



WHAT DO YOU DO

WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE

A CAN OPENER?

by TATE ROGERS

Have you ever looked at an early WWII scenario (1939 through mid-1941) where one side had AFV and the other side had, ummm, well, Infantry. When I say Infantry I mean just Infantry—no AFV, no Guns, no LATW—basically just regular SW and Infantry. When you looked at this scenario did you think, "Yep here is a real dog. Who could possibly stand up to that armor blitz?" The truth is that this situation occurred fairly often in the early years of WWII as the German armored juggernaut rampaged through Europe.

The following are a few suggestions and guidelines that might make you rethink how you look at such scenarios. They are not intended to be totally comprehensive but should get you thinking in the right direction.

SCENARIO

Obviously the situation will dictate the tactics. The VC, terrain, weather, etc., will determine to a large extent how you will conduct your forces during any action. Let's take a look at a typical situation.

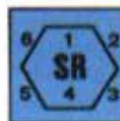
A combined arms force with a significant armor presence is attacking you in an 8 turn scenario in which victory requires control of terrain. You have no opposing armor, Guns, or LATW.

The benefits of a combined arms attack are legend. Besides the fire power that AFV Guns and MG bring along, there is the protection afforded that fire power by the vehicle's armor (allowing the attacker to get behind you and deny rout), as well as the protection (via Armored Assault and AFV TEM) afforded the attacking Infantry. Not to mention various forms of Smoke (if only in the form of Vehicle Smoke Grenades-F.10).

Last, and certainly not least, is the dreaded "VBM Freeze." This term refers to the tactic of moving an AFV into an enemy occupied Location in order to prevent those enemy units from firing out of said Location. (See A7.212 and its prior Q&A.) The mere presence of an armed unit in one's Location "freezes" fire at

anyone else, and the attacking AFV need not even enter the building/woods obstacle to invoke freezing. In fact, the AFV will often remain in Motion to increase the DRM vs it in Close Combat (CC).

What to do vs this combined arms attack? Depending on the tools at hand, the defender has various options.



OFFBOARD ARTILLERY (OBA)

OBA, even small caliber OBA, can be very devastating to AFV during the "Early War" due to the relatively weak Armor Factors (AF) of these vehicles. Any AFV with all AF (4) (the majority of early war AFV qualify) receives a -1 to OBA attacks against it (C1.55). OBA kills AFV with a KIA on the IFT, and Shocks or Immobilizes them with a K/# or one greater. Vs a thin-skinned AFV, 80+mm OBA kills on a 2 or 3 and Shocks/Immobilizes on a 4 or 5. Most of us

can roll a 5 or less on occasion.

If you are lucky enough to have OBA in this situation be happy—but not too happy. OBA is fickle and it will be difficult to get it targeted on the highly maneuverable enemy AFV. However, there are a couple of other things to be done with OBA that can make it difficult for the attacking armor force.

The OBA can be used to make the best avenue of approach dangerous. Study the ground upon which you will fight and find the possible choke points that your opponent's AFV will need to move through to get to good positions. By bringing OBA in on these points you force the opposition to risk driving through it or to take a longer, more time consuming route to get to your defense. There is also the option of Harassing Fire to increase the risk area, but this will reduce the effectiveness of any FFE such that driving through it may become acceptable to your opponent. A better use for Harassing Fire is stripping the enemy Infantry away from their AFV support (more on this later). All in all, though, using OBA to cut avenues of approach is perhaps not its most productive use. Odds are the opposing AFV will be able to maneuver past and not be delayed more than a turn, maybe two at most. This tactic will be at its best if the terrain is fairly restrictive and your opponent has only two or three good avenues of approach.

Another option with OBA is "The SR Scare." It has always amazed me how a SR can sometimes have more effect on an opponent than an FFE. There is an old axiom in chess: "The threat of a move is more powerful than the move itself." So it is with OBA. Keep your SR dancing around those enemy Tanks. Don't let him get comfortable. I suspect you will find your opponent eager to move his AFV any time an SR is placed within a couple of hexes of them. Wait for the best opportunity to catch as many enemy AFV and Infantry as possible in the FFE. Be patient!

