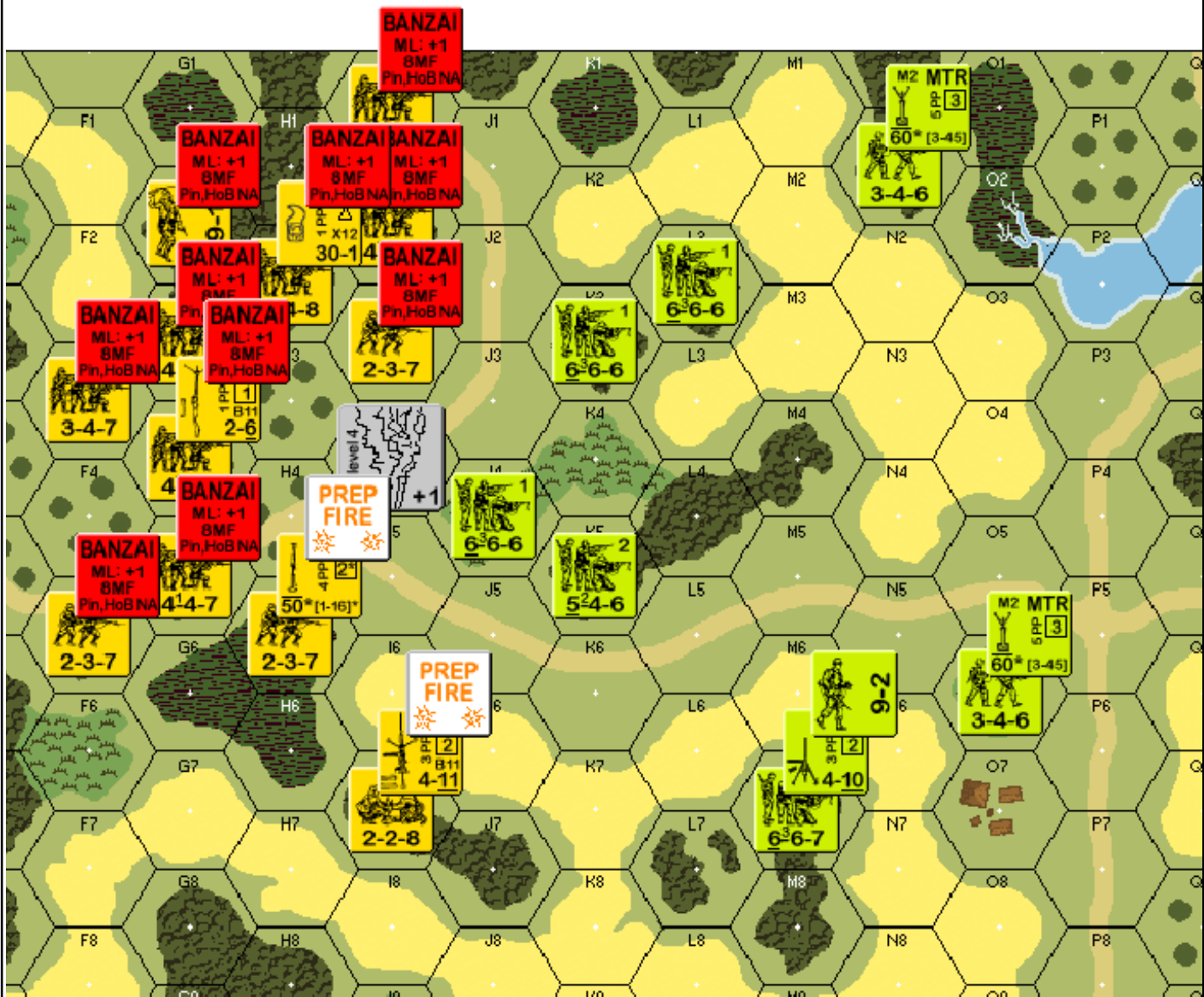


BANZAI!!!



The Newsletter of the Texas ASL Club

August 2023

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This newsletter is **FREE!** Don't let anyone charge you for it

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EDITOR'S FOXHOLE

Rick Reinesch



Welcome back to another edition of the newsletter of Texas ASL, *Banzai!!!*. With the cancellation of the Texas Team Tournament this year (a long, sad story that you can read on the Texas-ASL website), that left plenty of time for us to get the next issue of *Banzai!!!* generated. In this issue we are focusing on AFVs with a couple of excellent articles by Jim Bishop that he has graciously given us permission to cross post from his blog, **The Bishop Says**. The first are Jim's thoughts about the classic AFV article *Panzer Gegen Panzer* by Bruce Bakken. We follow that up with an AFV article where Jim outlines how to recognize favorable opportunities in AFV vs. AFV combat and how some of the nationality nuances affect such combat. We have a special interview this issue where we didn't speak to another ASL player, but had the good fortune to speak with Claude Berube who is in charge of the US Naval Academy Museum about their use of wargaming at the Academy. And finally Matt Shostak provides readers with a scenario analysis of AP60 Nishne Nyet!. All this and more await you in this issue of *Banzai!!!*. Enjoy.

A DISCUSSION ABOUT PANZER GEGEN PANZER

Jim Bishop



[Jim has graciously given Banzai!!! permission to reprint this excellent article from his blog – The Bishop Says, looking at Bruce Bakken's venerable article Panzer Gergen Panzer. Please check out Jim's blog for other fine ASL-related articles and content at <http://jekl.com>. -- Ed.]

A discussion about armored warfare broke out recently on the ASL Discord server. People began discussing tactics and

articles covering the topic. Inevitably the discussion turned to Bruce Bakken's seminal article *Panzer Gegen Panzer: Tank Warfare in ASL*. Historically, I have been critical about portions of this article. As I was supporting my position it occurred to me, I should probably do this on my blog. What follows is my thoughts on this gem of an article.

A Word About My Intentions

This will not be about me thrashing this article. I actually agree more with Bruce's thoughts than I disagree with them. My disagreement is mostly about a definition of terms and a mindset apparent throughout the article. Even though I think these are in error, Bruce still puts into print the crux of my position. He still gets to where I am going to take you, he just eschews it in favor of his own approach. *Panzer Gegen Panzer* (PGP) serves as a topic starter here.

At *The Point*, a now defunct ASL newsletter, originally serialized this article. Avalon Hill republished it in the ASL Annual 93a. These early versions were based on some rules which changed. MMP updated this article for [Out Of The Attic #2](#). It is this last version of the article which I will speak to.

I really like this article. It was thought provoking. The first time I read it I had to really think about the game and how ASL models AFV. As my understanding of ASL increased, I often came back to this article and re-read it. I did not come to my conclusion about this article overnight. It took me years to explore the depths of what Bruce wrote and to find my own thoughts on the subject, something I am sure Bruce would be happy to hear.

What I Agree With

In summary, just about everything. Seriously, the article is that good. There is very little to quibble about. Bruce's rule citations are relevant, timely, and well explained. His usage of the rules is spot on. As a new player, if you follow Bruce's suggestions, your play will definitely improve.

What I Disagree With

It really boils down to two things: Bruce's definition of "Engagement" and the resulting mindset that comes from it. How he defines an Engagement leads to the second point, the mindset. It is this mindset which I think holds people back from getting the most out of their AFV.

Even with these, Bruce gets the points I am going to make into his article. He is aware of these issues. He just really never addresses them and I think this is because of his definition. With that in mind, I will propose a new definition and a slightly different way to think of his article which I hope better explains my position.

PGP's Engagement

Bruce declares a tank has "engaged" another tank once it places a -1 Acquisition counter on its target. The "Engagement" forms when the enemy places a -1 Acquisition back on the original shooter. Bruce then provides his three rules of engagements:

1. Take the First Shot
2. Take the First Shot of the Engagement
3. Take More Shots than the enemy

Later in the article, Bruce says "... it must seem that the successful tank commander adopts a primarily defensive posture during an armored battle." This is precisely what happens if you adopt Bruce's Rules of Engagement and flow from his definitional position. You shy away from exposure seeking the first shot. As I have said elsewhere on my blog, this doesn't work as the attacker. The attacker has to fabricate the win. You can't just sit still and expect the win like the Defender can.

Bruce says "... following the Rules of Engagement and through judicious use of mobility, a tank tends to behave very much like a hunter stalking its prey." This works well if the "prey" can't harm your tank. You're not exposing yourself to the first shot or putting yourself in position to give your opponent more shots than you take.

Lastly, since Bruce defines engagements in terms of Acquisition, his Rules of Engagement discourage Bounding First Fire shots since they don't place Acquisition. Bruce labels this "nothing more than a hit-and-run tactic, intended to destroy the target in passing rather than become involved in a perhaps lengthy Engagement."

