

AAR of Panther Games' Conquest of the Aegean

<http://www.panthergames.com/>

AAR by :

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This PDF document is a compilation from a discussion forum AAR/Tutorial/Tips thread. As such it will continue to evolve over time. This PDF is current as of December 22nd, 2005. Future versions may or may not be issued.

Material may have been rearranged and some posts removed to improve the clarity of this PDF collection.

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All text by Mark Kratzer unless otherwise indicated.

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In the spirit of my two HTTR AAR and play guide threads, I'll be embarking on an AAR as one of the Fatherland's commanders in a life and death struggle to secure bridges across a river and prevent the escape of Allied forces.

Stay tuned!

This AAR will be drawn from Build 3.0.110 which is a release candidate. So, what you see here should be very close, if not, completely identical with the final game that is released to market.

Scenario Title

quote:

Tempe Gorge Crisis

Scenario General Briefing

quote:

17 April 1941, 12:00 hours, Tempe Gorge, Greece.

A reinforced German mountain division attempts to force a passage through an Allied infantry brigade. Historical scenario.

The surprise appearance of strong armoured elements on the eastern flank of Mount Olympus has been a rude shock to the Allied high command. Forcing the withdrawal of 21st NZ Inf Bn,

the Germans are threatening to race through the Tempe Gorge and take Larissa - thus threatening the withdrawal of at least half the ANZAC forces. Reacting quickly, ANZAC Corps HQ sends 16th Au Inf Bde to bolster the defence in that area and it arrives to find 21st NZ Inf Bn in defence forward of Tempe village and regrouping after the successful withdrawal from the Platamon Tunnel. The Allied group, now renamed Allen Force after its commander of 16th Au Inf Bde, must delay the Germans from passing through the Gorge for at least two days - until the larger forces to the Northwest can withdraw to the Thermopylae Line via Larissa. Allen Force must then disengage and withdraw itself with a minimum of loss to personnel and equipment.

Meanwhile, Generalmajor Ferdinand Schoerner's Geb Div 6, reinforced by a battalion of tanks from Pz Div 2, has been designated the main effort of XVIII Geb Korps and ordered to force Tempe Gorge and cut the Allies off at Larissa. If the Allies can hold the Germans at the Gorge, then an orderly withdrawal may be possible for the bulk of the ANZAC Corps, who are starting to pull back from the Portas and Servia passes. The Germans will be faced, again, with a tough pursuit over demolished roads and bridges and will have to crack an Allied line again in a few days. If the Germans do establish a strong blocking force in and around Larissa, the Allies will be forced to break up and head for the hills, and the battle for Greece will effectively be over - and the Allied war effort will be minus nearly two full divisions of troops who can ill be spared.

German Side Briefing

quote:

To: GenMaj Schoerner
From: XVIII Geb Korps HQ

The strength of the Allied positions in the Servia and Portas passes has upset our plans somewhat. As a result, the Korps main effort has been changed and your division will now carry the weight of our advance. Pz Div 2 has already been successful in clearing the Platamon Tunnel and you can have most of Pz Regt 3 to help you force Tempe Gorge.

You will probably find Gonnos to be a useful base for operations against Allied forces in the Gorge, especially since an attack south from the town will cut across their line of retreat. Force the Gorge as soon as possible, and try and get some intact bridges over the Peneios River as this will help future operations against Larissa and further south.

Once through the Gorge, you will be able to exit your men to Larissa and further orders will be issued at that point to establish a blocking position astride the line of retreat of the Allied Corps currently defending the Servia and Portas passes. A regiment of your mountain troops and the tanks from Pz Regt 3 should be enough for this purpose.

The scenario runs for 2 days and 0 hours. I will be playing it with the default settings. I will be playing at the highest level of order delays (painfully realistic).

Here is what I would like to accomplish with this AAR.

In terms of generalities:

- (1) Give a sense what it feels like to play the game.
- (2) Point out some the new features/changes since HTTR.
- (3) Cover some more tips and tactics.

I should point out to you that one of the most significant new features of the game will not really be touched upon in this AAR. That is supply. With a short two day scenario such as this, violence and force of arms applied directly will be our main focus as opposed to interdicting or protecting supply lines.

In terms of game play strategy:

- (1) Combining macro/micro management in a single game.

- (2) Hasty action in lieu of a methodically coordinated attacks.
- (3) Using the speed of armor to cause and take advantage of enemy disruption.
- (4) The use of support weapons at long range and mortar firebases.
- (5) High rate of fire arty barrages under direct player control to accomplish key missions.
- (6) Taking advantage of day and night phases for your movements.

For those who are interested, this scenario took me roughly about 4-5 hours to play. This includes thinking time, playing time, making some notes, making save games for later use, and chatting with other beta testers.

With #1 being the slowest and #3 being the fastest simulation speed: Most daytime action was played at #1 and #2. Night time action when out of contact with the enemy was often played at #3. Also, the way I play, I generally pause when issuing orders.

A quick note about the screenshots. They will be at 1024x768. I won't be cropping anything so that folks can get more of an opportunity to look at the interface.

1024x768 is the minimum resolution supported. Custom resolutions are easily available by making a Window's shortcut with the appropriate command line specifying the resolution you want.

There are a total of 8 objectives for the German side in this scenario. Rather than stepping through each individual objective here, I would prefer to summarize them and high light some key areas of interest on the map.

We have been tasked with accomplishing the following:

- (1) Get across the river. In particular, secure the bridges at Tempe in order that we have use of a high capacity crossing. (The Allies have primed the Road Bridge and the Rail Bridge with explosive charges to make sure we don't succeed. They will blow them if they cannot hold us back.)
- (2) Cutoff Allied forces from withdrawing through Larissa in the South. This includes both Allied forces that are actually on the map in the scenario and conceptual forces that could also pass through Larissa while the Allied forces on the map tie us up.
- (3) Keep pressure on the Allies and not permit them to establish a new defensive line further to the South. Meaning to pass our own armor and motorized troops through Larissa so that we stay hot on the heels of the fleeing enemy.
- (4) Neutralize Allied forces who are making a last ditch attempt to stop us at the river.

I have numbered various locations.

(#1) This is a new COTA feature; a SEP (supply entry point). This is where we draw our supplies from off map. They move out to our supply bases to possible other sub-supply bases to our units.

(#2) This is where we, the German forces, are. I will refer to this in the discussion as being the West bank of the river even though it is really North-West. (call me lazy)

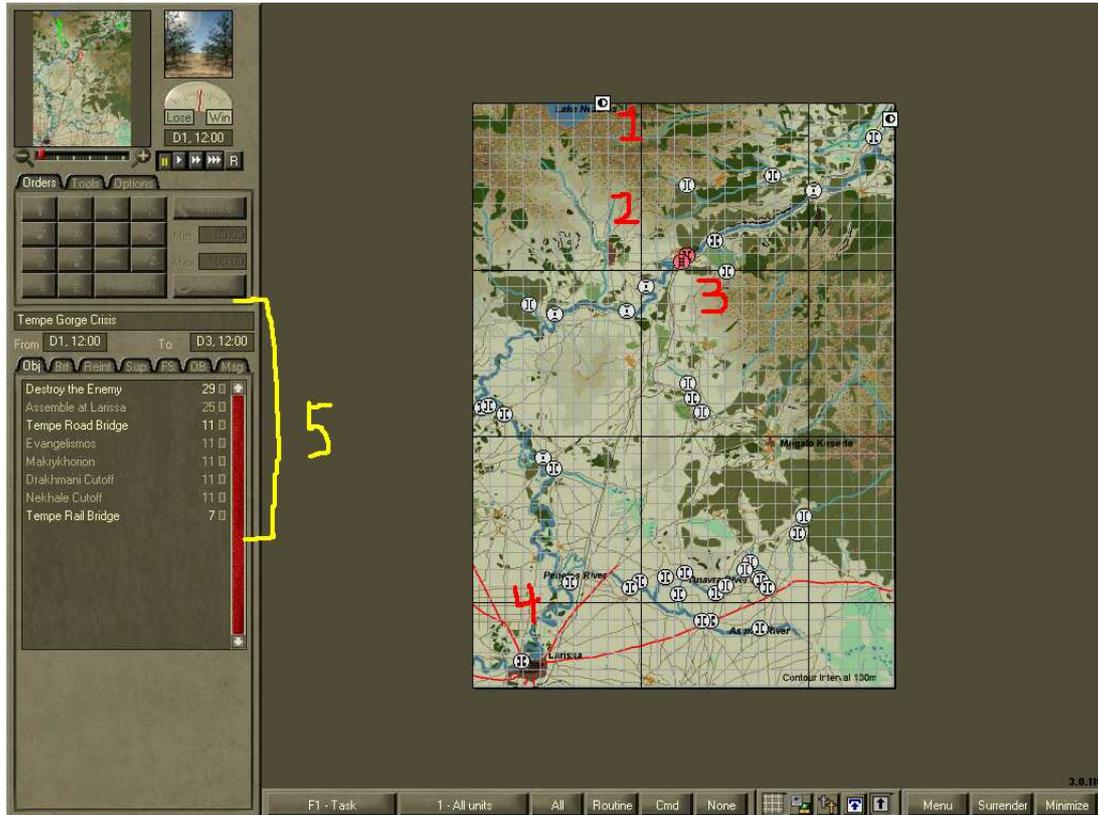
(#3) This is where the Allies are.

