only be blocked if the LOS touches terrain art in a hex. Is that single leaf on a tree or extraneous drain-pipe on a building blocking LOS? Let the arguments begin! I've always hated this level of anal retentivity in a game. Magnifying glasses should never be required. Instead, in *Off the Line*, terrain is assumed to completely fill a hex including the hex sides, despite what the art looks like. Remember how the sighting dots are color coded? The color of the dot indicates the predominant type of terrain in the hex, so players don't have to look for proportions (just how many trees make it a woods hex?). This design mechanism allows me to be more expressive with the artwork on the map without affecting game play. Players will find extra copses of trees here or there or terrain "spillover" that doesn't affect LOS. Easy Peasy. Mostly. There are a couple of twists. First, building terrain in a hex does not include hexsides. This allows LOS to pass between two building hexes without hinderance (unless

the building art spans across the adjoining hexside). And then there are the effects of elevation changes, mostly due to hillock hexes. Like building hexes, hillock hexsides do not block LOS (since LOS is drawn along the lowest edge of the hillock's slope). The trick is that hillocks (and other higher elevations) cause blind spots at lower levels in hexes close to the edge of the hillock itself. For instance, if there are two elevated hillock hexes between an active unit on the hillock and a target at a lower elevation, two blind hexes extend from the edge of the hillock. This is probably the most complex concept in the game, and it takes a moment to digest. I put several examples in the rulebook to help players understand how it works.

Now that you're clued into how LOS works, let me turn the concept up to "11" by circling back to the discussion on morale versus firepower. You know, that bit where your eyes glazed over? As I've noted, a soldier with a rifle can pretty much hit anything on the map if its terrain were completely clear and the soldier was steady enough while under fire. At the longest ranges, a target looks like a blob with legs. The problem is that intervening terrain that does not block LOS completely makes that blob less and less distinct. Essentially, hindering terrain makes a target harder to see by artificially reducing the effective range of the soldier trying to spot that target. Note that this has nothing to do with firepower qua firepower. A field of tall grass is not going to hinder a bullet fired at the speed of sound, but will hinder the ability of the soldier to put a bullet on the target. This concept is referred to as "range attenuation." During combat, soldiers count the shortest number of hexes along an unblocked LOS to the target hex. Each type of terrain within those counted hexes has an attenuation value. These values are summed to determine the effective range to the target. This process may be complicated by the elevation of the soldiers and the heights of the hindering terrain as a soldier occupying an elevated hex may be able to fire over some hindering terrain, but not others. As with LOS, this is a little difficult to explain in summary, but several examples are included in the rules. It's definitely not rocket surgery.

With a good grasp on LOS and range attenuation, players are ready to tackle the sequence of play.

Each turn starts with the drawing of one or more cards by the players. If a player performed any actions during the previous turn, only one card is drawn. Otherwise, a full hand is drawn. The implication here is that during the course of the game, players will run out of cards. This mechanism reflects combat fatigue and the need for a squad to halt and take stock of their situation. A player's hand size is determined by the command values of any unpinned leaders they have in play (plus one). So if a squad leader is pinned, a player might not be able to draw a card during this phase if they already hold more cards than their current hand size. Hand size also is indicative of the quality of the squad. Poor leaders can only offer few options. This not a reflection on the courage or quality of the soldiers under their command. I don't like the

idea of making soldiers incompetent based upon their nationality ... *cough* *Italians* *cough* ... as some games have. Not to throw stones or anything.

The second step in each turn is determining which side holds the initiative. Holding the initiative provides several benefits including a better likelihood of drawing a beneficial random event as well as setting the tone for the turn through the play of orders cards. Each player draws a card from the action deck and checks the value of the column equal to their élan. The lower value wins the initiative. There are two additional twists to this process. The first is that the player holding the initiative must add the value of the initiative marker (where it's located on the status track) to their initiative draw. This makes it harder for the player holding the initiative to retain it. However, the initiative player has the option of playing a card from their hand (say they have a card with a 1 or 2 value under their élan column) rather than drawing at random. This increases the chances of their retaining the initiative for that turn, but forces the initiative marker up a space on the status track. It also removes a card from their hand that may be needed later on. Decisions, decisions.