Patience is the key to good results with OBA. Don't bring down an FFE on the first enemy unit you see. Move the SR around some, make your opponent sweat it for a while.



OBA/MORTAR vs AFV EFFECTS CHART

Caliber	Final DR	
	KIA	Shock/ Immobilize
30+	1	3
50+	2	4
80+	3	5
120+	4	6
150+	5	7
200+	6	8
DRM		
-1 All AF ≤ 4		
-1 OT AFV		
+1 All AF ≥ 8		

Wait until the attacker is in a position where he is really depending on a particular fire base or AFV to support his assault, then bring in the OBA on that key element. Remember, once you bring in the FFE that access is gone and you will shortly have to draw for access again. This puts your OBA into the hands of fate once more.

Don't forget SMOKE. You can use OBA to SMOKE enemy AFV, allowing Infantry to safely move in for CC. SMOKE can also be used on AFV that have found good positions for long range fire on you. A good SMOKE FFE can make these guys useless for a turn or two, even if they move.

Of course, with OBA you don't know when or if you will get it, how accurate it will be, or how long you will have it. So don't pin the success of your defense on the OBA.



MACHINE GUNS (MG)

It is during the early war period when MG are most potent as anti-tank weapons. Consider the following:

A MG has a Basic TK of 4; at one hex range add +2 to the TK; against a rear target facing it would receive an additional +1, taking it all the way to a 7 TK. A PzKpfw IIIF has 3 AF on the front/side/rear hull. This means that the lowly LMG at Point Blank range and with a rear Target Facing has a 4 to Stun and a 3 or less TK.

As you can see the usefulness of MG as anti-tank weapons is high in the early war years. The key to using them against AFV will be maneuvering into a position to maximize their

TK#. This means trying to get as close as possible while getting a shot on the side or rear Target Facing.

Use any HIP you have for MMC armed with LMG, creating kind of an "anti-tank gun Lite" (see illustration 1). Look for HIP positions that will be unattractive for enemy Infantry to move through (MP cost) or at least Locations that you can cover with fire from other units. A good spot is the upper level of a building. Then it is a matter of timing and luck to get a good shot, keeping in mind that you may have to move to get it. Perhaps an Assault Move from HIP and then in the next enemy MPh your opponent has to decide whether to turn and fire at a concealed enemy unit or to crank up and move out. Hmmm.

If you don't have HIP, try to keep your LMG "7" as long as possible. And keep maneuvering them about trying to get into position for the good shot. Don't forget about SMOKE to help you maneuver. Starting the LMG on the flanks is a good idea; if you have more than one LMG try to establish crossing fields of fire with them.

I haven't mentioned HMG or MMG yet and there is a reason why. I believe that you should not plan your positioning of the MMG/HMG on anti-tank duties. The MMG/HMG have no better TK# than the LMG. The MMG/HMG have higher Portage Point costs which means they're not as easily maneuvered into better killing positions, and if the manning squad breaks as it attempts to maneuver the HMG/MMG will often be left behind by the routing infantry. Use the MMG/HMG to break and separate the enemy Infantry from their AFV support (more on this later). Which is not to say that you should pass up a tasty shot that an enemy AFV offers your MMG/HMG. Just

remember to keep the opposing Infantry in mind.

The To Hit DRM normally applicable to MG are not immediately obvious. To make things a little easier I have included a chart showing which DRM that apply to MG/LATW TH attempts.

Notice that MG, like LATW, do not incur

To Hit DRM Cases for SW MG and LATW

FIRER BASED			
DRM Case	Description	SW MG	LATW
A	CA Cbg	NA	NA
B	AFPh fire	NA	(USE C3)
C-C2	Bounding fire	NA	YES
C3	AFPh/Backblast	NA	YES
C4	Motion	NA	YES
D	Pinned	NA	YES
E	Within hex	NO	NO
F	Intensive Fire	NA	NA
G	Delib Immob	NA	YES
H	Captured	YES	YES
I	Buttoned Up	NA	NO
TARGET BASED			
DRM Case	Description	SW MG	LATW
J-2	Moving Target	YES	YES
J3-4	FFMO/FFNAM	NA	YES
K	Concealed	NA	YES
L	Point Blank	YES	NO
M	Bore Sighting	YES	NO
N	Acquisition	NO	NO
O	Hazardous Mvmt	NA	YES
P	Target Size	YES	YES
Q	TEM	YES	YES
R	LOS Hindrance	YES	YES