(#2-#3) Between these two locations, you see the river with various crossing points. Most crossing points are low capacity ferry or ford points. The key crossings are the two bridges which show as pink, since they have been primed to blow. It looks like there is a third crossing to the North-East, but it is just an artifact of zooming out. It does not span the river, but actually another small branch of the river on the East bank.

(#4) The city of Larissa. Aside from the bridges at Tempe, this is the other key prize for both sides. The Allies want to keep it open and withdraw their forces. We want to cut them

off and pursue any forces who have already withdrawn before they can establish a new defensive line.

(#5) The objective list for the scenario. We see that the big points are awarded for holding the bridges, passing a portion of our forces through Larissa, and destroying the enemy. Along the river and route South to Larissa, there are scattered smaller objectives. All our locational objectives are of the occupation type; meaning they became active at a certain point during the scenario and we accumulate points gradually as we hold them. Larissa is actually an EXIT objective (our units will physically leave the map).



Zoom in to the North ...



Zoom in to the South ...



Here we see a very low level zoom in of Tempe and the bridges. I mainly did this to point out a new feature. COTA provides for separate terrain textures at different zoom levels. So, you will notice that both colors and terrain patterns changed from the high level zoom to the low level zoom.



Another new feature here. Right clicking on the map will give detailed information about the terrain under the cursor: movement rates (relative), elevation, slope, vulnerability to fire, ...



Okay, let's begin to dig a little deeper into the problem at hand.

First, what is the situation of the enemy?

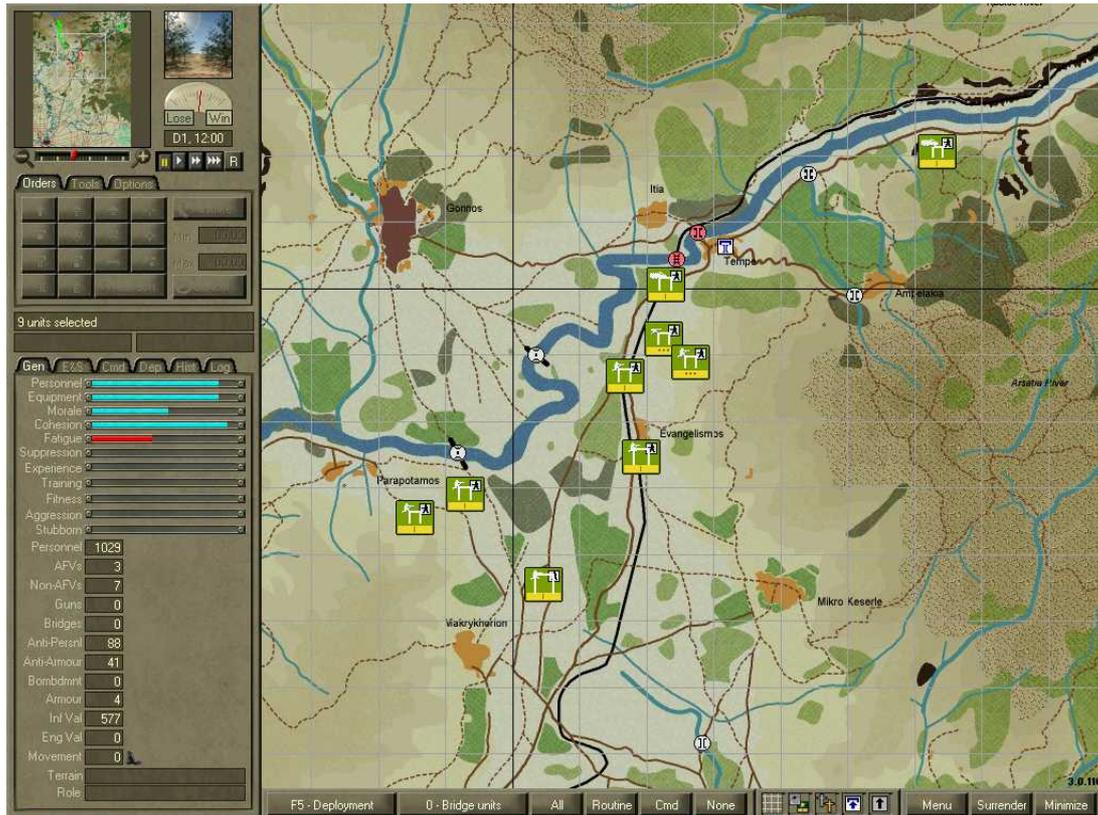
I have two sources of information: the briefing and initial intel reports.

My analysis of the situation is this: the Allies are scrambling, have limited manpower, and are for the most part on foot. (This will be the key insight which more than anything else will set the tempo of our actions and determine victory or defeat.)

The initial intel shows possible up to 1,000 troops on the move along the river by foot.

To just display the Allied troops and remove my own from this screen shot, I selected a filter that would match nothing my force of units. Then, I used a mouse drag to select all of them to get a quick head count and an estimate of their fatigue. Finally, I've select the deployment unit info box showing that they are on the move as opposed to dug in and waiting.

Of course, the initial intel could be absolutely wrong, but I am inclined to accept it.



One important reminder ... they may be weak on the ground, but they got those bridges rigged to blow and it is not going to take much to make that happen!

Okay, let's look at how I am entering this action.

I am the Divisional Commander.

To the North-West, I have two regiments of infantry, the 141st. and 143rd. Along with them, I have associated support units (anti-tank guns, field guns, artillery, mortar platoons and AAA).

To the North-East, I have Regt 3 which is composed of armor, motorized infantry, and recon troops on foot. Once again, there are a few support units too.

You can look at the map to see where my forces are set.

Don't bother with the OOB. (I'll put a larger one in the next post.)



Here is a blow up of my top level OOB.

This is a new feature in COTA. You can expand and collapse tree branches. Single clicking on a unit will take you to it on the map. Double clicking take you to it and open its specific in the left panel. Having a unit selected on the map and pressing "O" will take you to it in the OOB. Well, you get the idea.



The OOB only shows the organic structure. It will not display the dynamic command structure. (this is on the wish list for the future) Reinforcements are displayed after they have arrived.

Another new feature I want to point out is the merging of various information items that were in HTTR on two separate tabs to a single tab in COTA. Additionally, force rollup data is available. This is the second column of numbers. The first being just for the selected unit.

As we can see, I have almost 11,000 troops under my command with 47 AFVs.



I won't show you the reinforcement tab; suffice it to say that I will have no reinforcements. It's a "come as you are" party for us.

<Elmo3>

Reinforcements?! Hell you have about 11 to 1 odds now. You better not lose this fight!

</Elmo3>

Yep, but that is the intel picture. Of course, the guys who prepared that picture are not on the dusty trail marching down to the river with us. They are back in Berlin having schnapps right now.

Also, don't let this scenario fool you. If the right things are done, the Germans can get pretty tied up.

Okay, it is time for a plan.

Remember I said that the key insight is that the enemy is weak, on foot, and trying to prepare a hasty defense?

So, what does that mean to us? It means that speed is everything. Speed in this situation will be more important than careful plans, organization, and structure.

For those of you who have read my HTRR guides, you know that I am very fond of time tables, recon, carefully planned attacks with multiple axes of advance, etc... Well, you'll see none of that here. :)

If we can move fast enough, we'll prevent the enemy from:

(1) The enemy will arrive where he is going --- With a river in front of us, there are clearly some very advantageous positions for the enemy to deploy if he is given that luxury.

(2) The enemy will deploy/dig in --- He will be much more vulnerable and lay down less fire if he is moving. Basically, we will be on an equal footing with him. However, we do outnumber him. If he gets dug-in, then first we will initially be taking fire and not even be able to identify its source. Then, when we his positions are known we will have a hard time dislodging him.

(3) The enemy will make the main encounter for the bridges take place at night --- If we can force the issue in daylight, we will be in a much better position to bring our superior fire power of numbers and support weapons to bare. Furthermore, we'll have a much better fix on the enemy's positions. This should help us greatly in frustrating his plans to blow the bridges.

So, in summary, we are in a hasty attack situation. It is my intention to push forward as hard and as fast as I can. If we stop to organize a proper attack what will be the consequences?

(1) All the negatives I listed above will come to pass.

(2) Given the lack of cover and obstructed LOS all our actions will be completely visible to the enemy. There is no element of surprise to be had. No matter how we go about it, our intentions are going to be clearly telegraphed. At least, if we move swiftly, the knowledge of our plan may provide the enemy with little actionable information. (meaning he'll know what we are doing, but not be able move fast enough to interfere)

(3) We don't know what the enemy's arty/mortar situation is. Trying to get organized could end up being a much more protracted process than it appears on the surface.

(4) By delaying the initial contact, the enemy's second line positions will be prepared for action. Even if we break the first line, we'll still be forced to deal with them. If we move quickly enough, he will never recover and we will blow right through him.

(5) Time is tight and given how far the Pz Regt 3 has to go get down to Larissa across contested ground, we don't have anything to spare.

(6) Getting across the river is everything. Once we are across no matter how disorganized we are, it is pretty much over for the Allies. Delays on our part more than action on their part will decide whether they succeed or fail.

Here is the plan. Yes, I realize my artistic talents leave something to be desired.

We will cross the river at Kouphalades Ferry. In achieving that, we will cut off the enemy from withdrawing to Larissa and have that route for ourselves.

We will cross the river at the Tempe Bridges. This is one of our primary objectives. Achieving this will allow us to push the Allies away from the river.

My plan's legend:

Orange - Div HQ and engineers will deploy here waiting for word that Tempe is secure so that the engineers can be sent in to remove the charges.