The third step in each turn is the activation cycle. During this phase, players alternate ordering hexes to take actions through the expenditure of order points. Units may be ordered to move (and possibly melee), fire, rally, or hold. Once a soldier has completed an action, they're marked with a "complete" marker and can do nothing else for the turn (with a couple of exceptions, of course). I'll get to the details of the cycle momentarily as there's a lot to digest.

Following the activation cycle, the player holding the initiative checks for random events, markers are adjusted or removed, the turn marker is advanced, and players check for automatic victory (or just victory of the last turn was completed).

Move 'em Out!

At its heart, *Off the Line* is a resource management game. Players need to get their soldiers to accomplish the mission at hand, and to do that they need orders. Each turn a player indicates how many orders they'll expend. Unfortunately, their orders are limited, so players need to manage their use properly in order to achieve the goals for a turn. Players acquire orders by discarding cards from their hands at the beginning of each activation cycle. The number of orders a player receives is limited to six, but may play any number of cards to get to that number. But, and this is critical, the sum of the values of the cards discarded cannot exceed six. For instance, a player could discard a two- and a four-value card (for a total of six orders), but cannot discard a three- and a four-value card (which would exceed six). This mechanism injects aspects of hand-management into the game, which is exacerbated by the ability to only draw one card at the beginning of a turn if any orders are played. If a player opts to play multiple cards to maximize orders, they'll slowly drain their hand to nothing. This situation is made even worse if they hold

any zero-value cards, which cannot be discarded other than by random event or a “regroup” turn. Regrouping occurs if a player has no cards to play or plays a zero-value card when determining orders. In this case, the only thing a player can do is attempt to rally any pinned soldiers and on the following turn, they get to redraw their entire hand of cards. Tactically, a player needs to determine what they want to accomplish with their soldiers during a turn, and acquire sufficient orders to accomplish those goals. Orders are selected secretly, the player holding the initiative choosing first. This means that the other player will know how many cards the initiative player will discard, but not their values, adding the advantage of bluff to the initiative player. I’m playing two cards, but are their total values close to six, or are they both low? This might force the other player to discard more cards than necessary or blow a high-valued card in response. Once the orders for the turn have been determined, the initiative player determines who’ll start spending them. If the initiative player has more orders, it may be beneficial to force the opposing player to go first, so that the initiative holder can issue orders with impunity later during the activation cycle.

An order is typically spent to activate a hex where all the soldiers in that hex perform the same order given: move, fire, rally, or hold. There are a couple of exceptions to this activity. First, the only order pinned soldiers can receive is to rally. So if a hex holds a mix of pinned and good order soldiers, two orders can be assigned to the hex (one to rally the pinned guys and one to have the good order soldiers move, shoot, or hold). Additionally, a player may expend an order to activate a single soldier within the chosen hex to do something other than the order given to the hex as a whole, provided that the hex is within the command radius of a squad- or assistant-squad leader (the former has a two-hex radius, while the latter has a one-hex radius). Confused? Let’s say there are four soldiers in a hex, one of them being pinned. The player issues one order to activate the hex to move. This means that without the play of additional orders, all the good-order soldiers would have to move from the hex. So the player assigns a second order to have one of the soldiers fire before the other two good-order soldiers move. A third order is assigned to the pinned soldier in an attempt to rally him. You can hopefully see that it’s quite beneficial to keep soldiers within the command radius of a leader to benefit from this orders flexibility. Leaders are important in another way. When a leader receives an order, a player receives a number of additional orders equal to the leader’s command rating that can be spent on soldiers within his command radius. These free orders can be spent before or after the leader completes his own order (and can even use one of his free orders to allow him to complete a different order than those units in his hex). Imagine a leader with a command rating of three is ordered to move. Before moving, he could assign two orders to a nearby crewed machine-gun to fire on an enemy position, and then move to a hex close to a pinned unit that he could now spend his last free order to rally. “Thompson, Jackson, pin those Jerries while I go get Stevens off his butt!”