This is the crux of my disagreement. I think Bruce's definition of an Engagement leads to static, defensive play. The idea that it is better to be involved in an Engagement rather than destroying your enemy outright is detrimental to your success as an attacker. If you are Defending, by all means: follow Bruce's Rules of Engagement. But if you are Attacking, you need a different mindset and that starts with a renewed definition of Engagement.

Pre-Game Study

It is important to know the capabilities of you and your enemy's tanks before you start play. You need to have a good understanding of what his To Kill Number (TK#) is and how it compares to your Armor Factors (AF) and vice versa. These numbers govern the odds of a hit eliminating your tanks. There is nothing you can do to change this except to make sure his incoming fire strikes your strongest AF. No matter how unlikely the hit was, if it gets to this point, you are relying on the dice to favor you.

A New Meaning For Engagement

I believe the engagement starts the moment you decide to destroy your opponent's tank. That could be in this instant, it could have happened last turn, it could be because of something that just occurred making it reasonable to attack that AFV. The attacking mindset is looking for opportunities to advance to victory.

The key to decision making recognizes opportunities where the odds are in your favor or the need is pressing based on the Victory Conditions. These odds are a combination of how likely you are to hit the target and how likely you are to kill the target if you hit. The risks you take at the end of the game may be greater than the risks you take at the beginning of the game. With that in mind, here are my Rules of Engagement.

Jim's Rules of Engagement

1. Recognize the Opportunity
2. Maneuver to Tip the Odds
3. Take the First "Best Shot"
4. Be Prepared To Adapt on the Fly

Recognize The Opportunity

This is perhaps the hardest part of the equation. You need to understand the rules and how to apply them. You also need to know the relative power of each side's Order of Battle. What you're looking for is a "reasonable" chance to eliminate the enemy AFV without spending more than you are willing to for that outcome. Sometimes, it may cost you a tank or two to eliminate that Panther. That's a fair cost if you have the AFV to spare to pay the cost.

"Reasonable" is also hard to define but the Victory Condition will guide you. If I need to have a tank with a functional MA at game end, then it better be nearly certain that you have at least one tank left and eliminate the enemy tank. Early in the game, you might be unwilling to accept anything less than an 80% chance. Later in the game, desperation may lead you to accepting a 20% chance.

In all cases, the decision is driven by the Victory Conditions and where you are in the game. Destroying an enemy tank is not the goal (it can be). Winning the game is. We must make all decisions in that light.

Tip The Odds

Bruce points out in his article that we as tank commanders decide where and when to attack an enemy tank. We can force the enemy tank to take a bad shot through a complete understanding of the rules. As the Bounding First Fire AFV, we will face a minimum of a +4 To Hit (TH) Dice Roll Modifier (DRM). This means we need an Original DR6 TH (41.67%). Assuming we have a To Kill Number (TK#) of 17 against an Armor Factor (AF) of 11, a hit has a 41.67% chance to eliminate or Shock the enemy tank on a hit. Taken

together, we have a 17.36% chance to eliminate the enemy tank.

In contrast, an enemy tank with a 14 TK against our 6 AF and a +3 TH DRM. He has a 42.12% chance to eliminate/Shock our tank. The enemy tank is nearly 2.5 times more likely to affect our tank than we are his and he shoots first. This is likely not the best opportunity unless you have more tanks to press the action.

Instead, imagine you approached the enemy tank from outside its TCA. Now the +3 TH DRM becomes a +5. Now the enemy tank eliminates/Shocks our tank ~20% of the time. We have cut his chances nearly in half. If the enemy AFV is in a Wood/Building Location, his Case A DRM are doubled. This ties our own shooter-based DRM. If the enemy tank is also BU, we would win a Gun Duel (+4 vs. +5 Shooter-based DRM). Even if the enemy tank is CE, it would tie us on Shooter-based DRM and a "roll off" occurs. This "roll off" favors our tank since we have fewer total DRM.

Take The First Best Shot

Your goal here is to take a shot more likely to Shock/eliminate the enemy AFV than it is to do the same to your AFV. You can risk nearly equal chances if you're willing to accept he will probably shoot first. If you do this, you must declare a Gun Duel on his shot if you can even if

you know you will lose the Gun Duel. If you survive the first shot, declaring a Gun Duel ensures you shoot next no matter how many units he has capable of shooting your tank. You must also be aware the ROF and Intensive Fire will work against you. The Victory Conditions and timing of the game should inform your decisions on when and where to take these calculated risks.

For example, if we approach his AFV from the side, our first shot may hit a weaker Armor Facing. This increases our chance to eliminate the enemy AFV. As the combination of TH DRM and TK/AF comparisons change in our favor, we reach a point where we take the First "Best Shot". If we add to this a swarm of multiple tanks engaging the same vulnerable target, we can get multiple chances to successfully eliminate the enemy AFV.

Be Prepared To Adapt On The Fly

Every action on the board changes the situation. Each change in the situation effectively creates a different cost/benefit analysis. If an enemy tank changes TCA/VCA in a Wood/Building and fires, it may not change its TCA/VCA again. If it fires, it can no longer make a Motion Attempt or try for a Smoke Dispenser. These activities may make some actions more likely to succeed. Recognizing these changes is the tenet of Rule 1: Recognize the Opportunity.

Modified TH#	Chance to roll <=	Gain / Loss		Gain / Loss	
		"-1 DRM" pct (frac)	"+1 DRM" pct (frac)	"-2 DRM" pct (frac)	"+2 DRM" pct (frac)
2	1/36 (2.78%)	5.56% (2/36)	-	13.89% (5/36)	-
3	3/36 (8.33%)	8.33% (3/36)	5.56% (2/36)	19.44% (7/36)	-
4	6/36 (16.67%)	11.11% (4/36)	8.33% (3/36)	25.00% (9/36)	8.33% (5/36)
5	10/36 (27.78%)	13.89% (5/36)	11.11% (4/36)	30.55% (11/36)	19.44% (7/36)
6	15/36 (41.67%)	16.67% (6/36)	13.89% (5/36)	30.55% (11/36)	25.00% (9/36)
7	21/36 (58.33%)	13.89% (5/36)	16.67% (6/36)	25.00% (9/36)	30.55% (11/36)
8	26/36 (72.22%)	11.11% (4/36)	13.89% (5/36)	19.44% (7/36)	30.55% (11/36)
9	30/36 (83.33%)	8.33% (3/36)	11.11% (4/36)	13.89% (5/36)	25.00% (9/36)
10	33/36 (91.67%)	5.56% (2/36)	8.33% (3/36)	8.33% (3/36)	19.44% (7/36)
11	35/36 (97.22%)	2.78% (1/36)	5.56% (2/36)	2.78% (1/36)	13.89% (5/36)
12	36/36 (100%)	-	2.78% (1/36)	-	8.33% (3/36)

Some activities will work against you. You are prepared to lose two AFV to eliminate a Panther, risking one to First Fire and one to an Intensive Fire shot. Except the Panther maintained ROF on the first shot. Now you are looking at losing three AFV. Perhaps it is time to call off the swarm and figure out another way. An MMC with a BAZ can ruin a Panther's day just as well as your tank can. The MMC can rout though, your burning AFV cannot. **A Brief Aside**

Not all DRM are equal. I have said this many times on my blog. Refer to the chart above while we discuss this. The left-most column represents the Modified TH# while the second column shows the chances to roll less than or equal to that sum. The next four columns explore the impact of a +/- 1 and a +/-2 DRM on rolling a Final TH DR <= to the Modified TH chance.

For example, if you need a Modified TH# of 5 and have a +1 DRM, you need to roll an Original TH DR of 4. This means any sum of the dice totaling a 5 are no longer successful (4/36). Your chances of hitting dropped from 27.78% to 16.67%. This is nearly a 1/3 reduction in the chances of being hit. Compare this to Modified TH# of 10 with the same +1 DRM. Now, any sum of the dice totaling to 10 is unsuccessful (3/36). This is an 8.33% reduction from an original 91.67% chance to hit. The same +1 DRM has less of an impact at this end of the curve. Your tank is still likely to be hit. And if the enemy hits, you are relying on the dice to favor you in the TK DR. The swings are even more wild on the +/- 2 DRM columns.

What you should take from this table is how impactful the DRM are in the middle of this table. A Modified TH# of 6 to 8 can swing 13.89% - 16.67% on a simple +1 DRM. While the +1 DRM on a Modified TH# of 8 still means you're more likely to be hit than not, it is much closer to a coin flip than it is without a +1 DRM. Starting at a Modified TH# of 7, the odds just tilt further in your favor with the DRM having a larger and larger relative impact. This is where you control the odds of the engagement.