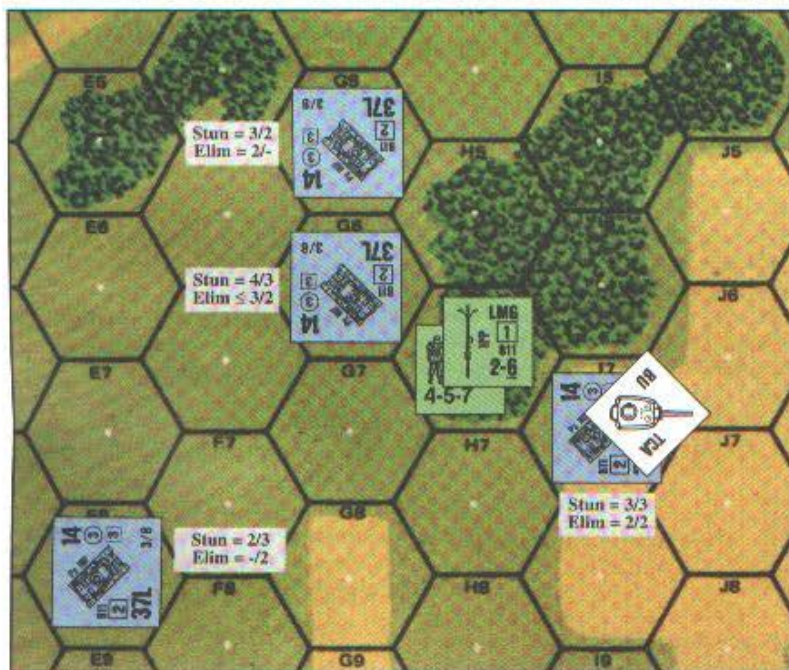
the Case E: Fire within hex DRM. This is very significant versus the VBM Freeze tactic. Unlike LATW, the MG does receive the benefit of Case L: Point Blank Fire. Lightly armored early war tanks will want to keep their distance from even your LMG.

A couple of last things to remember about MG vs AFV. You can not attempt Deliberate Immobilization with a MG. Anything that would half the MG FP (such as fire in AFPh without Opportunity Fire) prohibits a MG from attempting a TH/TK attack. Also, both Critical Hits and Multiple Hits are NA for MG.



SW MORTARS

Ah, the lowly mortar. Is it really so lowly? The mortar can be an effective weapon vs the early war AFV. It receives the same DRM on the effects DR vs AFV that OBA receives and uses the same type of effects results. Even if you don't harm the AFV itself, you will have a collateral attack on any vulnerable PRC; if there is Infantry using the AFV as cover they will be attacked by any mortar hit as well. Add to this the high ROF of most mortars and you have a fairly potent anti-tank weapon. Did I



A HIP "anti-tank gun Lite", a Belgian 4-5-7 and a LMG, reveals itself in the Defensive Fire Phase among a platoon of Motion German PzKpfw IIIF's. With the German armor unable to effectively fire until next Defensive Fire Phase, the Belgian units can expect at least two decent shots, not including ROF, and possibly a chance at Close Combat. With a little luck (well, a lot of luck!), the Belgians could eliminate three German panzers—a fair trade for a squad and a LMG. Shown for each panzer is the Original TK DR needed for an effect after a hit vs either the hull or the turret (H/T).

mention the possibility of Critical Hits?

The initial placement of mortars can be critical due to their high portage numbers. Repositioning them can be time consuming. They should be positioned as far back as possible while still having an expansive field of fire. The optimal position would be on a hill and entrenched—otherwise any non-building Location with a broad field of fire. Check out the rules for Spotted Fire (C9.3) as well. This ploy can be used to give your mortars better fields of fire and better protection in exchange for reduced accuracy and ROF. For example, you could place your spotter in an upper level building Location (a position from which a mortar cannot fire) while the mortar is outside in an adjacent hex. The spotter's higher elevation now gives the mortar much greater reach. The spotter will not lose concealment for spotting, while the mortar will likely be out of LOS. One possible ploy is to use a HIP spotter and HIP mortar; the enemy may have little idea where the rounds are coming from.