This leadership ability is vital to completing a mission and shows the importance of keeping leaders in good order. It also allows soldiers to spread out a bit, as clustering them is not necessarily a good idea, as you’ll soon see.

When assigning a move order to a hex, good-order soldiers must exit the hex. They may not exit and then return to the same hex. The movement process is straight forward and similar to other games. Soldiers move either individually or in groups and expend up to four movement points each. Points are expended while soldiers move from hex to hex, paying the cost of the terrain to enter. If they don’t have the points, they cannot enter. Pretty standard, right? There is a catch though. When moving with a leader, a stack of soldiers gets to add the command value of the leader to their movement point allotment. This differs from a lot of other tactics games where units get a standard movement bonus of two points added to their four. In *Off the Line*, some leaders are more motivational than others. I figure I can get away with this feature because of the more granular scale of the game. There are a few other features of movement worth noting. As part of movement, soldiers can toss smoke grenades or fire flares. When doing so, a card is drawn and if the value in the column equal to their élan value is red, they’ve run out. Soldiers may go prone to increase the protective value of the terrain in their hex. Coming out of a prone position costs two movement points. Some weapons can be fired while moving (assault fire), but at penalties to movement and fire. There is an optional rule called “Hesitation” where if a soldier attempts to enter a (mostly) clear hex within the LOS of an enemy soldier, there’s a one-in-six chance that they’ll balk and not move at all. This rule is handy for solitaire play. Finally, when entering a hex that contains enemy units, melee is immediately initiated.

Each soldier is noted with a melee value. When melee occurs a couple of things happen. First, any pinned enemy soldiers have the option to perform a “desperation” morale check. If they fail, they rout and are eliminated. If they succeed, they may participate in the melee. This check is optional as the owning player may decide that the good order soldiers might actually eliminate the attackers, in which case those pinned soldiers would be fine. However, if they stick around and their good-order compatriots are eliminated, they are KIA as well. Feel lucky, punk? Melee is a simple process of summing the melee values of attacking and defending units and comparing these values as a ratio. The melee is resolved on the column that is two to the right of the higher ratio value. So if the ratio were 2-to-1, the melee would be resolved on the 4 column, using the ratio values as an indicator of a success or failure. Say the attacker was initiating a 3-to-1 melee. The attacker would succeed on a draw of three or less on the five-column, while the defender would succeed on a draw of a one on the five-column. A success results in a KIA enemy soldier, with attacks being simultaneous. After dead soldiers are removed, the odds are recalculated and the melee continues until one (or both) sides have been

eliminated. Melee is very bloody and can turn on a supposedly superior force very quickly.

It is in the resolution of combat where players familiar with *Combat Leader* and *Up Front* will note the convergence of mechanisms from these two games. Nothing succeeds like success! When a hex receives an order to fire, each soldier in the hex fires individually and completes their attacks before the next guy in the hex. The LOS and range attenuation to the target hex are determined, and then the player notes the weapon that the soldier is armed with, and refers to the nationality's Weapon Attributes Table (WAT). The WAT shows the fire resolution column for a weapon at a specific attenuation. The player then draws a card and if the result on the resolution column is less than or equal to the soldier's modified morale value, the attack is on target and a number of enemy soldiers are affected by the attack (as noted on the WAT). Rifles usually only affect up to three soldiers, while an automatic weapon might affect all enemy soldiers. Each affected enemy soldier then makes a morale check based upon the protective value of the terrain in the attacked hex. Soldiers that fail this check are marked with a "Pinned 1" marker. If the result number was red, regardless of its success or failure, there is a KIA check for the soldier. Another card is drawn and the 10-column is checked. If the result is less than or equal to the KIA value of the terrain in the attacked hex, the soldier is killed outright. I felt it important to distinguish between panic and KIA effects as heroes and cowards are both killed in the same way. When firing on a hex that has pinned soldiers in it, those soldiers only need check for KIA results (soldiers cannot get more pinned than they are ... mostly). If those soldiers pass their KIA checks, but the result is red, they immediately rout. Routed guys are generally worth less toward victory conditions than soldiers who are KIA.