It is also worth noting that many of these BIF and First Fire shots will be in the Original 6 - 8 TH DR range. Eeking out an additional +1 is well worth the effort as it will be as impactful as it possibly can be.

After The Shot

What you do after the shot depends on your intentions. If you intend to stand with multiple tanks facing off against his tank, there is no need to get out of the line of fire. If instead, you have other places to be, then driving by and taking a chance of eliminating his tank may be a risk worth taking. The end goal of your plan is to fulfill the Victory Conditions. That may or may not include destroying his AFV.

If your tank can force his tank to move, you can fall back to Bruce's Rules of Engagement and be very successful. You

might accomplish this by simply driving by to a position which makes his position untenable. If you have the MF's to spare, stopping to shoot on the way may just solve your problem. But in the end, as the attacker, applying pressure will force him to react. And when he reacts, Bruce's rules of engagement are tailor made for this situation.

Giving Credit

Bruce said much of what I present here in his article. He acknowledges you may have a "... strategy to destroy the enemy before an Engagement actually develops ..." and may be accomplished by "... firing at him during your MPh." He even states "There is no greater penalty for firing during the MPh than if you had waited until the ensuing AFPh." Bruce clearly sees the opportunities I have discussed here, he just says it is a "hit-and-run tactic" and "... chances are quite good the enemy would get the first shot at you during the MPh" downplaying the tactic. While all of that is absolutely true, he does not combine it with his other observations on DRM changing the odds. It is entirely possible understanding these odds will expose situations where attacking an enemy tank during the MPh actually favors you. Bruce's article almost got here.

Bruce didn't say this directly, but he hinted at the DRM as your armor. He said "A more practical way to avoid fire is to influence which of the TH DRM the enemy must apply to his shot." This is the leap I eventually made that leads me to quibble with his otherwise outstanding article. If we can change the odds on the TH DR to favor our attack, we are creating the environment for a successful attack. This success begins with recognizing the opportunity and maneuvering to create conditions favoring our success. That is what I think of when I think about an Engagement. It has nothing to do with placing Acquisitions. It has everything to do with eliminating his AFV at a cost I am prepared to accept while taking risks I am prepared to take. And if it all goes pear-shaped, recognizing the engagement must be called off because of the changing circumstances.

There is nothing revolutionary in this article. I can find every point I make above in Bruce's original work. It took me years to feel like I grew beyond it. And really, I don't think I grew beyond it, I just took different lessons and meaning from the same information Bruce presented. If there were no Panzer Gegen Panzer, I would not have progressed as easily to where I am today.

Conclusion

I highly recommend you read *Panzer Gegen Panzer*. It is a masterfully crafted article which I place high in the pantheon of all ASL articles ever written. It is just as relevant today as when it first appeared all those years ago in *At The Front*. Over the years, I have repackaged his work to fit my play style and the modern ASL scenario. When you are standing

on the shoulders of giants, original thought is scarce, so it is no surprise to me there is very little new here.

Still, I hope my slightly different take on his information is informative for you. I hope it helps you to grow and expand your ASL games as much as it did mine. Thanks Bruce. I could not have done it without you. – jim

Afterward

I reached out to Bruce via email and offered him an opportunity to comment. So far, he has demurred citing a move away from ASL. He briefly reflected on our brief past discussion on his article and then made a point I had long forgotten. ASL was in a much simpler place when Bruce wrote *Panzer Gegen Panzer*. There was no Internet. There was no global audience readily available to bounce ideas off of. You couldn't log onto VASL and play someone from the other side of the planet without leaving the comfort of your own desk. ASL was very much an insular thing being played among small, isolated groups. Some of that changed with the emergence of ASLOk and other tournaments. All of that changed with the explosion of the Internet.

The way we play the game has changed over the years. We have gone from 40 counter a side, 10+ turn scenarios played across 3 boards, to 1/2 board, 10 squads and a tank a side blitz play. People have gained a ton of experience with the rules and tactics that historical scenarios almost feel quaint by today's standards. When you think about the progress the ASL community has made in its level of play, it is remarkable that *Panzer Gegen Panzer* remains relevant even today. That's a testament to Bruce's forethought and basic understanding about what AFV combat means in an ASL sense. Bruce certainly pushed us forward then, and continues to do so today. Thanks Bruce.

AFV COMBAT: ELEMENTS OF INTERMEDIATE PLAY

Jim Bishop



[Jim has graciously given Banzai!! permission to reprint this excellent article from his blog – *The Bishop Says*. Please check out Jim's blog for other fine ASL-related articles and content at <http://jekl.com>. -- Ed.]

Description

If you are reading this, I imagine you have been playing ASL for a while. You grasp how to move units across the board and how to attack with the various weapons available to you. You routinely check Chapter H. By now you're recognizing what is not working all that well and you're wondering where

to go next. I certainly don't have all of those answers. If I did, this would probably be a much longer article and no one would speak about Pleva, McGrath, Pilling, etc.

This article will convey some intermediate concepts of armored warfare in ASL. I intend it as a companion to my article [A Discussion About Panzer Gegen Panzer](#). A basic understanding of these topics will improve your armor play but make no mistake, this is no panacea. You will still struggle with armor for a while after reading this. This

information will take time to digest and work into your play. Only when it becomes second nature, will you truly recognize opportunities. But we all have to start somewhere.

What I Won't Be Covering Here

In my *Attacking In ASL* article first appearing in [From the Cellar #12](#) and [reprinted](#) on my blog, I identified several roles for AFV in ASL. I have also written several articles discussing some mechanics of [AFV combat in ASL](#). I will not be covering those here. Perhaps someday I will pull all of that together into one overarching AFV article but that won't happen here. This article focuses on recognizing favorable opportunities for AFV vs. AFV combat and how some of the nationality nuances affect such combat.

Recognizing An Engagement Opportunity

In my article [A Discussion About Panzer Gegen Panzer](#), I defined an "Engagement" as "the moment I decide to destroy your tank". I purposefully left this a little vague in the earlier article as it suited my purposes for that discussion. For this article however, that won't work. When I play, I am already thinking about destroying your tanks at side selection. We need something more meaningful here.

An Opportunity is any situation that occurs where your units can maneuver and destroy an enemy tank. If your AFV has 33 MP's, this could be more than one half a board distant. If instead they have 13, the range to target will be much closer. Planning a multiple unit engagement with layers of attackers focusing the same target takes planning across more than one turn. It is one of the more interesting challenges in ASL.

When identifying engagement targets, look for chances to eliminate enemy tanks with little or no risk to your own units. This won't always be possible.

What Makes For Easy Targets?

Identifying these favorable conditions and capitalizing on the opportunity is a big difference between new players and more advanced ones. Some common things to look for:



1. Enemy tanks lacking a To Kill Number (TK#) high enough to penetrate your best armor. In these cases, it is often worth it to just drive right up to the enemy AFV and shoot it in Bounding First Fire (B1F). Closing to Point Blank range and going CE means you hit on an Original DR 8 (Case B +2, Case C +2, Case L -2) assuming no other To Hit (TH) DRM.
 - a. Beware of Deliberate Immobilization (DI) attempts. This will be a Case G (+5) TH DRM coupled with a +2 Case J. If you move Point Blank, the shooter also gets a -2 Case L DRM for a hit on an original 7 when BU.
 - b. Given that a DI shot needs to hit the Hull, only 12/36 (33%) shots achieve a hull hit on an Original 7TH. This compares to 21/36 (58%) chances to hit on a normal shot.
 - c. CE tanks are vulnerable to HE from enemy tanks. Enemy tanks can attack with either VTT or ATT.
 - i. Resolve ATT per C1.55. If the AFV is not destroyed/Shocked/Stunned, the attack affects the vulnerable crew on the IFT with the original TK DR at 1/2 firepower. The +2 CE DRM applies.
 - ii. VTT must first secure a hit using the TH process. If hit, the TK DR will apply to the

AFV on both the C7.34 HE and Flame TK Table and the IFT as a Specific Collateral Attack. This results in a full firepower roll on the IFT with only a +2 CE DRM applied. Resolve the Specific Collateral Attack if the AFV is not destroyed/Shocked/Stunned by the shot.