Don't forget SMOKE. SMOKE from mortars can be used against those AFV that have found long range firing positions and also to cloud enemy AFV that are close to your Infantry—allowing your MMC a chance to close for CC. British and Japanese SW mortars have SMOKE available throughout the war, while the U.S. gets it in 1945 (or in 12/44 vs Peiper). Familiarize yourself with your mortars before play starts. Pay attention to minimum and maximum range. The Japanese SW mortar has variable ROF and range depending on the ammunition type being fired.



FLAME THROWERS (FT) AND MOL

Flame Thrower anti-tank capability is pretty straight forward. It has an 8 TK at normal range (1 hex) and is halved for long range (2 hexes). The TK# is not reduced by any AF nor is it reduced vs a moving/Motion vehicle, but it "Xs" out more readily if not used by an Elite unit (as does a Demolition Charge). The big problem is how to get that FT close to an enemy AFV.

If you have HIP, use it. Flame Throwers can fire at full effect in the AFPh, so one could move from a HIP position and then fire the FT at full strength. An upper level building Location is great for a HIP FT. Many players don't take the time to move upstairs or to Search/Mop-Up, meaning your FT unit could be bypassed, sitting there waiting for the enemy AFV support to roll through a supposedly secured area. You could also use a swarming technique, sending a few HS to draw fire, then sending in the FT for the kill in the AFPh.

One interesting tactic is to place the FT unit in an entrenchment behind a wall/hedge. The FT unit is out of LOS until the enemy AFV moves up adjacent across the wall/hedge, when you flame away. Unless your opponent is willing to move another unit adjacent, he may not be able to fire at the FT unit. Ideally, the FT unit will then be able to skulk away under

cover of the intervening wall/hedge.

Regardless of what tactic you decide on (there are many more than the three above) you should maintain as much "Fog-O-War" about the Location of your FT as long as possible. Keep them concealed up to the last minute before you use them. The fact that you have a FT or two will play on your opponent's psyche. As long as he doesn't know where the FT are he will not be willing to run his AFV up to your '?' stacks, and certainly will not be using any "VBM Freeze" tactics vs '?' stacks. The FT as a threat alone will be very valuable, so don't waste it.

MOL (A22.6-62) is an inherent SW that is allowed only by SSR or DYO. A unit that is designated as being MOL capable must still make a MOL usage dr. If successful, such a unit can then attack any same or Adjacent/ADJACENT Location AFV. You must target the AFV specifically and if you make a successful usage dr then you attack the enemy AFV on the "C7.34 HE & Flame To Kill Table" with a base 6 TK#. Like a FT, AF do not modify the TK. Unlike a FT, moving/Motion status of the target does. As you can see, MOL is a some what 'iffy' weapon.

Since MOL is usually only present by SSR,

The fact that you have a FT or two will play on your opponent's psyche.

odds are that your opponent will know you have the capability and will endeavor to avoid putting his AFV in proximity of your Infantry. It is because of this that MOL is a very difficult weapon to bring to bear against enemy AFV, although its mere threat may serve you just as well. It is most useful and effective in situations where you have HIP MMC, restrictive terrain, and/or fortifications that can be used to funnel enemy AFV.

One important item to note about MOL. It is equally effective vs AFV in the AFPh as it is in any other Fire Phase. This means your MOL-capable Infantry can move Adjacent to enemy AFV and use their MOL capability just as effectively (the TK is the same) as in any other fire phase. Unfortunately, you cannot use MOL as Subsequent First Fire, so each unit will only get one shot per Player Turn.



DEMOLITION CHARGES (DC)

The DC is a weapon that requires pre-planning to use effectively vs most any target, especially an AFV. When I say pre-planning, I mean you must consider from the moment you see DC on your scenario card how you are going to use your them and where you will set them up.

For example, if the terrain is constrictive in nature and there are only a few avenues of approach for the enemy AFV, you may want to try to Set the DC (A23.7) to block one of these lanes. Maybe the VC require exiting off a particular hex or two; again, setting the DC in an exit hex could be an option. If there are upper level building Locations, you may want to try throwing the DC on enemy AFV as they pass by.

