

# *Introduction to*

**MERIT**

# *Combat*

*by Lt. General Sir Brian Horrocks*

In war no two battles are ever the same because the terrain is always different and it is this, more than anything else, which influences the composition of the different armies and the tactics employed by the rival Commanders.

In "COMBAT" the same principles apply as in battle.

Your object is to destroy sufficient enemy troops to ensure a superiority in your favour of three to one, or to capture the enemy headquarters. You have then won the game.

So, start by studying the physical features on the board in front of you—hills, woods, valleys, roads, and so on—just as a Commander would study his map before battle. Then decide on the best composition of your forces. Do you want more tanks than artillery, or vice versa? You must now make your plan to defeat your opponent, and remember that this is achieved by suddenly subjecting his troops to overwhelming accurate fire. During the course of the battle you must try and keep your forces "balanced" i.e. in a position to concentrate rapidly against any weak point disclosed by your opponent, but at the same time retaining sufficient troops in reserve to protect your own base and vital air-strip.

This is easy to say, but not so easy to do.

Herein lies the fascination of "COMBAT."

After a few games you will think that you are an experienced Battle Commander, but pride comes before a fall and you may well meet an opponent full of guile, who will bluff you and trap you into an early defeat. Never mind, in "COMBAT"—unlike war—you live to fight another day and one learns from experience.

This is the closest resemblance to the problems which beset a Commander in war that I have ever come across. So have a go.

And may I, who knows only too well from bitter experience the difficulties of command in war, wish you

Good luck.



Fig. 1

This battlefield gives Blue a very strong defensive position. Well placed minefields and a few guns should be able to slow down and break any attack. On the other hand he has to advance over open country where speed and mobility would be exploited. He might decide therefore to compose his army largely of tanks, fewer guns and no planes at all.

Red will have to meet fast tank thrusts. He might decide to break these down with the superior fire power of guns. If successful he could then move slowly to the offensive destroying Blues defensive positions with plane strikes. His army then would predominate in guns and planes.

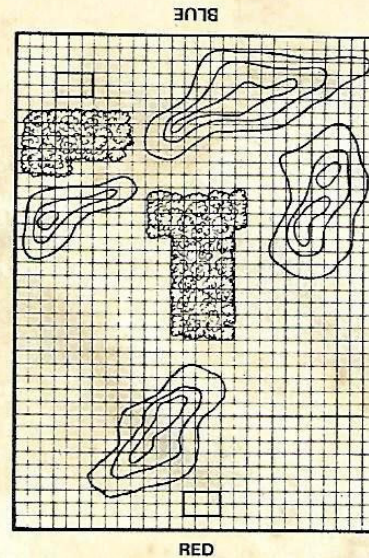


Fig. 2

The feature which will most influence the play on this terrain is the road system. Red has a good position to defend and open country in front. However the roads ahead are flanked by woods from which they could be covered. To clear the way for his tanks he may need guns and planes. He might compose his army of equal number of guns and tanks supported by a few planes.

Blue will have to cover two roads into his territory but the woods give him good cover. Tanks placed in them should give him all the fire power he needs to check an attack and would allow him to launch a swift counter thrust. He could depend on planes to destroy Reds defensive system. An army of tanks and planes may be his best choice.