2. A swarm of enemy units attacking an isolated tank can easily overwhelm its defensive fire options.
 - a. This is often called “The Dance of Death” and I wrote about it [previously](#).
 - b. Your aim is to soak up all of his Defensive Fire options by threatening his AFV with shots he cannot ignore, and then close for the coup-de-grâce through a vulnerable aspect of his AFV.
 - i. If your opponent opts for Motion, see 3 below.
 - c. You will likely lose a tank so be prepared for the loss.
 - i. If his first shot results in ROF you may have to call it off.
3. Enemy AFV in Motion are easy pickings.
 - a. Their TH shot in Defensive Fire/Final Fire is at least +6 BEFORE doubling the lower die of the TH DR.
 - b. Machine Gun (MG) firepower is halved when an AFV is in motion. This reduces the risk for CE crews.
 - c. Try to place your AFV into position to gain Acquisition and in position to shoot the Motion AFV in Defensive First Fire.
 - i. Protect against [Motion Escapes](#).
4. Shocked/Stunned AFV are freebies. Kill these while they are helpless.

Original TH DR	Final TK #									
	TK 2	TK 3	TK 4	TK 5	TK 6	TK 7	TK 8	TK 9	TK 10	TK 11
2	0.001	0.002	0.005	0.008	0.012	0.016	0.020	0.023	0.025	0.027
3	0.002	0.007	0.014	0.023	0.035	0.049	0.060	0.069	0.076	0.081
4	0.005	0.014	0.028	0.046	0.069	0.097	0.120	0.139	0.153	0.162
5	0.008	0.023	0.046	0.077	0.116	0.162	0.201	0.231	0.255	0.270
6	0.012	0.035	0.069	0.116	0.174	0.243	0.301	0.347	0.382	0.405
7	0.016	0.049	0.097	0.162	0.243	0.340	0.421	0.486	0.535	0.567
8	0.020	0.060	0.120	0.201	0.301	0.421	0.522	0.602	0.662	0.702
9	0.023	0.069	0.139	0.231	0.347	0.486	0.602	0.694	0.764	0.810
10	0.025	0.076	0.153	0.255	0.382	0.535	0.662	0.764	0.840	0.891
11	0.027	0.081	0.162	0.270	0.405	0.567	0.702	0.810	0.891	0.945
12	0.028	0.083	0.167	0.278	0.417	0.583	0.722	0.833	0.917	0.972

Identifying Other Favorable Circumstances

What if you can not find chances with little or no risk? Finding these other targets of opportunity requires a deeper understanding of the rules. For this, look for places where your chance to eliminate the enemy AFV is at least as good as his chance to eliminate your AFV. This relies on your understanding of the game. It is a combination of your TH/TK numbers compared to his TH/TK numbers.

Refer to the chart. On the left edge is the Original DR needed to hit. To find the proper row, subtract the DRM for the upcoming shot from the Modified TH#. For instance, if you have a Modified TH# 10 with +3 DRM, you need an Original 7 TH DR and this is the row we need to examine.

Next, identify the Final TK#. To do this, add any range, aspect modifiers to get the Modified TK# and then subtract the Armor Factor (AF) of the target to get the Final TK#. This is the column we have to use.

Example: Imagine a PzIV shooting at range 6 against a T34's front armor. The Base TH# is 10 with a +3 DRM. We are looking at the 7 row. The Modified TK# is 17 against an 11 AF resulting in the 6 column. Cross indexing, the PzIV has a 24.3% chance to eliminate/Shock/Immobilize the AFV. If you only want the chance of elimination, you would use the TK 5 column (remember, rolling equal to the Final TK# results in a Shock/Immobilization). This means the same shot has a 16.2% chance of out-right eliminating the T34.

Another Way

You don't have to have this table with you when playing. You just need to keep the curves in mind. If you are looking for a rule of thumb, notice how a 6TH/7TK and 7TH/6TK are both approximately a 25% chance to Shock/Immobilize

the target. Also notice that high TH chances means your chance to survive regresses to an armor test: his TK# against your armor. As the Final TK# approaches 7 or more, the TH DRM effectively becomes your armor. If he can not hit, he does not get to test your armor.

Anything Else?

If you can not put on your "DRM Armor", there is one other possibility. Look for opportunities where your AFV attacks from Hull-Down positions against the enemy AFV. I will not do an in-depth analysis of how Hull-Down changes the odds. Instead, I will point you to Phil Palmer's excellent article (*Not So*) *Free Parking* in [Journal 13](#). Phil provides several numerical comparisons between Hull-Down and not Hull-Down AFV. His analysis also puts a "DRM value" on Hull-Down which you can factor into the risk-based analysis I provided here. If you haven't done so already, I recommend you give it a read.

Nationality Distinctions

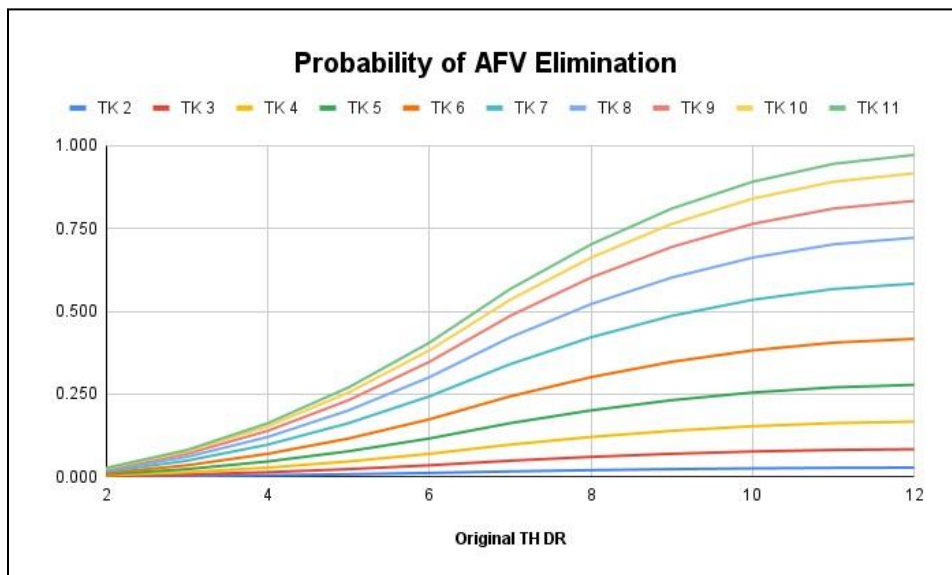


In this section, I will examine the nuances of playing with different nations in ASL. This examination includes factors

I believe affect decision making. I will explain these differences, how they affect your options, and ultimately how you can use these distinctions to your advantage. Keep in mind these are my impressions. They are based on the rules and my experience which means opinions will vary. Use what I present here as a starting point and form your own opinions.

General Observations

These are common attributes applicable to all nations in the game. Some are advantages, some are disadvantages. I will not mention these again from now on, but every nation faces these to some extent.





Some nations relied on Assault Guns and non-turreted tank destroyers. These AFV can destroy tanks but were not purpose built for this task. When changing VCA, a +3 Case A DRM applies. This can make these AFV a lot easier to approach but they may have good ROF so beware.

Several nations use Red TH# at various times during the war. At ranges ≥ 7 , Red TH # are a disadvantage of 1 pip on the die, 2 pips at ranges ≥ 31 . Similarly, small caliber Guns suffer decreased TH# at ranges ≥ 13 . Short barrel Guns (*) suffer TH penalties beginning at range 13 while L and LL barrel Guns gain TH advantages.

Beware of great differences in MP. The side having greater movement will have a distinct advantage. They can pose a threat from greater distances. If the distance closes, they can easily move in for a shot and escape to a point you cannot reach them. When they move in to engage, they can easily come from the side or rear forcing you into tough decisions.

Units with special ammunition have a chance to roll two TH DR. If they attempt for special ammunition and don't succeed, it is as if the shot never occurred and then may roll TH

again. This advantage means units are more likely to hit than you would otherwise think. This is especially powerful when the Original DR need to hit is equal to the depletion number. Don't forget, this includes shoot HEAT and Infantry in B1F for two chances as well.

German

German AFV are the baseline. They use Black TH# and their AFV do not have Restricted Turrets so CE fire is allowed. Early war AFV have reasonable Special Ammo allowing multiple TH chances.

Playing against Russians can be a mixed bag. Early in the war, Russian armor is usually a challenge for German TK#

frontally. In the middle of the war, German armor became a challenge for the Russians and German guns became more capable against Russian armor. Late in the war, both sides are level on capability but German armor can use Intensive Fire (IF) if needed where Russians usually cannot.

Italian



Early war Italian tanks tend towards Restricted and Restricted One-man turrets. This will impose an Extra +1 BU DRM on any TH DR. The Italians also use Red TH#. Almost no Italian AFV have special ammo and when they do, it is often for HE or HEAT. Some even have depletable AP. Their armor is often very weak and their MA can be lackluster. Italians usually oppose the British in DTO scenarios where their lack of "L" MA will put them at a disadvantage at long range.