Dark Blue - Our initial arty deployment. We'll be in reach of all the engagement areas along the river.

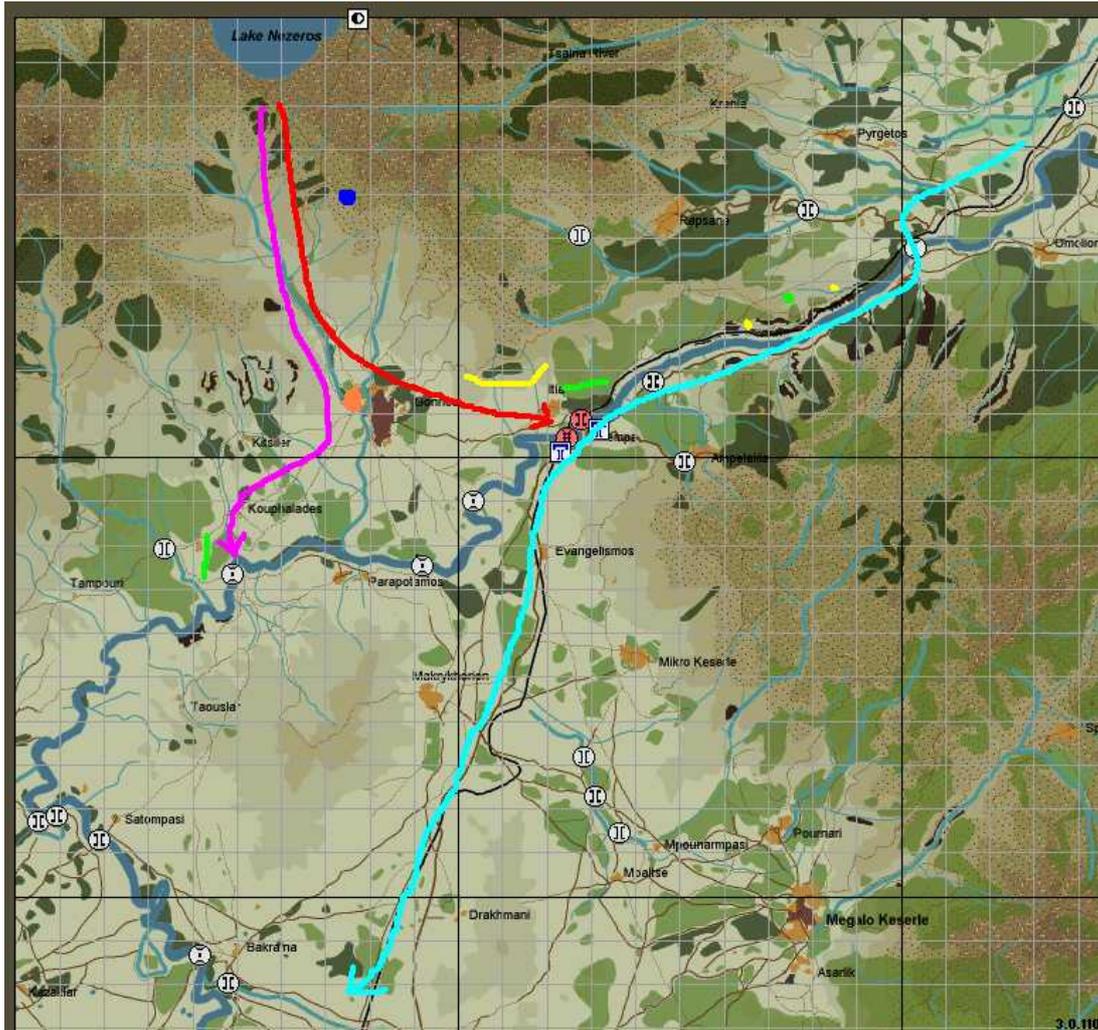
Light Green - Mortar positions. Our heaviest concentration of mortars will be Tempe. The next concentration will be at Kouphalades. We'll place a single platoon the North to cover the Pz Regt 3 as they make their way to Tempe.

Yellow - All our direct fire guns will be concentrated on hill overlooking the Bridges and Tempe. They will break enemy positions near the bridges and prevent reinforcements. We'll also place a few guns to cover the Pz 3 Regt.

Purple - The 141st. Regt (infantry on foot) will push as fast as possible to cross at Kouphalades Ferry.

Red - The 143rd. Regt (infantry on foot) will push as fast as possible to cross at Tempe so that the bridges can be secured.

Light Blue - The Pz 3 Regt (minus recon units on foot; armor and motorized infantry) will race down and push on to Larissa. They will assist where they can and otherwise take advantage of the chaos pushing on towards Larissa.



By the way, the grey gridlines on the map (if you didn't own a previous game) are 1km square boxes. Note, this is just for reference. There are no hexes or turns in this game.

I'll pick this thread up again in a day or so.

That should give my fellow beta testers Ray and Eddy a chance to snicker at my clumsy plan which relies on a sledge hammer to break eggs. And Bil to complain to Dave that I have debased yet another new game release by not using mil symbols on my counters in the screen shots.

:)

Okay, before we get started with the battle, let me talk for a minute about how we'll look at the battle. Since I previously had explained this in my HTRR AAR/tutorial/tips thread, I'll just quote the relevant passages below.

Here is how I play and how I will present this battle:

quote:

Before actually formulating our plan and starting this particular game, let's talk a little bit about style of play. What I am going to describe here is my style of play and yours may well differ. Although HTRR is a realtime game, I do pause at times to analyze the situation and I always pause when issuing orders.

We could say that HTTR will take two forms of player inputs. There are query inputs. These will be key strokes or mouse actions that you will issue for the purpose of displaying information. There are command inputs. These will be key strokes or mouse actions that you will issue for the purpose of altering the outcome of the game. I generally find that while playing HTTR, you will be performing more query inputs than command inputs. In another thread, I had said that HTTR is a "true" strategy game. You will not be spending most of your interaction with the game handling miniscule details which only fractionally contribute to your overall strategy. In fact, when you issue command inputs, they will generally reflect your strategy in a clear succinct manner and have a significant impact on the very outcome of the battle.

By the way, the thread I refer to is here: [A Perspective: What Makes HTTR Truly Special](#)

So, I tend to generally regard an HTTR game as having a number of order cycles. The cycle begins when I have a plan or sub plan and issue orders to carry it out. The cycle ends when the orders are either completed or I revise them. For example, the order cycle begins when I order an attack. The order cycle ends when the attack has succeeded and the battalion completes securing the objective and assumes a defensive posture.

Thus, in my view, an HTTR game is made up of a series distinct junctures (order cycles) where you implement/revise a plan. Aside from formulating plans, the challenge to you, the commander, is to recognize out of the continuous flow of battle when a key juncture has been reached and a new order cycle is required. So, as you play, you will spend much of your time watching a dynamic situation and trying to evaluate the progress of your plan, the enemies intention, and the ebb and flow of battle. So, as I present this AAR, commanding may seem very simplistic and that is because without actually playing the game, it is not easy to see what a challenge it is identify these discrete points in a battle which for the most part is completely continuous. HTTR models this continuous nature of battle very well. Unlike other games, battle in HTTR can be quite messy and at any given point in time it is not easy to say with certainty what the true situation is. Individual units will advance and fall back. Battle lines will not be like lines drawn on paper. For you the reader, this AAR is going to look cleaner than battle really is, since you will be unable to watch the actual flow of the game.

Here is the key contents of the thread, "A Perspective: What Makes HTTR Truly Special". It is true of all the games in the series:

quote:

I wanted to take a few minutes out to discuss why I feel HTTR is a very special game.

Before going any further, in the interest of full disclosure, I should mention that I am a Beta tester. (Dave O'Connor, the President of Panther Games, had asked that we make that clear if we post opinions on public forums.)

What I find most exciting about HTTR is the gaming engine (the technology) itself. Certainly, the Market Garden Campaign is historically interesting. However, as has been discussed in another thread, it has been done before. And, it will certainly be done again, too.

I get a feeling when playing HTTR that I have rarely gotten when playing other games. I have played other war and strategy games, but I am by no means a crazed fanatic with 20 years of war game experience going back to table top and board games. When playing HTTR, I feel that the crux of what I am doing is defining and monitoring a strategy I have drawn up for a battle.

In many so called "strategy" games, the player may formulate a strategy in pursuit of victory. However, when it comes to executing the strategy, it is largely incumbent on the player to execute each small detail in order to realize the strategy. So, the "strategy" is actually something the player imposes upon the gaming system, as opposed to the player actually interacting with the system at the strategic level. At worst, this leaves the player so mired with the details that the big picture is lost or at best, the player can track the big picture but finds much of their involvement happening at a lower level than the one for which they acquired the game for in the first place.

So, what is it that is different about Panther's engine that allows strategy to be both the main focus of the player and main interaction with the game?

(1) Panther has introduced a flexible multi-level chain of command structure into the game. The player may interact with units/sub-units at any level within the chain of command. Thus, it is very adaptable to individual style and needs. One can both micro/macro manage within even a single gaming session. A critical road block can be created by tasking individual companies while some place else an entire brigade can be given very open ended orders to make an attack.

Some games have a natural level at which the player should interact with the game. As long as scenarios and forces are constructed around that natural limit, they play very well. Panther's engine is much more open ended. The ability to command at any level makes the game highly scalable. In many games, if you double the forces, the complexity for the player will quadruple (exponential scaling). In Panther's engine, the scaling is more of a logarithmic function. So, doubling the forces may increase the complexity for the player by a factor of 1.2 or so.