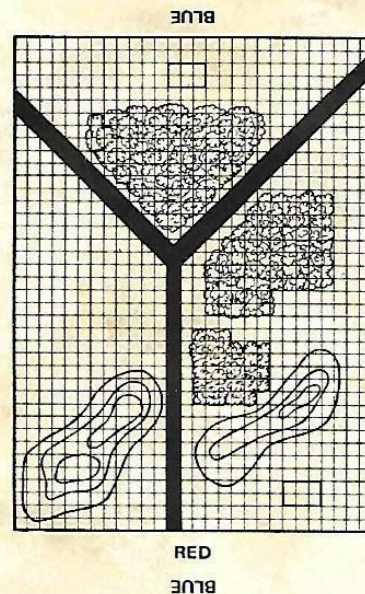
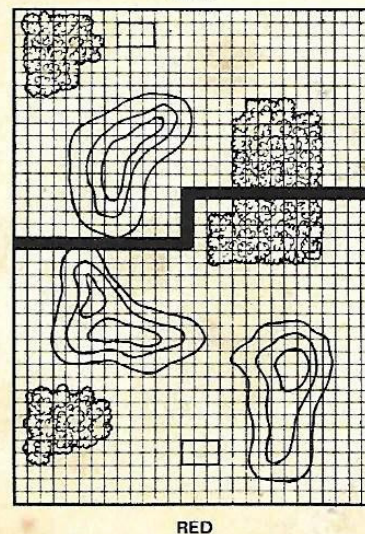


Fig. 3

On this battlefield neither side has the advantage of terrain. The distribution of the natural features gives several alternatives of attack and defence to either army. The lateral road will allow for the rapid movement of forces from one side to another.

A careful commander will give his army a slight predominance in guns, a more aggressive general may rely on the speed of tanks to effect a break through and have fewer guns. Each would include a few planes for support.





## THE RULES OF COMBAT

The game may be played by two or more players.

### PREPARATION

The squared up board represents a battlefield. The board is in two separate parts. The Blue army will attack from and defend one half of the battlefield, the Red army the other.

The two halves of the battlefield are put together at the centre line and the topographical features (hills, roads, woods and airstrips) are arranged on it to the agreement of the players.

These features are laid down so that their squares fit into the pattern of the squares on the board. They may be placed in any position to give a different character to the battlefield for each game.

Players will now toss or dice for sides.

## THE BASIC GAME

### THE GAME FOR TWO PLAYERS

The object of the game is to achieve an overall majority of 3 : 1 pieces. The first player to do this is the winner.

Having prepared the battlefield and tossed for sides, each commander chooses the force he requires according to the nature of the terrain he will have to attack and defend.

### ARMIES

Armies may be of any size according to how simple or complex the players wish to make the game.

Armies will be equal in number but it is at the discretion of each player as to the proportion of tanks and guns and planes which will make up his force. Each army is allotted not more than 16 mines in addition to its other pieces. It is recommended that beginners limit their armies to fifteen pieces plus mines.

### DEPLOYMENT

The sections of the battlefield are now separated to allow the players to deploy their forces in secret.

One in 5 pieces may be deployed in advance of the DEPLOYMENT LINE. All others must be deployed behind the DEPLOYMENT LINE, including mines. Planes are deployed on airstrips.

Pieces and mines are placed one to a square.

**Ready for Battle.** Join the two halves of the board again and the forces confront each other.

**To Begin.** The player who has lost the choice of terrain has the first turn to open the battle.

**Moves.** At each turn a player may move all his pieces or not as he pleases, except MINES which must be placed before play begins and may not be moved.

**TANKS.** Except on roads and hills or when moving through a wood a tank may move THREE squares in any direction, FORWARD, LEFT OR RIGHT, DIAGONALLY or BACKWARDS. In any one move a tank may move in more than one direction say diagonally 2 squares and right one square.

**On Roads.** If a tank has entered a road from open ground its speed increases to five squares on the next turn and so long as it stays on the road.

**On Hills or in Woods.** On reaching a hill or entering a wood a tank must stop and then may move only one square per turn through the wood or over the hill.

**GUNS.** may move in any direction but only two squares at a time.

**On Roads.** If a gun enters a road from open ground its speed increases to three squares on the next turn and so long as it stays on the road.

**On Hill or in Woods.** On reaching a hill or entering a wood a gun must stop and then move only one square per turn, until in open country again.

**FIRING.** A piece may fire when an enemy piece lies within range.

**Tanks** have a range of two squares in any direction in a straight line, that is right, left, forward, backwards or diagonally.