Axis-Minor

Refer to German notes when using German AFV. Axis Minors using indigenously produced AFV use RED TH#. Like their German allies, Axis-Minor AFV are a mix of fast and slow turrets. Early war AFV often have Restricted and Restricted One-Man turrets. When firing the MA, these AFV will also be BU for an additional +1 DRM when fired. Still, some of these early war AFV are very capable for the time.

Japanese

Early war Japanese tanks have Restricted and Restricted One-man turrets. As development progressed, they stopped being Restricted but remained slow. Japanese tanks are radioless and use Red TH#. Being radioless has a significant impact on their movement given they usually have limited MPs available. Even when unopposed, Japanese armor can feel limited on the battlefield. They have low firepower MGs and their small caliber MA lacks HE punch. They also feel less capable when facing off against American armor.

When a Japanese Armor leader whose crew is neither Stunned nor Recalled is forced to Abandon its AFV, it may

immediately become an Infantry leader of the next lower quality. See G1.411 for details.

Russian

Early war Russian AFV are Radioless. This makes Motion attempts harder and slows AFV movement. Through the middle of the war, Russian tanks usually had Restricted and Restricted One-man turrets. As the war progressed, Russian AFV gained radios and lost the Restricted nature of their turrets.

Russians use Red TH# unless using Lend Lease AFV, and even then, American Lend Lease AFV use Red TH# early in the war. Early war "Land Battleship" tanks have lots of MA and Secondary Armament but barely any armor. They can be formidable to approach but easily eliminated when in LOS. Some early BT-type tanks have a lot of MP and can move far across the board in one MPh.



Some Russian AFV kept Special Ammunition throughout the war. Late war AFV with large caliber guns cannot IF. This makes them more vulnerable to swarm attacks and can make them take more incoming shots than they take. Still, if they hit, they have great TK# and can challenge most German and Axis-Minor armor they face.

British

British AFV have many capabilities much like American tanks. Smoke mortars, Smoke dispensers, special ammunition, and others are available. Some British tanks have slow turrets but no Restricted turrets. Firing while CE is ALWAYS an option for British AFV. What can be surprising is the lack of HE in some common British AFV. This makes those AFV far less of a threat to opposing Infantry.

British use Black TH# unless using early war Lend Lease American AFV. In DTO scenarios many British AFV have

"L"-type MA giving them a range advantage over some opposing AFV.



In most cases, the MA won't challenge a German behemoth frontally, but have the MP and toys making it possible to challenge them. German MA is almost always capable of penetrating British AF (and their Lend Lease Vehicles). Taking on the big cats frontally doesn't go well for them. Still, they are well rounded, capable AFV. They have the MG, HE round, and tools making them very credible threats to enemy Infantry. Against Italians in DTO scenarios, they are likely to be nearly invulnerable. Against anything but a long barrel MkIV 75, they will be on equal footing.

French

Early war French AFV are usually radioless and have Restricted or Restricted One-man Turrets. Coupled with low MP, French AFV seem to struggle to move. French AFV pitted against early war Germans usually have an AF advantage. German tanks will struggle to threaten these early war tanks. These early war tanks have strong, all-around armor making the only credible threat a shot through the rear aspect.

Superior German movement and tactical flexibility will challenge this AFV. Penalties to Motion attempts while moving in platoons, being forced to shoot BU, and slow turrets are significant penalties, particularly in Gun Duels.

French MA can penetrate German armor but it won't be a guarantee. The penetration values are not high compared to German armor. French AFV use Black TH#.

Chinese (Red/GMD, non-Korean War)

Chinese AFV are a hodgepodge of AFV from other nations. They have American, British, German, Russian, and even Italian AFV. Their early war AFV are radioless. Coupled with few MPs, Chinese AFV struggle to get around the board, particularly in 2MP+ terrain.

Early war AFV feature Restricted and Restricted One-man turrets. These force the MA to shoot when BU. The Chinese use Red TH# even when using American and German AFV which would otherwise use Black TH#. Also notice many Chinese AFV have red B11 (B11). This means all weapons malfunction on an Original DR 11.

Finally, the Chinese do not have an Infantry unit with 8 morale. According to D5.1

Inherent Crews check morale with the same morale as the nation's best unbroken elite unit. For the Chinese, this means their crews have a morale of 7.

Allied-Minors



Allied-Minors use Red TH# unless using American or British AFV. Even American AFV use Red TH# early in the war. Consult the vehicle note to make sure you get this correct. Besides that, Allied minors have a mix of AFV produced by both indigenous and foreign factories. Given the number of nations, it is hard to find a common flavor of play with these forces.

American

Like most American Forces in ASL, American AFV are all over the place. They use Red TH# early in the war but change to Black TH# in the middle. The early M4 with the small 75mm gun performs poorly against German armor and it lacks many of the additional capabilities enjoyed by other tanks. On the other hand, the M3A1, M5A1, and M24 Chaffee can be absolute terrors with their mobility. The M24 particularly can be a nasty surprise with its white ROF background.



Starting in 1944, American use Black TH# and their AFV became more capable. More AFV have the white ROF background, their Guns—and corresponding TK#—become bigger, they have smoke mortars and smoke dispensers. They have access to special ammo, including HEAT and White Phosphorus. If willing to risk CE, many of their vehicles have 4FP AAMG. These things combine to make American tanks very flexible vehicles representing a significant threat to enemy Infantry. When massed (or on near equal terms on TH/TK odds), they can also be a significant worry for enemy armor. An armor leader with a gyro stabilizer can be a VERY potent tank killer in any tank.

Offsetting this, American crews only have a morale of 7 making exposed crews vulnerable to Stun/Recall. It is almost never a bad option to shoot at an exposed American Crew. Armor leaders offset this weakness when present.

Korean War

KW nations are using Russian and American AFV and all that implies. North Korea and Communist Chinese forces use Red TH#. American, South Korean and KMC forces use Red TH# early in the KW but use Black TH# as the war progressed. Commonwealth and United Nations forces use Black TH# throughout the war.

KW tanks are usually very capable, particularly American made AFV. Be sure to read the vehicle notes for your AFV to make sure you get everything you can out of these. I have not played a lot of KW scenarios so I would have to do this too.

So how do we progress from Intermediate to high-level ASL play? This is a much tougher question to answer for me. I am still on my journey. As of this point, I think the tools presented here are enough to get there; it comes down to consistent application. I also think quicker and more reliable recognition of opportunities that come up during the game is key.

Application of the tools means more shots at a reduced risk. When it isn't possible to avoid risk, it means not taking more risk than you are inflicting on your opponent. Earlier recognition of opportunities leads to better positioning of your AFV to take those engagements which favor you. Sometimes, this may mean sitting right where you are and waiting for the enemy to put his fish in the barrel. This will rarely happen as the attacker so identify the risk/reward and tilt the odds in your favor as much as you can. At least this is my current thinking. But you know me, if I come up with something else, I will probably let you know. – jim

INTERVIEW: CLAUDE BERUBE

Banzai!!! is pleased and honored to do an interview with our good friend Claude Berube. Claude has been in charge of the US Naval Academy Museum and we took the opportunity to ask about his use of wargaming there.



Banzai: Thanks so much for agreeing to this interview, Claude. Let's start with you telling us about your professional background.

Claude: I've mostly worked in the DC area on Capitol Hill or for the Navy. I've worked for Senators from both parties and one House member, all of whom represented states or districts with shipbuilding and navy bases. In the 1990s I worked as a defense contractor for the Naval Sea Systems Command on the AEGIS program and the Office of Naval

Research. In 1999 I was commissioned as an intelligence officer and two years later spent time at the Joint Analysis Center in England. When I returned, I happened to be at the Office of Naval Intelligence on 9/11 and watched as we lost our briefing team at the Pentagon and was immediately mobilized for a year to the newly created Red Cell there. At the end of that mobilization, I was hired as the head of a new terrorism analysis team at ONI and then returned to Capitol Hill. I deployed with Expeditionary Strike Group Five to the Persian Gulf in 2004-05 as the N2 on USS Bunker Hill where we were the first Navy ship to respond to the tsunami off Sumatra, some time in the Persian Gulf, and then off Somalia for piracy operations. Following that I was offered a teaching position in the Political Science Department at the Naval Academy and then in 2012 I transferred to the History Department when I was selected to be the Director of the US Naval Academy Museum, the oldest navy museum in the country. My final deployment was 2018-19 when I was at the Joint Task Force-Guantanamo Bay and I retired as a Navy Commander early this year. During all this, I earned my doctorate in history and have published both non-fiction books and, thus far, three thrillers (The Aden Effect, Syren's Song, and most recently The Philippine Pact).

Banzai: How did you get involved in gaming?