(Okay, keep this scaling in mind as I will come back to it soon.)

(2) Along with this being able to take command at any level, Panther has provided a very powerful (or as they prefer to say "capable") AI. In most games, the AI is something that serves as your opponent. In the Combat Mission series, Battle Front identified two different AIs. First there is the Tactical AI, which resolved combat between individual elements (units) in the game system. Second, there is the Strategic AI which formulates a high-level plan for the battle against the player. If we look at Panther's engine, we will also find both of these AIs. However, in the Panther engine the Strategic AI also functions on behalf of the player to produce plans in the execution of orders given by the player. It is this which allows the player to command at any level. The player need not concern him or herself with a myriad of typical details like choosing the best route, coordinating the movement of many units with proper overwatch and security, developing a proper attack formation, deploying different type of assets to their maximum advantage, etc...

So, when we add the two above features together we get a highly scalable system that allows the player's main involvement to be with defining and monitoring strategy. In some games, you may be able to command large scale battles. However, this is often achieved by abstracting the forces involved in the battle. With Panther's engine, large scale doesn't mean highly abstracted. In fact, while playing HTTR you will find all the low level elemental units like infantry companies, anti-tank platoons, mortars platoons, ... individually represented and involved. So, even though you are directing a battle involving tens of thousands men and giving order to brigades, it is fought before your eyes at a much finer level of granularity. All the inherent messiness and give and take of battle is not abstracted away by some hidden numerical system. It is all there for your immersion and analysis despite your involvement at a much higher level.

(3) I think there is one other aspect of Panther's engine that significantly contributes to the strategic nature of the game. This is order delays. Anyone who is serving or has served will tell you that no plans/orders are immediately executed. They require time to plan, communicate, organize, and execute. You will also be told that command and control delays during WWII were much greater than they are today. There were no GPS satellites, computers, integrated battle management, etc... Panther has implemented such command and control delays into the gaming engine. While playing, you are free to issue orders and reissue orders at any point in time. However, if you choose to play with order delays (this is optional, but is selected by most players), then you will not be issuing orders and revising them every simulated hour. You are going to analyze and then, formulate a plan. Then, you will issue orders. Then, you are going to, with as much patience as you can muster, sit back and let things run their course. Even when things are not going well, you will not immediately jump in and tweak this or that. You will make a commitment as the commander to stand by your decisions until a major overhaul is needed.

Believe me, this all feels very real life. The requirement to create the best plan on incomplete/inaccurate information and then sit back and let things just happen, adds a lot to the fact that this is about strategy. You will work out a strategy and then set it in motion. You are not going to keep nudging things in the right direction based on some tables published by players who have reverse engineered the gaming system. I have never served in the military, but I have managed large scale software projects and this game truly captures the feel and challenges of leadership/management.

Besides the three features cited above. HTTR has a clean and powerful interface for the player. Based at what I have told you above, you would certainly expect nothing less. I won't discuss

the interface though, since I had really wanted to call your attention to why HTTR is a true strategy game. I am sure others will tell you more about the interface at a later date and there will be the usual previews and reviews in the trade press.

So, to restate the basic premise of this post. Panther's engine is very unique and special in the way it allows a strategy gamer to play HTTR and remain focused on strategy.

I have been playing (beta testing) a simulated 10 day scenario for the last few days, and I have been having a wonderful time. I thought I would take a few minutes and share some of that feeling and the reasons why with other war/strategy gaming hobbyists. Well, I have to get back to testing; as both the Beta Team and Panther/Matrix are all working hard to keep this project on schedule.

Take care.

As stated above, I will present this battle as a number of discrete moments in time and highlight to you in particular why it was time to revise orders.

Since this battle was somewhat longer than the one which I used for my HTTR AAR, I will also give you a few situational updates (meaning no new orders were required) to follow the progress of previously issued orders.

Finally, in this battle, I made extensive use of manually issuing fire missions to my arty bty. (the other alternative is to simply leave your arty under AI control) This was required and did have a decisive impact. Given the frequency and fluid nature of such orders, we will not consider these to represent new "order cycles", but instead I will just describe this aspect of the battle in broad strokes.

As you can see here, my general approach to planning a battle is "top-down". Meaning I look at the big picture (objectives, terrain, forces, intel, ...) in order to formulate a plan in broad strokes.

However, my general approach to implementing a plan is "bottom-up". Meaning that I will start with the smallest elements of the plan and single units and lower echelon forces to actually construct the plan with the game interface. There are a number of advantages which accrue by doing it this way. The two big ones are:

(1) If you approach giving orders top-down, it is much easier to lose the smaller units which you want to micro-manage as they become hidden in an already assigned larger force. Going bottom-up it will be very easy check and double-check our plan implementation prior to starting the clock.

(2) When working out ATTACK or DEFEND footprints for a force, all included units are considered. If you later remove units implementing your plan top-down, then you will have been working with incorrect and misleading footprints.

Now, the most intensive time of using the interface is usually at game start and perhaps later if a great number of reinforcements arrive. This is simply due to the fact that you are starting with a clean slate. As the game progresses, changes to orders will tend to be incremental and most orders previously issued will be left to stand.

Finally, just a reminder: In general, order delays are waived for the first 59 minutes of the scenario and for the first 59 minutes after arrival for reinforcing units. When playing with order delays, there will be a time lag from when you give your commands to when they begin to be executed. Depending on circumstances and at what level you issue them, this could be anywhere from a half hour to a half day.

So, as you watch the order cycles I present, you will see that I will be issuing orders in advance based on what I anticipate is going to happen. I might anticipate a force making it

across a river or I might anticipate that night fall will hide my movements ... You get the picture.

In the next series of posts, I will implement the plan.

Observe as I do that, I will do a bit of micro-managing of individual units. Also, observe that I will also do some macro-management and delegate some very broad high-level tasks to the AI to handle large forces of many units.

Part of the beauty of this game series is that it easily accomodates both styles of play and you can flexibly do both even within a single battle and/or switch styles within the middle of a battle. (In fact, you'll also see a little bit of this by me towards the middle of the battle.)

Micro-managing mode = on (just for rhetorical emphasis)

Macro-managing mode = off (just for rhetorical emphasis)

I generally like to begin with my artilleries batteries and set up my fire bases. Arty plays a key role no matter what the particulars are and there usually aren't many such units and they tend to remain fairly stationary.

Our arty is already in range of the initial engagement area. So, I want them to be able service fire missions ASAP. Thus, I gave a DEFEND order "in-situ" (don't move; do it where you are).

Let me highlight a few of the tools I used:

#1) A filter to just display the units of interest for this task.

#2) Weapon range display to verify that I can hit what I want to hit.

#3) The blue circle is the maximum range at which I can deliver fire missions.

#4) There is the task marker. (Since it is "in-situ", it doesn't really matter where I put it. I usually offset it a little from the current location to make it easy to spot.)

#5) There is the "in-situ" setting.



Micro-managing mode = on (just for rhetorical emphasis)
 Macro-managing mode = off (just for rhetorical emphasis)

Okay, let's take care of some of our mortars. In this plan, I have decided to micro-manage them. Later, I'll give some of them back to the AI for management. It all depends on the situation. For a discussion of this, see my HTTR threads.

Here we see four platoons of mortars assigned to the Tempe mission.

#1) That's the platoons I have selected. (but the orders need to be given one unit at a time)

#2) This is where I want them setting up. In general, I want them to hustle over there. However, I placed many waypoints in the last kilometer, since I want to short circuit the movement parameters and make them travel through cover.

#3) Here I set them to hustle and make a maximum effort; also, the facing of their deployment.

In this scenario, most parameter settings will call for speed and maximum effort. There will not be much pacing of physical effort, ammo conservation, or holding back reserve forces.



Micro-managing mode = on (just for rhetorical emphasis)

Macro-managing mode = off (just for rhetorical emphasis)

I am assigning the three remaining mortar platoons. Two are assigned to Kouphalades Ferry mission, and one to covering Pz 3 Regt coming down the road from the North-East; in case, they run into trouble. I position it across from a suspected enemy position based on intel.



Let me make a quick detour here to introduce two new features and extremely useful ones. These will figure into the order for our support weapons to provide support for the Tempe mission. Support weapons being anti-tank guns (but they can also fire anti-personnel rounds), AAA, and field guns.

First, we have the new LOS Area tool. It displays a pattern showing the visible area from a selected location. (For those who have played Steel Beasts, the implementation is quite similar.)

If you will recall, my plan called for me position all my support weapons on a hill overlooking Tempe.

#1) The hill.

#2) The new LOS Area tool.



Here you see the new LOS AREA tool in action. The red dot is where I clicked. The white area shows good LOS. Or in this case, confirms my decision to setup on this hill as it will give me an excellent field of fire over the bridges (to hammer the enemy) and on any approaches (to prevent reinforcement by the enemy) to Tempe.



The second new and useful feature I want to point out is the path display tools.

In RDOA and HTRR, you could specify particular types of path, but you wouldn't really know what the AI would choose until it did. Well, sometimes, you could be in for a painful surprise.

I personally has adopted the following techniques to deal with that:

- (1) Place waypoints at major road junctures to constrain the AI's freedom.
- (2) Place numerous waypoints at short distances when what you want at a particular point in the route is contrary to the overall parameter selection. (You see an example of that with my mortar platoon paths to the Tempe area.)

The need for #1 is largely eliminated with the new tool I will show you. However, #2 still proves to be a useful technique. (There is a wishlist item to allow parameters to be assigned in a waypoint specific fashion.)