When in possession of a hill CREST the range is increased to three squares.

**Guns.** Have a range of 4 squares in a straight line in any direction. When in possession of a hill CREST their range is increased to 5 squares.

**Guns or Tanks** may fire into or from a hill or wood but not over hills or woods. The maximum depth a shot may penetrate either a wood or hill is two squares. Pieces may fire only on their turn and have one shot only per turn.



**SALVO CARDS—GENERAL RULE.** On firing a player takes the top card from the **Salvo Pack**. This card will indicate whether or not the piece attacked has been hit. If hit, the player whose piece is under fire throws the dice. If 1, 2, 3 or 4 is thrown the piece has been destroyed and is removed from the board, if 5 or 6 is thrown the piece is undamaged and remains in the game.

**NOTE THE FIRST SALVO RULE.** The player receiving the first salvo only of the game may save his pieces by a throw of 4, 5 or 6.

**A HILL OR WOOD** gives cover. A piece located on a hill or in a wood if hit may be saved by a throw of 4, 5 or 6. A piece passing over a **MINE** is hit but may be saved by a throw of 4, 5 or 6. The **MINE** crossed has exploded and is removed from the board.

**A PIECE** may fire at any moment during a move, and may then continue its move in *any* direction.

**AIRSTRIKES AND AIRSTRIPS.** Each player may have one airstrip only, and may place it where he wishes behind the Deployment Line. The number of planes deployed is at the discretion of players. During each turn a player may strike once with each of his planes. Planes may attack pieces anywhere on the board. When making an air strike a player will indicate which piece he intends to attack and draw a card to determine result. If hit Pieces so attacked will be saved by a throw of 4, 5 or 6. A plane is considered hit during its attack. A throw of 4, 5 or 6 will save plane. An airstrip is put out of action and all planes on it destroyed if it is entered by an enemy tank or gun. Should the enemy leave the strip it once again becomes operational and planes may again fly from it if available as reinforcements to the player(s).

**REINFORCEMENTS.** Armies will receive Reinforcements, when a **Gun** or a **Tank** succeeds in reaching the enemy's **Base line**. The gun or tank is considered lost but three other pieces of the player's choice may be brought in as reinforcements behind his own Deployment line.

Reinforcements may be placed anywhere behind the Deployment line but will come into play only on the next turn.

#### **RULES FOR FOUR PLAYERS**

When four wish to play the armies are broken down into two army corps each. For instance the Blue Forces will be divided into a **Right Army Corps** which will operate on the right section of the battlefield and a **Left Army Corps** which will operate on the Left section. Each corps will have its own commander. The same for the Red Forces. The Corps commanders will agree on tactics and co-operate throughout the battle but may consult only after every three turns. Pieces may move from one section to the other to support each other. Pieces moved into another commander's sector come under the control of that commander.

The objectives and the rules of play remain the same as in the Game for Two but the armies may be bigger—twenty pieces for beginners is recommended, and not more than 20 mines each side.

**URNS.** One Corps commander moves then his opposite number and so on, alternating between Right and Left sections.

#### **VARIATIONS OF PLAY**

##### **GIVEN OBJECTIVES**

Each army will establish its Headquarters on a hill or in a wood. This will be the objective for attack and will be considered as captured and the game won if entered by two pieces. Other objectives may be set such as air strips and the cutting of a main road. The rules of play remain as in the Basic Game.

##### **THE BATTLE IN TIME**

A game may be played against time. Each turn may represent one hour; a day, twelve turns. The game is stopped at nightfall and the forces allowed to regroup. Regrouping will take three turns, where pieces may not advance but may retreat or move laterally. No nightfiring is allowed. At dawn the players will again toss for first move. A time limit in days will be set to the game, at the end of which the winner will be the army with numerical superiority. The rules of play remain as in the Basic Game.