Claude: Through high school friends. A friend gave me "Fury of the Norsemen" (the old MicroHistory series by Metagaming). We'd play G.E.V, Ogre, WarpWar. I still have Fury of the Norsemen and WarpWar. Occasionally I ventured into more complex games.

Banzai: How are you using gaming in your professional capacity?

Claude: A few years ago, I was at a navy leadership symposium and heard one of the speakers mention that we'd have to re-learn wargaming. I decided, along with another professor, to start a wargaming initiative at the Naval Academy. Academy wargaming was historically very sporadic, mostly because people assumed that's what the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island is for. They're correct, however we thought we could jumpstart the learning process by introducing wargaming as midshipmen so that by the time they eventually go to NWC as Lieutenant or Commander, then they have a basis to draw from. I set aside some space in the museum for wargaming. We had two approaches that worked.



First, we established a wargaming extracurricular activity (ECA) with about 100 midshipmen interested. We ran games on weekends. Some were run by mids who were wargamers themselves. In other cases, we had experts and organizations (CIA, RAND, the Center for Naval Analyses, The Pew Charitable Trust, the Hybrid Center of Excellence in Helsinki, etc.) run and referee games for the mids. In some cases, mids playtested early versions of games that would later be used to help instruct policymakers domestically and internationally.

Second, we created a formal wargaming course. Thus far we've run it twice and we hope to do so again next spring. The key to this was master wargamer Sebastian Bae. In my opinion, there are few better in the naval wargaming community. His knowledge and energy were tremendous. His latest game is *Littoral Commander*. The class had 15 students. They were divided into teams of three. At the beginning of the semester, each team had to select a war, operation, campaign, or battle, learn about the details and then design a wargame about it based on the design mechanics Sebastian taught them. At the end of the semester, we held their final exams in various places at the museum where the students would referee their games to professional wargamers from think tanks, the Pentagon, and elsewhere who played them and gave them immediate feedback. You can get a sense of the games here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27769V_7--4

Through a grant we were able to have the board games converted to playing online through VASSAL. We'll release the four top games in August or September. If anyone follows the US Naval Academy Museum on Facebook or Twitter, we'll announce the availability there.

In the classroom, particularly in my naval history class, I've started using wargames more to complement what the midshipmen are reading about. I think it's a superior way to teach them about resource management, strategies, options,

and consequences. For example, when I teach the Tripoli War module, I use the game "*The Shores of Tripoli*". It really helps them visualize the challenges of geography and movement of ships - as well as limitations - in a way that just reading a book might not. The interactive approach is also helpful when I teach them about the Pacific theater during WW2. I've been using a game where different teams play the Axis and Allied powers and I can even break it down to various fleets and types of ships. This demonstrates disagreements on approaches to how to fight and win but also teams have to learn to cooperate. So, a command of a carrier group might have to defer to another commander.



I also use wargaming when writing my novels. These are military thrillers based on a private maritime security company. In *Syren's Song* I gamed out several of the battles as I did in the most recent book, *The Philippine Pact*, where I gamed both sea- and land-based actions and battles. In the land-based one I just got a large poster board and drew a map of the area and base as I envisioned it and filled it in - sort of like how we'd draw out the maps to play Dungeons & Dragons or maybe rather when we played the In the Labyrinth rules. I purchased a ton of different colored meeples and ship units and just worked it out a few times to see what worked and what didn't, then I set to writing the scenes.

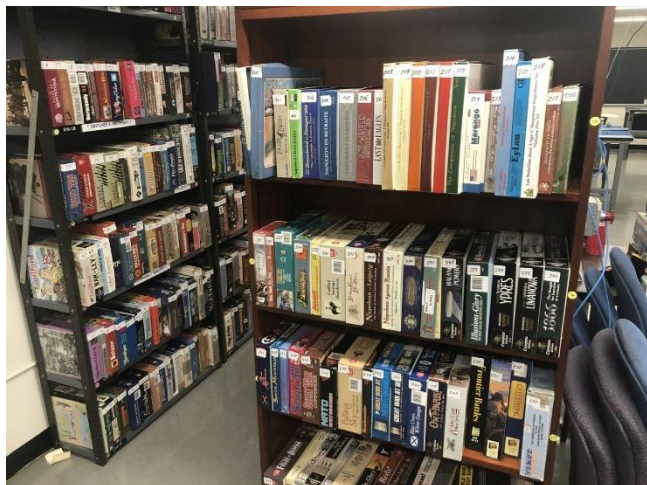
Banzai: Do you see any particular advantages to using board games instead of computer games, or computer simulations?

Claude: Each has its advantages based on what you want them to do. In our case, we opted for board games to take the students back to understanding the fundamental concepts. In the case of the classroom, they build the games from the ground up. I think that's important before they play computer games where they might not understand why something needs to happen. In some cases, the computer games may be limited on options. Throughout the process of the board games, the students are discussing the processes and learning. That's what important in building them as future

naval leaders. They start to understand how wargaming can help their future decision-making.

Banzai: Board wargaming has a long history, and there's a plethora of titles out there commercially already. How do you think these stand up compared to those created by the professionals in the military?

Claude: I think they stand up pretty well but I think you have to realize that there is a LOT of cross-pollination going on in wargaming. I think of someone like Mark Stille who had a long career in the Navy, understood military wargaming, and has done a lot of historical military games for Osprey Publishing. But even someone without military experience can invest much more time in developing a game. That's a healthy balance. In some of the more complex war games, the design is practically indistinguishable whether it's generated by the military or a commercial game. Off the top of my head, there's *Assassin's Mace* created by the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab that's just as detailed and robust as a Squad Leader. But, again, it depends what you want your game to do. *Diplomacy*, for example, is not a complex game in terms of game mechanics or details on fleets and armies. It can be used with PoliSci/International Relations students to better experience and understand the art of state interests and negotiations. In some of the games above that are more detailed the goal may be to help players/military understand timing, geographical limitations, logistics, etc. We're fortunate that in our wargaming lab we now have hundreds of board games for our students, in some cases we have multiple copies in case we want to break the class down and simultaneously demonstrate different paths the games can take based on the players and decision points. Aside from *Shores of Tripoli*, we have several copies of *Falling Sky: The Gallic Revolt Against Caesar* and *Midway*.



I think we need to do more wargaming in the military - and far earlier than the Naval War College, which is why we're trying to showcase the teaching opportunities at the midshipman (or undergraduate) level. There's an assumption that this happens all the time. We can do so in a way that doesn't just teach contemporary or historical military operations. We can use them to discuss how Congress works or the fight for women's right to vote. In fact, the same maker of *The Shores of Tripoli* also has *Votes for Women*.

Banzai: The nature of combat has become increasingly interwoven, detailed and complex. Do you think it is possible to reproduce conflicts as complex as those of the present day in a boardgame?

Claude: It depends on your purpose. If you're trying to help officers understand the functions of strategies, operations, decision-making, and capabilities of various platforms and systems, then I think the board games meet that fundamental purpose.

Banzai: For games that are developed internally by the military, how do these differ from those available commercially on similar topics? Are there deficiencies in commercially available wargames that those developers should address?

Claude: That's probably not a question I can properly answer. You might want to talk with someone at the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab or Naval War College on this one. In terms of what some other professors and I are doing at the Naval Academy, however, the goal of our wargaming initiative isn't only to teach military operations of the past or how we might conduct them in the future. One math professor is using it to teach probabilities, for example. What we're trying to do is provide them with core understanding so that they are better prepared at the next level of wargaming at other facilities.

Banzai: I have a couple of favorite wargaming-in-real-life stories. The first is about the Japanese Imperial Navy gaming the Midway attack, and when one of the results was that they lost three of their carriers, the umpire overruled the result as ridiculous. But of course, they lost four carriers in the actual battle. The other was described in the book *A Game of Birds and Wolves*, by Simon Parkin. The Royal Navy had a wargaming system set up to try to learn how to combat the U-boats, and the young women playing the U-boats often embarrassed the RN officers in the games, including an Admiral, if I recall correctly. Do you know of any other cool real-life anecdotes of militaries using wargames?

Claude: The first comes from the Tripoli War (1801-05). In 1803 the frigate USS Philadelphia grounded off Tripoli resulting in the capture of more than 300 officers and crew for the next year and a half. The officers and crew were held separately. One of the ways the officers passed the time was to continue the education of midshipmen - prior to 1845 midshipmen were largely taught at sea before the Naval Academy was established in 1845. We know that the senior officers used blocks of wood to represent ships to teach midshipmen about tactics.