Going back to the hill overlooking Tempe, let's see what the AI would choose as the fastest route to the hill for one particular gun unit.

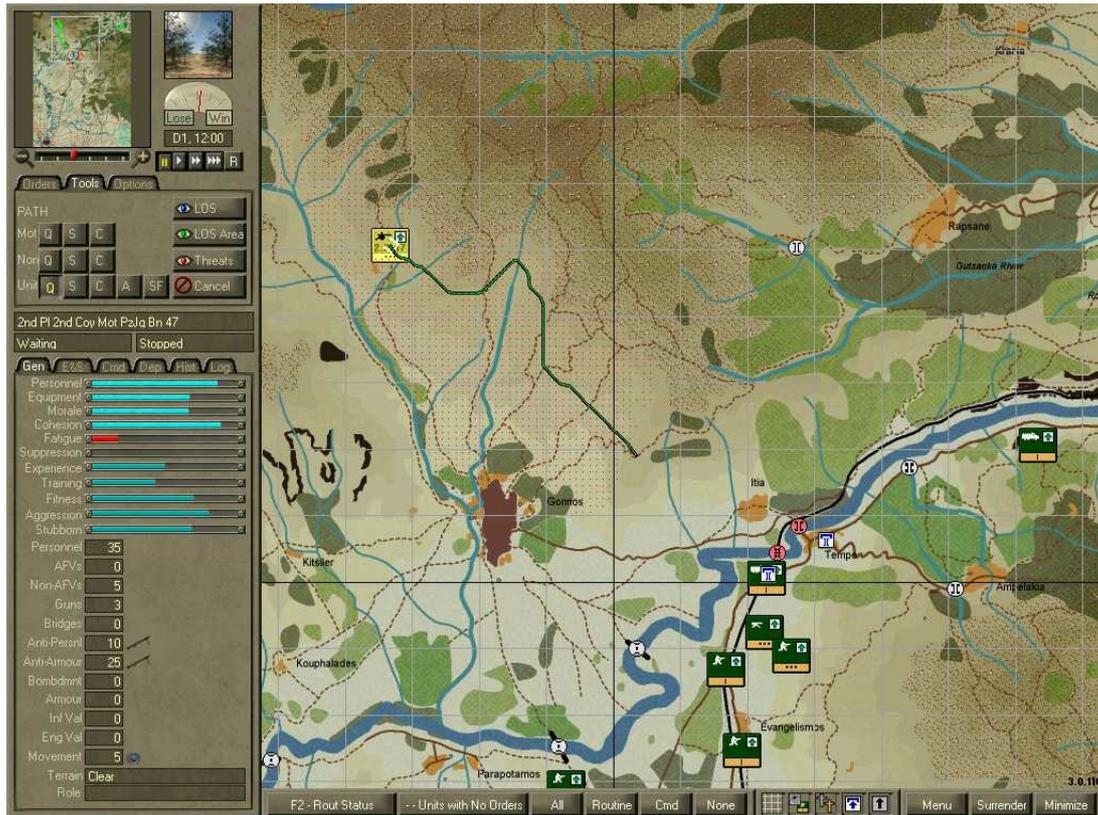
The pathing tools are over to the left next to the LOS AREA tool. The green line shows the route the AI would choose for the quickest travel.



Now, there is only one problem with this route. It will take ATG platoon too far South and too close to the defenders in Tempe. However, in general, I do want it to make the best time.

Let's try this. Much better.

Now, what is this telling me? It is saying that if I place a single intermediate waypoint somewhat to the North of the hill and then the final waypoint on the South of the hill, I will get exactly what I want.



re: LOS AREA

It shows variable degree of LOS. (Of course, when using it for direct fire weapon placement. One should also consider the range of the desired weapon system.)

You can use it anywhere on the map.

So, the use of the pathing tool yields the following order to accomplish what I want. Less work than in HTRR with 100% certainty of what you are going to get.



Micro-managing mode = on (just for rhetorical emphasis)
Macro-managing mode = off (just for rhetorical emphasis)

Alright, let's continue with the orders for our support weapon units now.

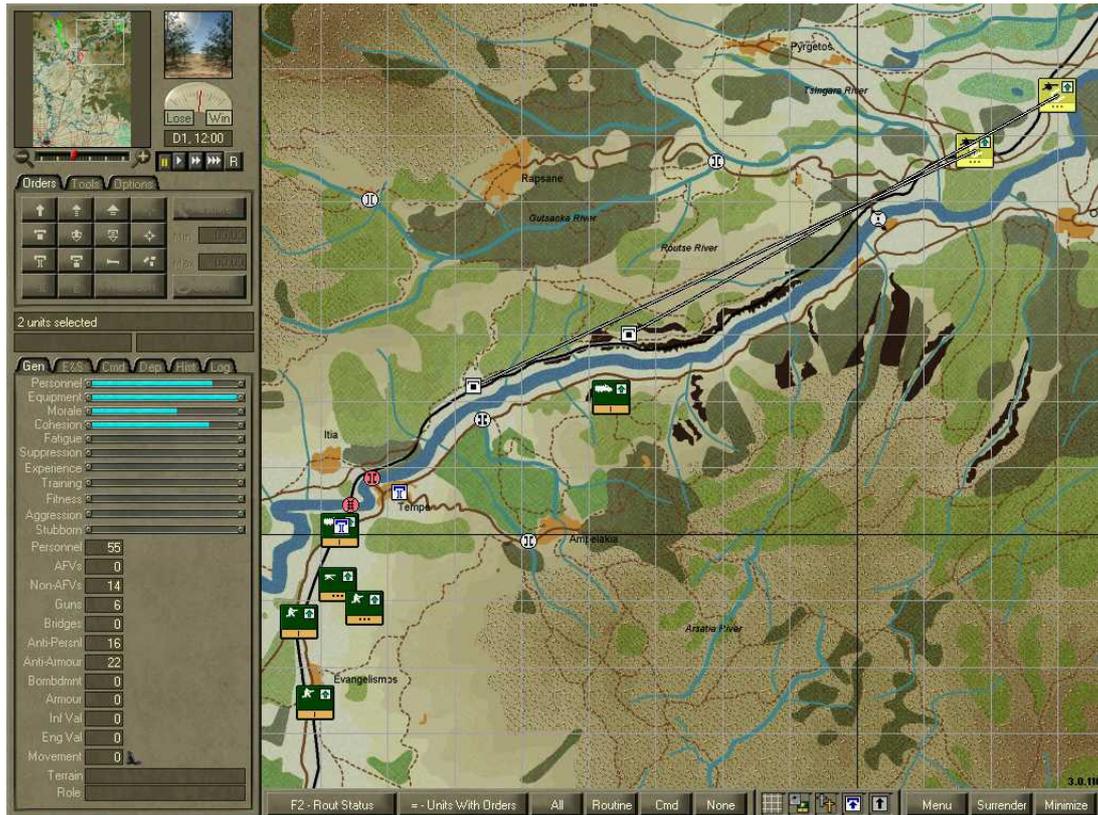
These units are assigned to the Tempe mission.



Micro-managing mode = on (just for rhetorical emphasis)
Macro-managing mode = off (just for rhetorical emphasis)

Finishing with the orders for our support weapon units here.

These units are assigned to the cover Pz 3 Regt's mission.



OKAY, I AM NOW SWITCHING TO MACRO-MANAGING. MEANING BROAD DELEGATION TO THE AI.

I'll work from West to East as I do this.

Micro-managing mode = off (just for rhetorical emphasis)
 Macro-managing mode = on (just for rhetorical emphasis)

I have switch to another filter here; the HQ units filter. This is very useful when macro-managing and working with large forces. (See #1.)

Here is the order to the 141st. Regt to cross at Kouphalades Ferry.

3,000+ men (See #2)

17 units; meaning game counters (see #3)

Once again, they have been ordered to do this fast and with maximum effort.



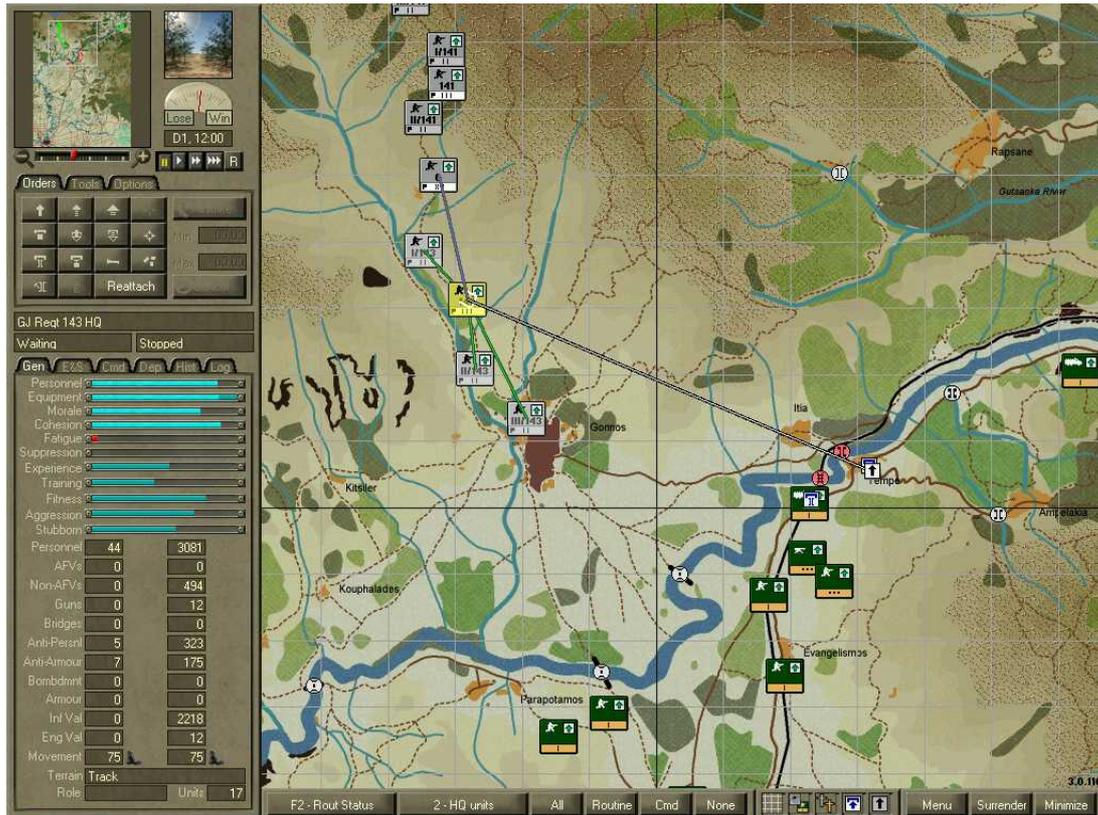
Micro-managing mode = off (just for rhetorical emphasis)
 Macro-managing mode = on (just for rhetorical emphasis)