More likely, you may need to run up to the AFV and Place the DC. If so, don't forget about Infantry Smoke grenades. Having a couple or three squads place Smoke on or around the intended target before running up can greatly increase your odds of success.

DC always draw a lot of enemy FP when they pop out, and this in itself can be used as a tactic. By running a DC-toting HS at an enemy AFV you could give other units an improved chance to get at it.

Giving the DC (or FT) to a leader is often a good tactic. A leader is an elite unit, has more inherent MF than a regular MMC, self-rallies, and usually has morale as good, if not better than, the basic MMC. These factors make leaders very good choices as DC/FT delivery systems.

As with the FT, try to keep the Location of your DC secret as long as possible. DC also help keep enemy AFV at arms length, as long as your opponent doesn't know where they are.



FORTIFICATIONS

Fortifications will serve one primary purpose: to funnel enemy forces into the areas where you want them to go. This will usually be into the kill zones of your other weapons. A secondary purpose is simply to slow down and break up the assault.

I usually like to concentrate my available fortifications to make a particular part of my setup area a fortress that my opponent will likely want to avoid. Then I place my other weapons to create kill zones and traps in the remaining area.

Review the rules for your fortifications before setup. Pay particular attention to how these fortifications interact with the terrain of the scenario. This will allow you to take full advantage of their usefulness against enemy AFV. In general there are three types of fortifications:

- Protecting:** Entrenchments, pillboxes, Fortified Building Locations
- Blocking:** roadblocks and Wire
- Attacking:** mines and panjis

(Tunnels are not technically a fortification. A-T Ditches are a type of trench and are both a Blocking and Protecting fortification)

Use your fortifications in combination with restrictive terrain (gullies, cliffs, board or play-

ing area edge, etc.) to funnel the opposition's AFV assets into the kill zones of your other weapons. Wire/Panjis/Mines/Roadblocks are all dangerous for AFV to enter. Normally, a player will not risk his AFV forces by entering these type of fortifications. Instead, once discovered, he will try to bypass such areas with his AFV and in so doing (assuming you have placed these fortifications wisely) will hopefully place them within reach of your anti-tank weapons.

Entrenchments are valuable for securing your Infantry against the wrath of the enemy AFV, affording a +4 TEM vs overrunning AFV (and OBA) as well as the normal +2 TEM vs other attacks. Trenches are also Bog terrain for fully-tracked vehicles, while other vehicles are prohibited from even entering a trench Location. In addition, Trenches are especially useful in trying to get your concealed troops into CC vs enemy AFV, since it is easier to maintain '?' while moving through trenches.

CC

CLOSE COMBAT (CC)

The most prevalent anti-tank weapon in your arsenal is the Infantry itself. CC is no sure thing, but it makes each MMC/SMC a potential AFV killer.

Normally your troops will have to advance into CC during the APH. To do this they will first need to conduct a PAATC (Pre-AFV Advance/Attack Task Check). If an enemy AFV ends its movement in your Location, no PAATC is required for your troops to be able to conduct CC vs that enemy AFV in the CCPh. When such an enemy AFV enters your Location, you have to roll a PAATC during your opponent's MPH only if you wish to retain '?' status (if any), or if you wish to conduct CC Reaction Fire.

CC Reaction Fire is a normal CC attack conducted during your opponent's MPH vs an enemy AFV that has entered the Location of one of your units, but your opponent cannot attack back using CC in the MPH. It uses the CC table and modifiers and can be used in combination with Street Fighting (A11.8). The Street Fighting rules are intended to simulate the restrictive effect that European cities/villages had on the maneuver of AFV.

The detailed mechanics can be found in CC vs A Vehicle (A11.5 - .8) and also CC Reaction Fire (D7.21 - .212). This will give you the "how to" on CC vs vehicle, but the "where" and "when" can be a little more tricky.