**PLAYERS** may when they wish revise the rules by agreement. As many pieces as are available (40 per side) may be used. The range and speed of Guns or Tanks increased, for in this way the speed and complexity of Combat is greatly developed, taxing the powers of any commander. The fascination of **COMBAT** for the skilled player lies in this endless variation in complexity, and the permutations of play—no two games are the same.



## RULES (LOGICALLY CODIFIED) *HOUSE RULES IN BRACKETS*

### OBJECTIVE

Achieve a 3:1 majority of pieces on the table.

### SET UP

- 1) Arrange terrain
- 2) Dice for side / to become 'Red' or 'Blue'. Winner chooses side (and ergo colour of army)
- 3) Choose armies (both equal number of pieces *no more than 30*) up to an agreed total from 'pool' available. Each side also gets an equal number of mines (up to 16 max – 20 max if two players a side.).
- 4) *Shuffle the salvo deck. Takes cards from the top and place into discard pile until all taken, then re-shuffle*

### DEPLOYMENT

- 1) Separate boards and deploy in secret. 1 in 5 may be placed in advance of deployment line; the rest and all mines behind deployment line; planes to an airstrip behind deployment line.
- 2) Stacking is always one piece or mine only per square.

### TURN SEQUENCE

- 1) Join boards together. Player who lost the set-up dice takes his turn first.
- 2) On their turn each player may move as many pieces as wished (mines cannot be moved).

### MOVEMENT

Tanks: Three squares in any direction, forward, left right, back (etc). If entirely on road that turn tanks can do five squares along it. On hills and woods one

square in total max; they must stop upon turn entering as this counts as the one square.

Guns: Two squares in any direction, forward, left right, back (etc). If entirely on road that turn guns can do three squares along it. On hills and woods one square in total max; they must stop upon turn entering as this counts as the one square.

Planes: Can attack anywhere on the board once per turn, then return to base.

*They can instead fly to another friendly airstrip.*

## FIRING

Pieces may only fire once per turn. It may fire at any point in its move and then continue.

Tanks: Range of two squares in any direction in a straight line; right, left, backward etc. When on *grey* hill crest can increase range to three squares.

Guns: Range of four squares in any direction in a straight line; right, left, backward etc. When on *grey* hill crest can increase range to five squares.

Guns and tanks may fire into a hill or wood but not over them. Maximum depth a shot can penetrate into a hill or wood is two squares. *Note hill counters for impossible firing angles.*

To hit take top salvo card – this will give ‘hit’ or ‘miss’. Hit pieces make save throw – 5, 6 saves as undamaged (increased to 4,5,6, on the first player’s turn only). If on hill or wood add +1 to save throw. If moving over a mine the mine is removed but the hit piece is saved on 4, 5, 6. If attacked by a plane the saving throw is 4,5,6 - and the plane is considered ‘hit’ and must also throw to save.

*Planes can attack planes.*

## AIRSTRIPS

If crossed into by enemy ground forces any planes on the airstrip are destroyed.

If recaptured reinforcements (or planes from other strips) can be based there.

## REINFORCEMENTS

When a gun or tank reaches the enemy base line it is 'lost' but the losing player gets three new pieces to place behind his own deployment line; to be activated on his next turn.

## RULES FOR FOUR PLAYERS

Divide each army into two 'Corps' to operate on each flank. The players may only confer after three turns of their side. Pieces moving into another commander's sector come under his control. Each side alternates turns, as does each player (*facilitating two against three games*).

## VARIATIONS OF PLAY

Given Objectives. Each army establishes an HQ on a hill or wood. The game is won if it is captured. Other objectives can be airstrips or cutting a road.

Battle In Time. Each turn represents an hour; twelve turns to a day. Stop at nightfall and regroup for three turns of moving backwards or laterally, but not forwards. No night firing is allowed. *Boards may be re-separated during redeployment*. At dawn dice for first move. Play until the basic 3:1 has been achieved.