Here is the order to the 143rd. Regt to cross at Tempe.

3,000+ men

17 units; meaning game counters

Once again, they have been ordered to do this fast and with maximum effort.



Micro-managing mode = off (just for rhetorical emphasis)
 Macro-managing mode = on (just for rhetorical emphasis)

Okay, let's pick up the pace a little.

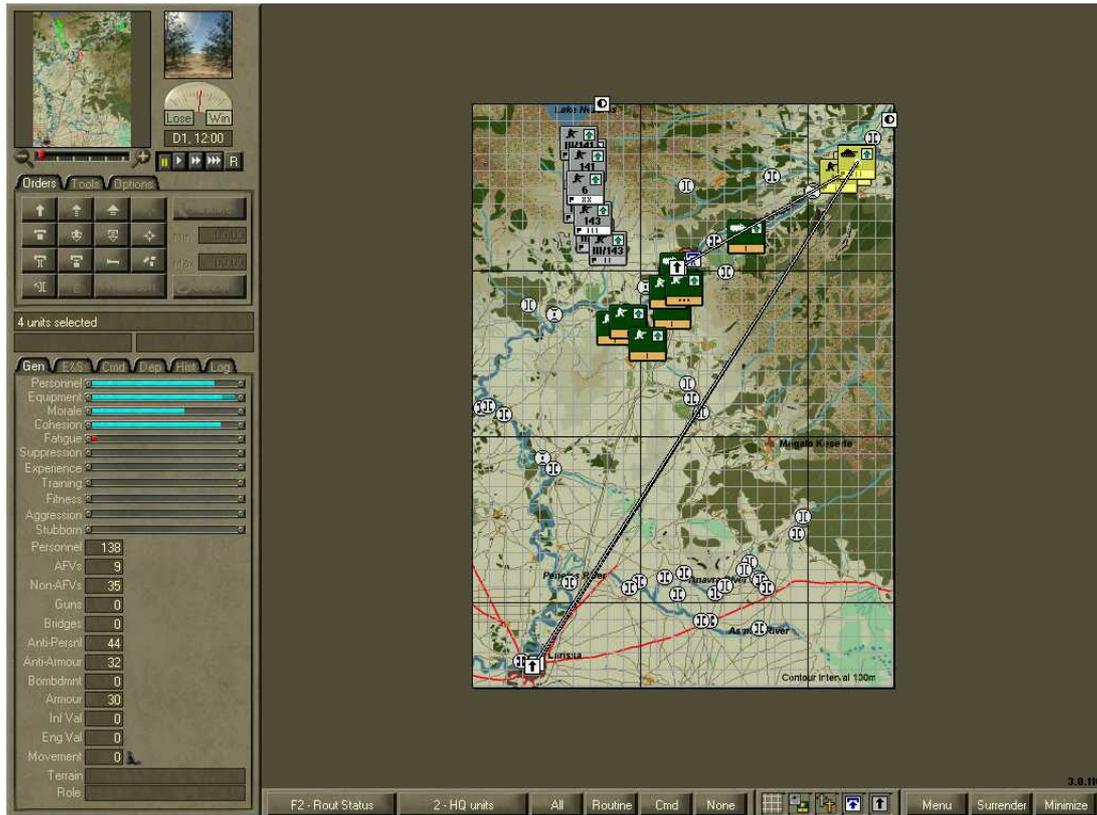
Looking at the Pz 3 Regt, they are composed of armor, motorized infantry, and recon on foot. I'll work bottom up again.

The Geb Recon Bn 112 (recon on foot) will be assigned to move down to the Tempe Rail Bridge. They have been ordered to take their time. I am assuming that they will function as a security force to hold this objective (after it has already taken) to free the 143rd. Regt for other duties.

The 1st. Pz Bn Pz 3 Regt (armor) will be assigned to push as hard and as fast as they can to Larissa. It is anticipated that they will provide assistance along the route to further disrupt the enemy at Tempe.

The rest of Pz 3 Regt which is the HQ and motorized infantry is separately assigned to push hard to Larissa. However, they are assigned to do this at a slower pace. We will let the armor do the heavy lifting of clearing the route.

Is it risky to send the armor barreling on ahead (not even stopping at night)? Well, it could be, but I am counting on them encountering an enemy who is in turmoil on route and not one that has dug-in with the intent to ambush. Call it a Deutsche Thunder Run to Larissa.

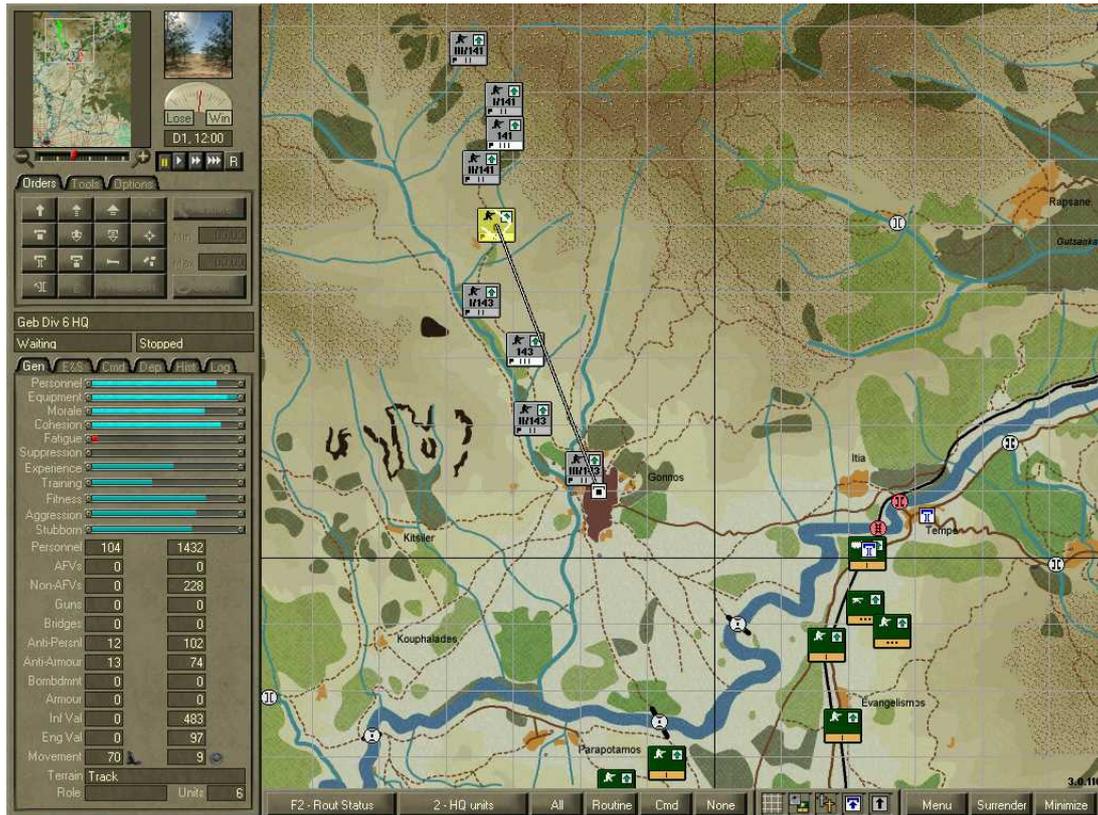


Micro-managing mode = off (just for rhetorical emphasis)
 Macro-managing mode = on (just for rhetorical emphasis)

Working bottom-up we finally are left with Geb Div 6 HQ. All the lower level tasks have been assigned already.

We order Div 6 HQ which now only has three engineering units, a supply base, ... in direct command to defend down Gonnos. The engineers will wait there until it is safe to head towards Tempe and remove the demolition charges from the bridges.

At this point, you should hit the filter for units without orders. All units should disappear from the map, since everyone should have orders. If you find a unit, you've screwed up somewhere.