There are a couple of other factors that affect fire combat, such as crewed weapons being fired solo, optional traversing fire and machine-gun rate of fire that ratchet up the complexity a bit. The feature that deserves noting in greater detail is reaction fire. When soldiers move or fire within the LOS of an inactive soldier or a soldier under a hold order may attempt to fire at those soldiers. Unlike many other tactical games, this is not automatic. A player must first discard an orders card and then draw a result on the seven-column that is less than or equal to the value of the discarded card. If successful, the attack proceeds normally, otherwise the player has dumped a card from their hand to no good effect. A soldier under a hold order uses the five-column instead (making it easier to pass the check). This mechanic feeds the hand-management aspects of the game again. Do you save that high orders value card for reaction fire?

As a result of combat, soldiers get pinned. To get out of that status, they must receive a rally order. To rally, the soldier makes a modified morale check on the column equal to their squad's élan value. If they succeed, the pinned marker is removed and the soldier is marked with a complete marker. If the check fails, the pinned marker

remains, but the soldier is not marked complete. This means that additional orders may be spent to rally the soldier later during the turn. Despite the fact that a pinned soldier cannot get any more pinned during combat, there are two levels of pinned. When a soldier is initially pinned, he gets a "Pinned 1" marker, which means that he's going to ground. At the end of the turn, the Pinned 1 markers are flipped to their "Pinned 2" side. This means that the soldiers are now prone and taking maximum advantage of the protective terrain in their hex. Soldiers that are Pinned 2 get beneficial shifts to their terrain protective values, do not block LOS, and may remain prone (if they may legally do so) when rallied.

One other thing to mention related to both fire combat and rallying is the jamming of weapons. If a targeted soldier draws a yellow result when determining their status, the attacking weapon has either misfired (which can also be interpreted as the weapon requiring a reload) or has jammed. The owning player makes a morale check against the column equal to the jam value for the weapon noted on the WAT. If the check fails, the weapon is jammed. In any case, the attack stops and the status of additional soldiers is not checked. What's interesting here is that the check happens when the target is resolving their status, not when the attacker is actually firing. If this seems odd, it is. But, doing it this way saves additional steps of having to determine which soldier was being hit when the jam occurs. The ultimate effect is the same and saves a lot of extra work. This mechanic also stresses that it's the equipment that fails and not necessarily the man wielding it. When issued a rally order, good order units may attempt to repair their jammed weapons through a rally check as described previously.

As the activation cycle proceeds, a player must spend one or more orders. There is no passing unless all of a player's orders have been spent. Sometimes though, there may be no available targets, units are not pinned, and the player doesn't want to move the soldiers in the selected hex. In this case, those soldiers receive a hold order. They are waiting to see what happens. Units under a hold order may more effectively use reaction fire or may receive a fire order later during the turn. If they do fire, they're either marked with a complete or reaction fire marker, depending upon the action taken. Another benefit to hold actions is that players have the option to remove them at the end of a turn or carry them into the next turn to limit the number of orders needed.

The acquisition and expenditure of orders during a turn provides a very fluid play experience that allows players to understand why squad tactics often relied upon the use of a maneuver section and a fire section. Although it might seem to make sense to cluster your soldiers close to your leaders in order to maximize the use of orders, doing so opens them up to devastating fire attacks by the enemy. The only stacking limits in the game are the likelihood of getting your squad blown away in one attack. Spread out, but stay in touch!

All By Myself ...

A common question I get upon releasing a new game is how well it plays solitaire. I'm one of those folks who can play pretty much anything solo, taking both sides and making rational decisions for each. Some games are a little harder to do this, particularly when there are fog-of-war issues involved, such as hidden units or hands of cards. *Off the Line* uses both. Although I still find it easy to employ a little schizophrenia when required, some folks have a harder time with this. Fortunately, the action deck in *Off the Line* and a relative dearth of options provide a perfect vehicle for some solitaire assistance.