The second is similar to your first example and still controversial. In 2002, the Pentagon held the Millennium Challenge exercise. Marine Lieutenant General Paul Van Riper led the Red Force and, with conventional and unconventional methods, sank most of the US force. As I recall General Van Riper telling us the story about 15 years ago, the referees re-set the exercise because it showed the vulnerability of the carriers and they wanted to validate their continued use and construction. But as a historian, I realize there's always more to a story and last year in the course of a conversation with someone during my reserve annual trainings, I realized this individual was working the game. I'm the host of the Preble Hall naval history podcast and he kindly agreed to share more about the intent of the game. You can listen to it on all platforms but here's one link: [Millennium Challenge 2002: Being There | Preble Hall \(simplecast.com\)](https://www.simplecast.com/episodes/millennium-challenge-2002-being-there-preble-hall) I think this will give your readers who haven't been part of military games how some are structured.

[Ed: For further reading on this topic, you can go to <https://warontherocks.com/2023/07/put-educational-wargaming-in-the-hands-of-the-warfighter/>].

SCENARIO ANALYSIS: AP60 NISHNE NYET!

Matt Shostak



Attraction: This looks like the kind of scenario you can really sink your teeth into, with Soviet forces desperately trying to hold onto a bridgehead in the winter of 1943 against a powerful German attack. Both sides get a lot to play with, which is always fun. The Germans get 6 Tigers, for crying out loud! Meanwhile the Russians have an ample bag of tricks of their own. The board configuration and terrain is interesting, including seldom-seen features like an embankment railroad and a long antitank ditch, and the escalating victory conditions are a nice touch. The Remote Online Automated Record (ROAR) currently shows it with a 7.25 rating (somewhere between 'recommended' and 'highly recommended') from 75 players, which seems to confirm that players have fun with it.

German Advantages: Leadership, Armor Superiority, Sudden-death Victory Conditions, Infantry Numbers

Ordinarily in scenarios on the Russian front the Germans have a leadership advantage; here it's only slight but it's worth listing anyway, especially because the armor leader will make one Tiger very deadly indeed. How often do you get to employ 6 Tigers, anyway? Whether they're punching holes in the Soviet tanks or dishing out high explosive attacks on the enemy infantry and peppering them with machine guns, the big cats will attract a lot of attention. The six Pz III Ns should be able to provide plenty of smoke cover, and of course they're perfectly capable of giving the Red infantry the business with high explosive and machine guns too. The biggest edge for the Wehrmacht here, though, may lie in the victory conditions. There are 3 objectives listed, and the Germans can win instantly at the end of turn 4 by achieving any one of them, or on turn 6 by achieving any two, or at game end by satisfying all three. This allows them tremendous flexibility and forces the defense to try to cover all three even early in the game, rather than just falling back to a last-ditch position. Having a 22:15 edge in bodies helps as well, especially considering that attackers can often achieve even greater local superiority at the points of attack.

German Disadvantages: Casualty Cap

The Russians can win by bleeding the Germans. Scoring 48 CVP may seem difficult at first glance, but the Pz III Ns are

worth 36 points by themselves, and the halftracks represent 15 more potential points. The Tigers are worth 7 apiece for 42 total, with a possible 3-point bonus if the Reds manage to bag the armor leader. It's not that much of a stretch to imagine the Germans suffering significant armor losses here. Those 57LL antitank guns are formidable; with APCR they could even hole a Tiger through the front, and they can easily Swiss-cheese any of the other German vehicles. The 76L packs a hefty punch also. The Russians can set up one crew hidden, so it's very likely it will have a molotov projector and may nab a vehicle or two. If it doesn't maybe the other one will. Though the Russian tanks are outclassed, they are not helpless and may score some kills also. Throw in a possible street-fighting tank loss with the inevitable infantry casualties and defeat due to excessive losses looks entirely possible.

Russian Advantages: Guns, Defense (late), Restricted Terrain

As already mentioned above, one obvious path to a win for the defense is by extracting a high price in men and materiel. Therefore the Russian guns take center stage because the best way to rack up points is to destroy armor. It's not all about the towed guns either; there are 6 tanks available which, though outclassed, can still knock out some German tanks and halftracks if used well and/or they have some good fortune. Although the victory conditions favor the Germans early, they may favor the Russians late. As time goes by and it becomes more apparent that the Germans must satisfy all 3 conditions, the defenders can consolidate around just one of them to make it as difficult as possible to take. That's easier said than done of course. A very long section of the front is covered by an antitank ditch. Coupled with the roadblock, this can severely restrict German movement.

Russian Disadvantages: Armor Inferiority, Wide Front to Defend, Outnumbered

The Russian tanks are outclassed by the Tigers, of course. They may still be able to have a positive impact if used skillfully but it will be difficult. The defense will have to disperse because they have 2 or 3 territorial areas to defend, and the Germans can attack from both the east and north. The attackers simply have more men and tanks to use, and so with the wide front should be able to achieve local superiority of numbers where they choose. After considering the pros and cons for each side, this battle appears to me to favor the Germans, maybe 60-40, but ROAR has it with only a 28-27 German edge as of this writing.

Defensive Plan

When setting up a defense I tend to think of positioning the important pieces first, but of course considering the terrain and the victory conditions. At first glance it seems like causing maximum casualties will be critical in this contest, but also it's important to avoid losing to a blitz on one of the

objectives. The guns must be deployed carefully since so much depends on them. It seems the HIP crew should probably have a molotov projector - these things can be surprisingly effective, and may in fact be one of the best hopes against a Tiger. Of the three objectives, (c) looks like the most vulnerable to a blitz. It is satisfied by having "no Russian Mobile AFV with functioning MA/MG and/or no Russian Good Order non-crew MMC within 3 hexes of 3a0L7". Most Russian players will probably not want to cram all 6 of their tanks in this area, but even if they could a determined German assault could knock them all out in the first 4 turns. The Germans entering on turn 2 will almost certainly try to clear this area early on, so the Russians must still post enough here to avoid an embarrassing sudden loss, or else they may find themselves speeding a tank over there frantically on turn 4, just hoping it can cross the goal line and survive defensive fire.

Terrain is always key to any defense, and here the dominant terrain features are the embankment railroad and the extensive antitank ditch. A word of caution: the road from 49Y8 to 3aI1 is an embankment railroad (EmRR, B32.12 and F6.). This can be a cause of confusion and mistaken game play for a couple of reasons. First, there's no actual overlay on the board, so there is no visual clue that this part of the road should be played differently than the other roads. It's easy to lose track of this in the heat of the moment and make mistaken moves and rules errors. A.2 is a useful rule, but I don't think many players enjoy living with multiple goofs over the course of a scenario, so be careful. I'd recommend both players go over the various movement costs and hull down opportunities of this railroad before setup. Note that tanks can be hull down if behind the railroad, and the increased movement costs for vehicles. There's also ground snow, making infantry slower as they climb the embankment and eliminating the road movement rate.

The Russians can use a roadblock and an antitank ditch to further extend the defense. But how to employ only one antitank ditch? The obvious spot seems to be 49F5 which blocks exit from the bridge over the existing antitank ditch. This extensive obstacle nicely separates the German attack toward the opposite ends of the battlefield, forcing the Germans into a narrower front than they'd like. The roadblock in the vicinity of 49M8-N8-O8 can be effective in channeling the attack away from the big factories 49E8 and 49K9.



Here we illustrate an example setup, but there are probably many other equally good or better ideas, so take it with a grain of salt. The smaller German force (7 squads and 6 tanks) entering on turn 2 could win the game by clearing the 3aL7 area, either of mobile AFVs with functioning MA/MG or of Good Order non-crew MMC, so choosing the right amount of resources to devote to this area is critical to the defense. Probably a couple of tanks are called for, along with several squads and maybe even a gun. The rest of the defenders of course need to protect the other objectives: the stone buildings next to the railroad, several of which are factories, and the stone buildings behind them on board 8 close to the river. Any troops positioned too far forward--that is, on the other side of the embankment railroad--will probably get killed quickly for little gain, so some territory is ceded immediately. In general the main line of resistance is in the factory area on the Russian side of the railroad. All three ATRs are in this zone, since this is where the halftracks will probably be. If the halftracks cautiously stay out of the line of fire, then they can be used for deliberate immobilization attempts against the PzIIIINs. One molotov projector is in this area too. It is hoping to kill a Tiger, but it might have to settle for shots against the lighter AFVs. Either way, if it can score casualty points, that's a good thing. The rest of the Russian defenders on boards 49 and 8 plan to play a cagey, fallback defense, eventually winding up in last-stand positions in the big factory, and the rearmost stone building by the river. The tanks are all deployed with an eye to keeping engagement ranges at 6 hexes or less, so that they can at least go for deliberate immobilization if faced down by a Tiger. The 76L gun has a conservative placement. It can help hold the factory against infantry assault, but also it has some interesting lines of sight to either side, so maybe it can knock out a tank as well. Two Stuarts lurk hull down behind the wall next to the big factory, and they can bide their time and look for opportunities. If necessary, they can start up and motor over to the 3aL7 area. Don't forget that the Stuarts have canister; that shotgun blast could be a nasty surprise for some Wehrmacht troops. On that far left flank, a few squads,

two tanks, and one gun are hoping to hold the Germans off until the end of turn 4. The crew with the molotov projector is set up hidden. The gun looks down the railroad, and is protected by some nearby infantry. All of the Russian units would be concealed, but are shown for clarity. The guns would be hidden, as is the squad with the molotov projector in 3aK9. Hypothetical German positions after their first move are shown, assuming they all reach their destinations unscathed.