First off, rushing your Infantry out at an enemy AFV with no plan other than to try to get a squad or two into CC would be foolish (EXC: Banzai/Human Wave). On the other hand, if your opponent has allowed an AFV to become isolated from covering fire, then a swarm tactic might work. In general, though, you want to keep your Infantry in good defensive terrain such as woods, building, entrenchment, pillbox, etc. Armor alone is not very effective at trying to dig enemy Infantry out of such defensive positions.

If you need to go after the enemy armor, then set up to take advantage of any possible Street Fighting positions. Use a defense in-depth so that units that break in your counter attack can fall back behind Good Order friends. Place your leaders so that they are in a position to rally and regroup after you attack. Don't forget Infantry Smoke.

Another tactic is to use a "Human Roadblock" by placing Infantry in possible choke points to try to force the enemy AFV into CC Reaction Fire situations. If the roads are not paved, put a foxhole and squad in a key road hex-or dig your own foxhole during play. In any case it would be wise to try to include a leader, if possible, in your CC attempts on enemy AFV. A Leader's DRM can modify the PAATC of any Infantry trying to enter CC vs an enemy AFV, as well as modifying the CC attack. Each SMC also increases by one the CCV of any one MMC in CC.

It is also wise to try to get at least one concealed unit into any CC vs AFV, allowing you to roll for Ambush even if you are not in Ambush terrain, and giving your whole stack a -2 on the Ambush dr. This is significant if you are not in a situation where you will receive the automatic Ambush benefits of Street Fighting.

Another plan is to hide from AFV and concentrate instead on removing their friendly Infantry support (more on this later).

(MORE ON THIS LATER)

Perhaps you were wondering when I would get to this.

When you have little effective anti-tank resources and you are facing a combined-arms attack, my suggestion is to concentrate on what you can affect. Hammer on the opposing Infantry instead. Avoid the opposing AFV as much as reasonably possible and gain '?' at every opportunity. Avoid Prep Fire, unless there is a really juicy target. Often, armor alone cannot win the game, and AFV without support are vulnerable to enemy Infantry.

If you are successful in stripping away the Infantry support, your opponent will be forced into bringing his AFV up to Point Blank range to try to dislodge you, bunching up and becoming vulnerable to the tactics and weapons discussed above.

This "Take Out The Infantry" tactic will be particularly useful when the scenario involves gaining control of terrain. An AFV can only control the Location it currently occupies and cannot Control a building.

CONCLUSION

The key to any defense will be how well the defender uses his available weapons to complement each other. No one weapon or tactic will work every time and you will seldom (if ever) have all of the weapons listed above available in a given scenario. Look for opportunities to use one weapon to help bring another to bear. Set up your MG so that when the enemy AFV turn to go around the fortifications, they will be exposing their side target

facings. Set up a line of trenches that allows you to move your FT from one key area to another while remaining concealed. Position your FFE to force the enemy AFV into your minefields. As in chess, it will be the combination of resources that yields results and not one piece alone.

Know your OB, know your troops (National Capabilities). Know your weapons (ROF, Special Ammo, Ranges, etc.), know your fortifications. Know the terrain. If necessary, review the applicable rules sections to get a refresher. ASL is a highly detailed game, and it is often the little details that make the difference. It usually isn't the 150mm Gun that ends up making the difference, but rather that last turn shot by the LMG. In other words, take nothing for granted and pay attention to each detail. Especially if you are at an apparent disadvantage as we have been discussing. You just might find you don't need a can opener after all.

FROM THE EDITORS

By now, perhaps you've read most of the magazine and may even have pushed around a few counters from the scenarios within. We hope you enjoy it. Regardless, please drop us a line to tell us what you think—the return of the Signals page after two-plus years give you a forum from which to be heard. Maybe your insight or your question will lead us down a path we otherwise wouldn't tread. At the very least, we'll read your comments, put them into perspective with the feedback of everyone else who has taken the time to voice their opinions, and try to gauge what you other ASL players want to see. Because we at Multi-Man Publishing are ASL players, too. As players, the things we look for in the Annual include insightful articles along with interesting and balanced scenarios. To the extent this magazine is lacking in those areas, point the finger at us. Any credit, however, belongs to the authors, designers, and playtesters listed on page 3. Our thanks—as both players and editors—go to them. We know what we like, both in these pages and outside of them. Now we want to hear from you.



The Editors