For the most part, I shy away from purely solitaire games as I find their decision engines overwrought, often comprised of lots of decision flow-charts and tables. Rather than try to build something like this, I built more of a decision assistant that simply helps a solo player to determine what the artificial enemy player (AEP) will do and then offer some guidance on how its turn evolves. It's really up to the solo player to provide a challenge by not making the AEP do something really dumb like not advancing when they need to take ground for victory. The goal is to provide a solo player with a challenging experience, not a cake-walk.

To the left of each action card, above the random number columns are up to three solitaire action icons. When the AEP spends an order, one of the three nearest inactive AEP hexes is selected and random and a card drawn. The AEP then completes the first action listed, if possible. If not possible (or foolhardy) the second action is taken, or the third if the second option is also poor. For example, if the options are move, rally, and fire (in that order) and the hex is a defensive position (say a bunker that needs to be captured), the first option to move makes no sense and is ignored. If there are no pinned soldiers in the hex, the rally order is ignored, and the soldiers fire upon the nearest enemy soldiers. If there were no soldiers within the AEP unit's LOS, making a fire attack impossible, no orders would be feasible and the selected hex automatically gets a hold order. If a hex is selected that includes a leader, there is a schedule as to how the leader's inherent orders are spent. Using this process cuts down significantly on the decisions that a player needs to make for the AEP, but does not eliminate all of them. Strange things may still happen that run contrary to all logic, so the solo player is expected to make the right decision for the AEP when necessary.

We've Got A Situation Here

There are twelve scenarios included with *Off the Line*. Each scenario card includes a short blurb about the situation to get players in the mood, as well as the orders of battle (plus the élan value for each squad), and the setup instructions. A turn track is provided that indicates how long the scenario lasts. Victory is generally determined in

one of two ways. Either one of the sides meets the victory conditions described (which could be an automatic victory at the end of a turn or earning sufficient victory points at the end of the last turn) or through the elimination of sufficient enemy soldiers to cause their squad to break. Including this casualty-based break level ensures that a player not sacrifice his soldiers needlessly in an effort to complete a mission.

In addition to the twelve scenarios, there are additional ways in which a player can increase the value of their copy of *Off the Line*. The game includes pretty extensive guidelines on how to design your own scenarios. This is encouraged, as I'd like to publish fan-made scenarios either in a war game magazine or as separate scenario packs. Additionally, the orders of battle for each scenario include the build values for each squad. On the reverse of the WAT is a listing of each soldier and how much they cost in build points. Players can use these values to create entirely new squads to try out with the included scenarios. Or, you can flip the maps over and play a scenario under winter conditions (or vice versa, depending). Finally, *Off the Line* can be played multi-player. There are sufficient components to manage the play of two scenarios simultaneously, with the maps put together to create a larger battle zone. If you really push it, you can probably get three scenarios running together with two teams of three players, but you may need to mock up some extra tracking markers. There is a heck of a lot of variety built into *Off the Line*!

Some Final Words

As a player of the game (or potential purchaser if you're reviewing an on-line version of these rules) you may take this with a grain of salt, I do believe this is the best game I've designed. At least so far. It ticks just about every box for me. It's not overly complex, it plays quite quickly (usually within a couple of hours), it's both exciting and frustrating, there are lots of critical decisions to make, and its replayability is very high. It's also hugely expandable and I plan on doing just that by adding additional nationalities, maps, and scenarios. As of this writing the British Army expansion (which includes six more maps and scenarios) is already done and ready to go to print (so keep a look out for it). I've already started gathering data for the second expansion, the Italian Army.

If you have any questions about the game, there are forums established for the game on *BoardgameGeek* and *ConsimWorld*. You know where to find me.

Thanks for reading and I hope to see you ... *Off the Line*!

Mike Nagel