Don't sell the speedy Stuarts short; in the right hands they can be a real pain for the Germans, as Allen King demonstrated for me when we played. He drove a one into a Tiger's line of sight, crew exposed. The Tiger fired on it but malfunctioned its gun. Figuring that wasn't so bad because it still had machine guns available, and Allen had foolishly given me an opportunity by not buttoning up, I fired 8+2 at the crew but failed to get a result again. In reality, Allen had nicely baited me into a shot. With all of its weapons used up, the Tiger could do nothing but sit there while the Stuart moved around behind it and put shell right up the old tailpipe. Ouch, and well played, Allen.

Attack Plan

Who wouldn't want to command these Germans? It's a rare scenario that features six big cats, and their overall force is impressive. The Pz III Ns have ample smoke ammo, and two thirds of the infantry force are elite. There's even a flamethrower and a demo charge to add a boost to the attack if needed. The minus-2 armor leader should make one of the Tigers truly fearsome. If any players put the armor leader in a Pz III N or a halftrack, please share that story with me, because you've got way more style and guts than I do, and I'd love to hear about it.

When given halftracks, I often have visions (more like fantasies) of some kind of bold flanking maneuver or deep penetration with them carrying a few squads to glorious victory. It's probably good to think that way at first but reality is likely to intrude and squash those petty dreams. Halftracks

toting infantry around are casualty points ripe for the picking when the other side has decent antitank capability as they do here, and that long antitank ditch puts a real crimp in their style anyway. I'd be happy to award a boatload of mythical style points for tales of such aggressive tactics in this scenario, especially successful ones.

Given the complexity of the victory conditions, there's more than one way for a savvy German player to approach this fight. One could go for the early-round knockout, putting the pedal to the metal for 4 turns. That might work out great or it might be a disaster. One might also plan on getting two of the three objectives by turn 6, or plan for the long game. No matter what the German scheme is, it probably makes sense to keep an eye open for an opportunity to secure a sudden win; what may not look possible at setup may look different after a few turns. Figuring out just how aggressive to be on the attack is the key to this fight for the Germans. Coming on too hard might increase the odds of achieving one of the VC by turn 4 or two by turn 6, but it might also result in too many losses. Just how much VBM freeze are you willing to try? If the Germans remain conservative with their armor, keeping it back and supporting the infantry with fire and smoke, I think they have a really good shot at a turn-8 win. As Russian losses begin to mount, and their dispositions become better known, the German armor can get progressively more aggressive. Defenses have a way of crumbling fast in the ending stages of games if they've been suffering attrition for quite a while. If going for the early knockout, the easiest of the 3 victory conditions to achieve might very well be the one at 3aL7. Given this example setup, it sure looks like it. It's not hard to imagine clearing that small zone. The Russians may simply underestimate how much force to put over there, so keep an eye open for this opportunity. The fear of losing quickly on this flank might also prompt an overreaction, weakening their right flank in the process. Therefore even if you don't intend to go all-out for the quick win on this flank, it might be beneficial to at least make your opponent think you do.

Consider this vignette illustrating how the turn-2 opening move could proceed on the board 3a flank. All Russian units in this illustration are concealed, and the 57LL is hidden. The 57LL is in P6, looking down the embankment railroad all the way to H2, covering the front of this Russian position. The German idea here is to provide some cover for the Tiger, so that it can get deeper into the Russian positions quickly, but they suspect the 57LL is nearby. The PzIII led the way, trying for a smoke dispenser and failing, then finally ending its move in bypass, wary of getting within molotov range of Russian infantry, and the gun crew held its fire, waiting for a juicier target. Then some German squads moved out, trying smoke grenades and succeeding once. Also wary of comrade molotov, the Tiger is trying bypass movement to flank the Russian position. How dangerous is this moment for the big cat? The antitank gun could score a hit on a 4 or less and a

turret hit. Remember that the embankment railroad acts like a hillock, so the Tiger would be hull down. Therefore the base hit number would be 8 at this range, with modifiers of +2 moving, +1 limited LOS, +2 smoke, and -1 large target. Too bad for the Reds that bore sighting is not available. Even if a hit is attained, the frontal turret of the Tiger has 14 armor and the 57LL kill number is only 15, or 18 with APCR. This is probably a risk most German players would be comfortable with. Maybe a better choice would have been for the 57LL to drill the PzIII and hope for rate, or hold its fire even longer, waiting to see how the rest of the German move unfolds.



Conclusion

This is a fine scenario with many interesting features. The interplay of the victory conditions, terrain, units, weapons, and even the weather provides a fun tactical puzzle for both sides. If you're up for a challenge on the eastern front that's more complex than your garden-variety "control N buildings" game, you might want to put this action on your list.

RULES TIP

Banzai! Staff

An often-misplayed rule is in the last sentence of B13.41 which states, "All MP penalties for entering a hex containing a wreck/vehicle, and/or for changing a VCA across a non-road hexside, are doubled while in a woods hex." While one doesn't often move a vehicle through a woods hex with a vehicle/wreck in it, movement of a vehicle along a woods/road hex happens quite often, the impact of this rule is that a VCA change across each non-road woods hexside is doubled to 2 MP, which is frequently missed.

There also exists in the third sentence of D2.11 the following, “VCA can be changed only at the cost of one MP per hexside changed (two MP per hexspine change if actually in [not in bypass of] a building/woods/rubble or any combination thereof).” So what’s the impact of both of these rules for vehicle on a woods/road hex? Prior Perry Sez Q&A had indicated that the impact was additive from the two rules resulting in a total MP expenditure of 4 MP for a vehicle in a woods/road hex to change its VCA across a non-road hexside. That has recently been corrected with the following Q&A.

Q: What does it cost an AFV on the road in a wood-road hex to change VCA across a non-road hexside?

A: 2 MP. This revises our prior answer of 4 MP.

This results from the situation that a vehicle on a road in a woods/road hex is technically not **in** the woods, and so D2.11 does not get applied.

Another misplayed situation can occur when a vehicle attempts to leave a woods/road hex via a non-road hexside. Let’s say a vehicle would like to move from J1 to K2 in the image below. Players might think they can move from J1 to K2 for the normal Open Ground MP expenditure to enter K2. This would be incorrect though as defined in the last sentence of B13.421, which states, “Any vehicle that enters a woods hex via a road must take a Bog Check when exiting the hex via a non-road hexside as it enters the woods portion of the hex.”



The proper way to get into K2 that doesn’t involve expending a half or all of your MPs (depending on the vehicle) and taking a Bog check would be to go from J1 to K1 first and then to K2. A vehicle moving along the red arrow above is first moving off the J1 road and into the J1 woods and hopefully passing a Bog check before being able to move into K2. Certainly a risky proposition.

CLUB NOTES

Lunch Gatherings

Lunch gatherings have been more sporadic lately, but they still happen. Stay tuned to our email list. The club sends out email reminders, or you can call Matt or Sam for information on the next get-together.

Game Days

The Austin, San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas/Ft. Worth groups have remained active, hosting various gatherings for

club members to get together and knock cardboard heads. If you missed any of these you missed a lot of fun. It's like a tournament atmosphere for a day. The Austin group meets on the first Saturday of every month. The DFW group has been meeting on the second, the San Antonio guys on the third Saturday of every month, and the Houston group on the fourth Saturday of every month. To stay informed of upcoming club events, stop by our club website, www.texas-asl.com or better yet join our email group. You can post a message at texas-asl@groups.io or you can point your favorite browser to <https://groups.io/g/texas-asl> and take a look. For those still not connected, give Matt, Rick, or Sam a call for club information.

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Thanks to Rodney Kinney for VASL, Carl Fung for his VASL counter images, and the VASL Map Cabals for their VASL map images. We use a combination of VASL counter and map images for scenario layouts with permission of use for that purpose.

NEXT ISSUE

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 - Player Profile
 - Favorite Scenarios
 - Club Meeting Recaps
- And much more!