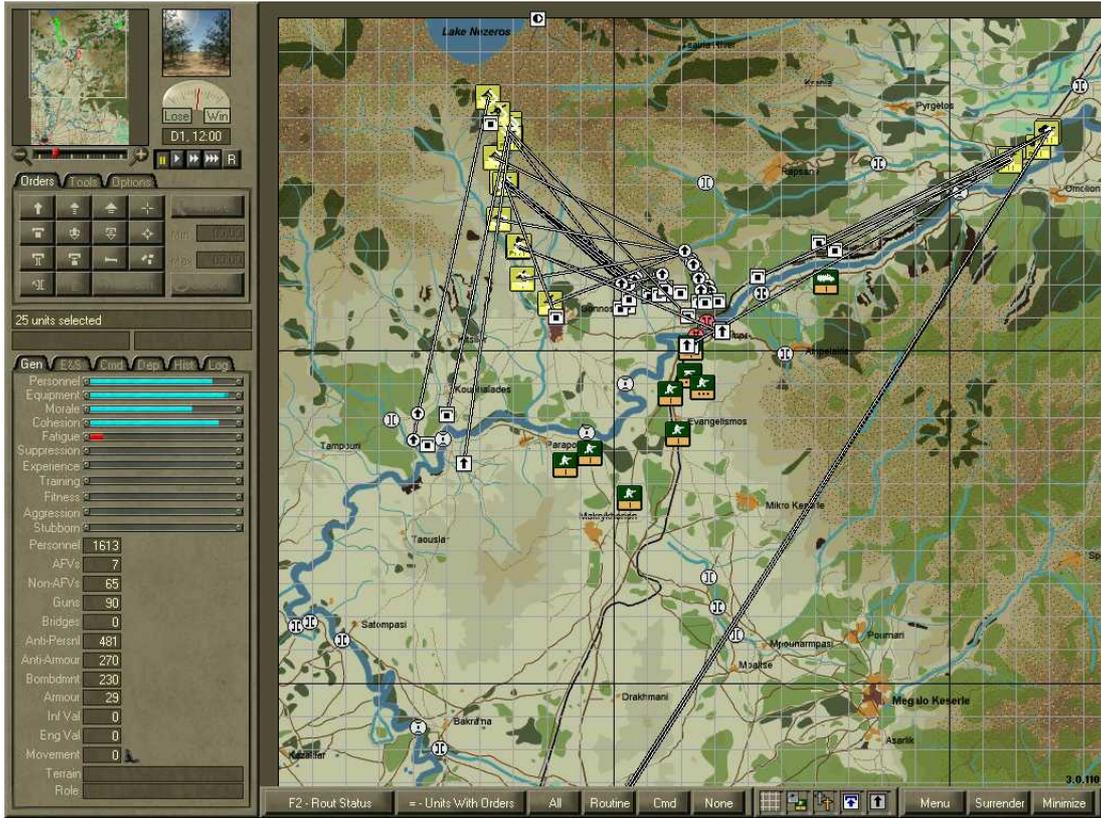
At this point, I'll give you some screenshots of the complete plan.

Remember the following points from all this:

- (1) Construct your plan top down.
- (2) Implement the plan in the game bottom up.
- (3) Combine micro/macro management as you see fit.

I have the filter for just units with orders selected. I have selected the small counter option.

Here is what it looks like completed zoomed out.



A close up of Kouphalades Ferry.



A close up of Tempe.



Our plan is now implemented.

I'll stop here and we'll pick it up next time with the heat and smoke of battle. It may be a few days as I anticipate a busy week coming up.

Feel free to comment and post questions. Dave O'Connor, President of PG, should be around next week.

Take care.

Now, I had said that my plan would not include a detailed time table like other battles I have fought.

However, let me just call your attention to one key deadline that will make or break this plan. We must be across the river by nightfall.

Based on our intel reports ... At Kouphalades Ferry, it looks like we will be largely be unopposed or meet light resistance. So, timing is less critical. But at Tempe, we are clearly going to meet some determined resistance.

Our plan says that we will use our fire power advantage (artillery, close in mortar support, and long range direct fire from support weapons) to break Allied positions at Tempe and prevent reinforcement. However, if we do not get across by night fall, we will lose our fire power superiority. The Allies will be able dig-in their front line positions, and move in reinforcements with impunity.

So, if we don't get across by night fall, this could turn into another Dunkirk for the Allies. Personally, two weeks from now, I would rather be waiting for my next promotion to come through than explaining to Herr Hitler how I was responsible for a fiasco.

Now, what is our deadline? At 22:00, it will go dark. New COTA feature: Check out the new rollover text for the environmental conditions of the battle.



To help you keep track of time, I will put the following header in my posts as we follow the action:

Start: X XX:XX End: X XX:XX
Last: X XX:XX Now: X XX:XX

The start and end time of the scenario. The last time I updated you and what time it is now.

Let's begin ...

Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 1 12:00 Now: 1 12:57

For the most part, Pz 3 Regt forces are already across the river having used a ferry crossing. Excellent progress. In fact, they are moving so fast that they will probably encounter the enemy before their support weapons are set up, since the support weapons are moving through rougher terrain.

I have selected the actual units with orders here so that you can see how the units directly under my command are tasked.

It looks that we are going to run into the enemy in about another 2-3km.

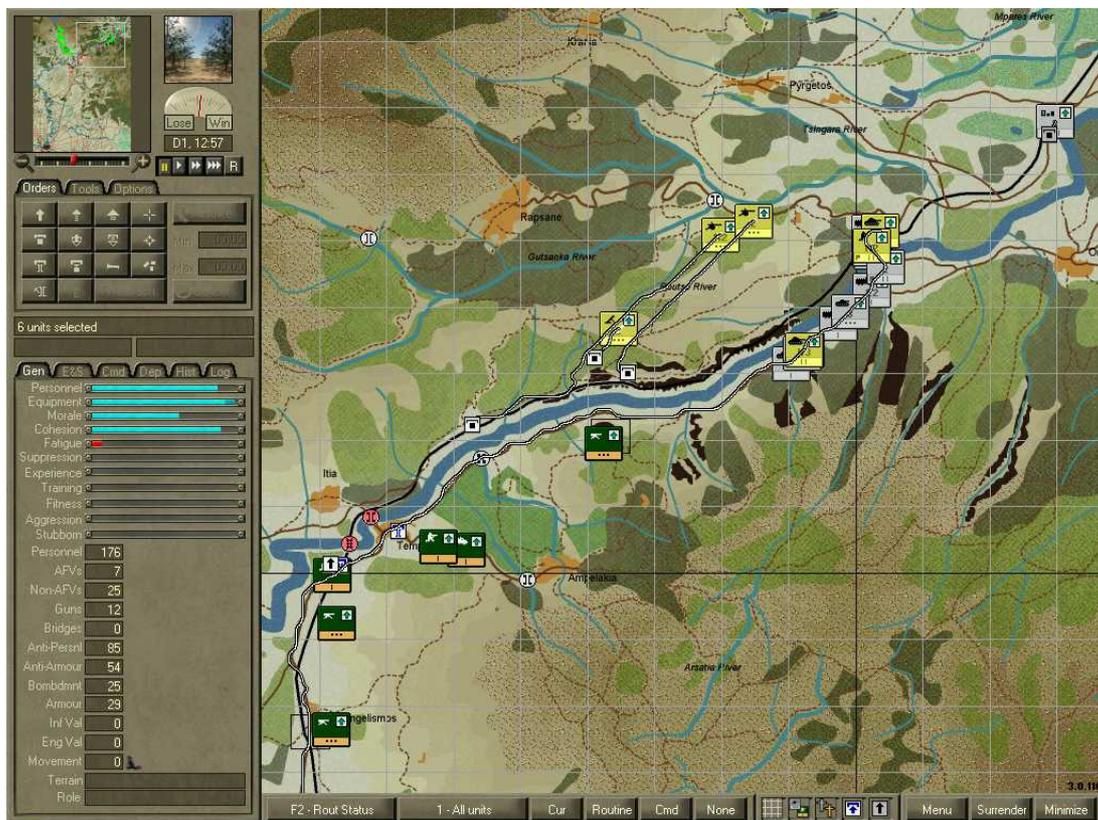
Now, let me discuss one of the key realism improvements that you will see in COTA. It's hard to pick up in the screenshots, but it is going to make a big difference to your game play.

(1) Road networks are going to be critical both for keeping supply lines open or interdicting

supply lines and force movement. In HTTR, nothing was impassable except for water; although movement slowed down and fatigue increased for vehicles off road. In COTA, there is impassable terrain for vehicles and the penalties for off road terrain that is passable by vehicles is very significant. So, roads are going to play a much bigger role.

(2) In general, fatigue rates have been increased. For longer (time duration) operations, you are not going to be able to push a single force through days of hard action. Night fatigue rates have been increased to be more significant than they were in HTTR. Additionally, terrain slope will also play a role.

In HTTR, a good Allied road block on this road would have delayed us, but not stopped us; unless it was supported with heavy arty. In COTA, a good Allied road block with the river on one side and woods on the other can stop us dead in our tracks (intended pun here).



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 1 12:00 Now: 1 12:57

The 143rd Regt heading for Tempe is now in contact with the enemy. Look at the Southern most counter; its bottom right corner of the counter; the blue box - this means it is exchanging fire with the enemy.

I have highlighted just a few unit paths for the 143rd Regt, support, and mortars so that you can see where everyone is headed.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 1 12:00 Now: 1 12:57

From now through the next few hours, we will have some very solid contact information on enemy units defending Tempe or moving in to reinforce.

We will take direct responsibility for calling fire missions to break the defenders and turn back any reinforcement. For the next few hours, this will be our primary means of preventing the bridges from being blown before we are able to mass our forces across from Tempe.