## FORCE SELECTION POOL

8 X Planes

16 X Tanks

16 X Guns

*20 X Foot Infantry*

*10 X Motorised Infantry*

*10 X Cavalry*

*5 X Attack Helicopters*

### *HOUSE RULES (MODIFICATIONS)*

- 1) Planes can only attack on alternate turns due to need to refuel and rearm*
- 2) Only one airstrip allowed per player, and this must touch the player's base line.*
- 3) Maximum depth a shot can penetrate into a wood is one square.*

### *HOUSE RULES (NEW TERRAIN)*

- 4) RIVERS. Impassable except at bridges – bridges can be objectives (‘well Horrocks did endorse the game’). One two squares wide maximum.*
- 5) BUILT-UP AREAS / DEFENCE LINES. Count as woods for movement and visibility. -1 to all vehicle saving throws.*

### *HOUSE RULES (NEW PIECES)*

- 6) ‘PBI’ FOOT INFANTRY. Move and save as if Guns. Firing range is 1 square. Add +1 to saving throws in woods, +2 if in BUA.*
- 7) MOTORISED INFANTRY. Move as tanks and save as if Guns. Firing range is 1 square. Add +1 to saving throws in woods and in BUA.*
- 8) CAVALRY. Move and save as if tanks. Firing range is 1 square. -1 to all saving throws outside of woods and BUA.*
- 9) ATTACK HELICOPTERS. Move as if Tanks +1 square. Fire as Tank +1 square. Save as if Tanks. Cannot cross any woods or BUA.*

### *HOUSE RULES (HISTORICAL PERIODS)*

- 10) EARLY WWI VARIATIONS (c.1900-1916). Foot Infantry, Cavalry and Guns allowed only. No mines allowed. Army starts with a maximum of a quarter as many guns as its number of start of play Foot Infantry.*
- 11) LATE WWI VARIATIONS (1917-c.1936). Foot Infantry, Cavalry, Tanks, Guns and Planes allowed only. No mines allowed. Tanks move as if guns.*



*Planes -1 to all attacks. Max of two planes and two tanks per side allowed at any one time.*

*12) EARLY WWII VARIATIONS (c.1936-1942). Foot Infantry, Motorised Infantry, Cavalry, Tanks, Guns and Planes allowed only. Mines allowed. Army starts with a maximum of a quarter as many Motorised Infantry as its number of start of play Tanks.*

*13) LATE WWII / EARLY COLD WAR VARIATIONS (c.1942-c.1955). Foot Infantry, Motorised Infantry, Tanks, Guns and Planes allowed only. Mines allowed. +1 square to all Tank ranges.*

*14) MID COLD WAR VARIATIONS. (c.1955-c.1975). Foot Infantry, Motorised Infantry, Tank, Guns, Attack Helicopters and Planes allowed only. Mines allowed. +1 square to all Tank and Infantry ranges. Army starts with a maximum of an eighth as many Attack Helicopters as its number of start of play Tanks.*

*15) LATE COLD WAR VARIATIONS. (c.1975-c.1990). Foot Infantry, Motorised Infantry, Tanks, Guns, Attack Helicopters and Planes allowed only. Mines allowed. +2 squares to all Tank and Infantry ranges. Army starts with a maximum of a half as many Attack Helicopters as its number of start of play Tanks.*

*16) POST COLD WAR VARIATIONS. (c.1990+). Foot Infantry, Motorised Infantry, Tanks, Guns, Attack Helicopters and Planes allowed only. Mines allowed. +2 squares to all tank and Infantry ranges. -1 to all saves against Planes and Attack Helicopters.*

## **POINTS SYSTEM**

*Planes = 5 points each*

*Tanks = 3 points each*

*Guns = 3 points each*

*Foot Infantry = 1 point each*

*Motorised Infantry = 3 points each*

*Cavalry = 2 points each*

*Attack Helicopters = 6 points each*