Tip: If you let the AI control your arty and mortars, the ROF (rate of fire) will always be slow. If call in the fire missions yourself, you can set any ROF you want.

Here is what I am going to do:

(1) ROF = Rapid ----- If the unit is in Tempe or actually moving towards Tempe and it shows a green arrow on its counter (top right hand corner); meaning it has not been shaken by our fire.

(2) ROF = Rapid ----- If the unit is in Tempe and it shows a green box on its counter (top right hand corner); meaning it has been somewhat affected by our fire. But any unit in Tempe is a real problem for us, since they could blow the bridges.

(3) ROF = Normal to Slow ----- If the unit is trying to move towards Tempe, but has stopped and it shows a green arrow or green box on its counter. We'll conserve some ammo, but keep the pressure on.

(4) ROF = Slow (possibly) ----- If the unit is outside of Tempe, but has stopped and it shows an orange arrow or orange box on its counter; meaning that it has retreated. Conserve ammo, but perhaps see if we can break the unit and take them out of the fight.

For those who know the game, I am talking about the unit info box / rout status display.

When you do your fire missions, you want to set the intel filter to current contacts and zoom when placing the cursor. Keep your eye on the situation and drag the cursor as the contact moves.

Here you see one such fire mission.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 1 12:57 Now: 1 13:29

Our arty is having just the affect I wanted. Here is a close up of the Tempe area. You can see some retreating and/or halted enemy units.



Start:1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 1 12:57 Now: 1 13:29

Here are the Pz 3 Regt forces.

The armor is leading about to blow past the enemy. The motorized infantry is trailing the armor. The recon force on foot is bringing up the rear. The support units are still quite a way off from doing much good.

I have selected one particularly armor unit and displayed its log window. You can see that it has started engaging the enemy since 13:27.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 1 13:29 Now: 1 13:40

Here we see that the 143rd. Regt is making very slow progress towards Tempe. Their support weapons are no where close to being where they need to be.

But the armor has broken through and should be wrecking some havoc very soon!

(The 141st. Regt has yet to reach Kouphalades Ferry area. So, I have not bothered informing you of their progress yet.)



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 1 13:29 Now: 1 13:40

Here is the some screen shot, but with the unit info box showing the deployment status. What is this telling us?

Everyone is scrambling and in motion, but for a few units taking cover and deploying. Both us and the Allies. Total chaos! However, the difference between our situation and theirs is that we are growing stronger by the minute, and they weaker.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 1 13:40 Now: 1 14:31

Our arty ammo will run out soon, but we still don't have our mortars and support weapons set up. (look at the bottom left of the screen shot showing the fire support tab and you will see a blue bar indicating remaining ammo).

Our armor is going to be engaging the Tempe defenders very soon. They are performing better than I had hoped.

It looks like the 143rd Regt is not going to lead the push on Tempe for us.

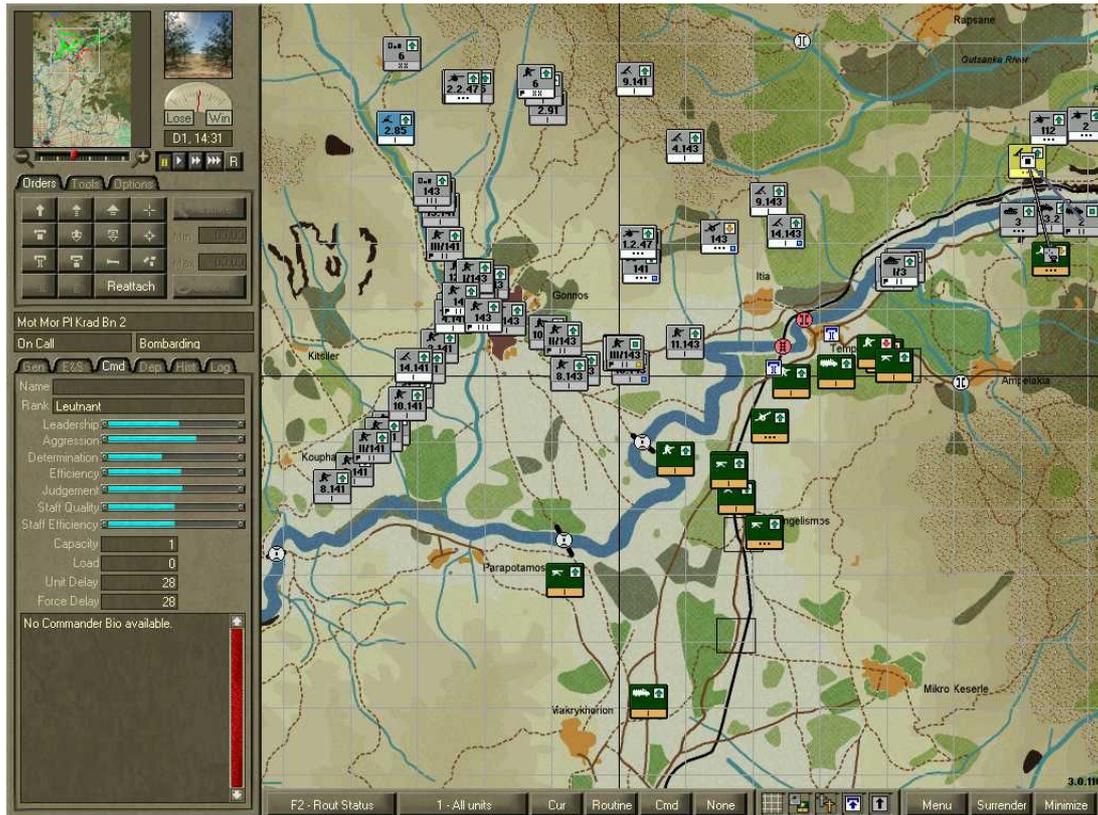
It's time to revise the plan. I'll get back to that momentarily, but first let me review the situation elsewhere.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 1 13:40 Now: 1 14:31

Here we see that the 141st Regt is making good and steady progress towards Kouphalades Ferry. They have not met any resistance.

Our motorized infantry to the North-East has met some resistance, but they are now receiving supporting fire from a mortar platoon on the West Bank. They should be able to break through soon. I have highlighted the mortar unit.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 1 13:40 Now: 1 14:31

New Orders

The Pz 3 Regt motorized infantry is still a few hours outside of Tempe. They were originally ordered to make their way to Larissa.

Their new orders are to halt at Tempe and form a defensive line to protect Tempe and the Bridges until the support weapons are in place and the 143rd Regt can cross.

The left of the screenshot you can see that I have set formation, facing, and foot print ...



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 1 13:40 Now: 1 14:31

New Orders

Alright, let's talk about order delays.

Why am I giving these orders now and not when Pz 3 Regt reaches Tempe? Because it is going to take a while for those orders to reach them and then be executed. If I wait until they reach Tempe, then they are going to end up having to double back to Tempe.

So, how long will it take for them to start acting on new orders. I would say about three hours. (see below the force delay value)

Tip1: The force delay will only be accurate when the force is already formed and one set of new orders has already propagated. Thus, if you form a new force, you are just going to have to wing it in terms of estimating the delay.

Tip2: The delay estimated is for how long it takes the orders to reach everyone. To estimate the time it takes for them to achieve it; you must also factor in travel, resistance, changes of formation, preparations, and deployment. But that's why the Wehrmacht put you in charge, because you have years of experience doing all this. :)



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 1 14:31 Now: 1 15:54

New Orders

My arty is out of ammo.

Let's talk about another new COTA feature. In HTTR, units get resupplied at 03:00 in all cases. In COTA, SEPs (supply entry points) feed high level bases, high level bases feed low level bases, and low level bases feed units. All this, provided that the roads are open.

In HTTR, everyone would run out of ammo during the day and then at 03:01, then the big guns would sound again. In COTA, the supply system makes for a smoother more measured resupply. Of course, it still takes time.

I am going to use this wait for the convoy carrying my shells to move the battery to Gonnos. (see orders in the screenshot) This should allow me to engage many more targets as the FEBA moves deeper into Allied territory.

To the East we see that the 141st. Regt is just beginning to cross unopposed. Very good news!

The 143rd. Regt isn't making too much progress towards Tempe, but the mortar units and support units are beginning to arrive.

Our armor is now engaged.

There is an enemy engineering dug-in at Tempe, but I will be calling some heavy mortar fire in on it momentarily.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 1 15:54 Now: 1 16:24

That mortar barrage did the trick. The engineers are bugging out. Our armor is holding off any reinforcements.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 1 15:54 Now: 1 16:24

We have taken our first objective. Notice the green icon on the map and the left side bar. Points will accumulate as long as we hold it.

Also, notice that the 143rd Regt is very much going on the offensive now.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 1 16:24 Now: 1 17:17

2/3s of the support for Tempe mission is setup and providing fire.

Our recon troops are arriving in Tempe.

Pz 3 Regt motorized infantry (I have highlighted them) have now received their new orders and are on the move to Tempe. The gray paths and task markers are implicit orders issued by the AI on our behalf.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 1 17:17 Now: 1 18:31

New Orders

The Allies are attempting to counter attack. See those thick black arrows in the unit info box. That means that they are assaulting.

Nothing to worry about. We have the situation well in hand.

Our armor is about to leave the Tempe area.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 1 17:17 Now: 1 18:31

New Orders

The 141st Regt is across. Restructure the force into sub forces and have them take a series of three objectives. These objectives have yet to become active. They will let us control the route to Larissa and cutoff the Allies escape route. (Note, how you can very easily transition between macro and micro management in this game.)

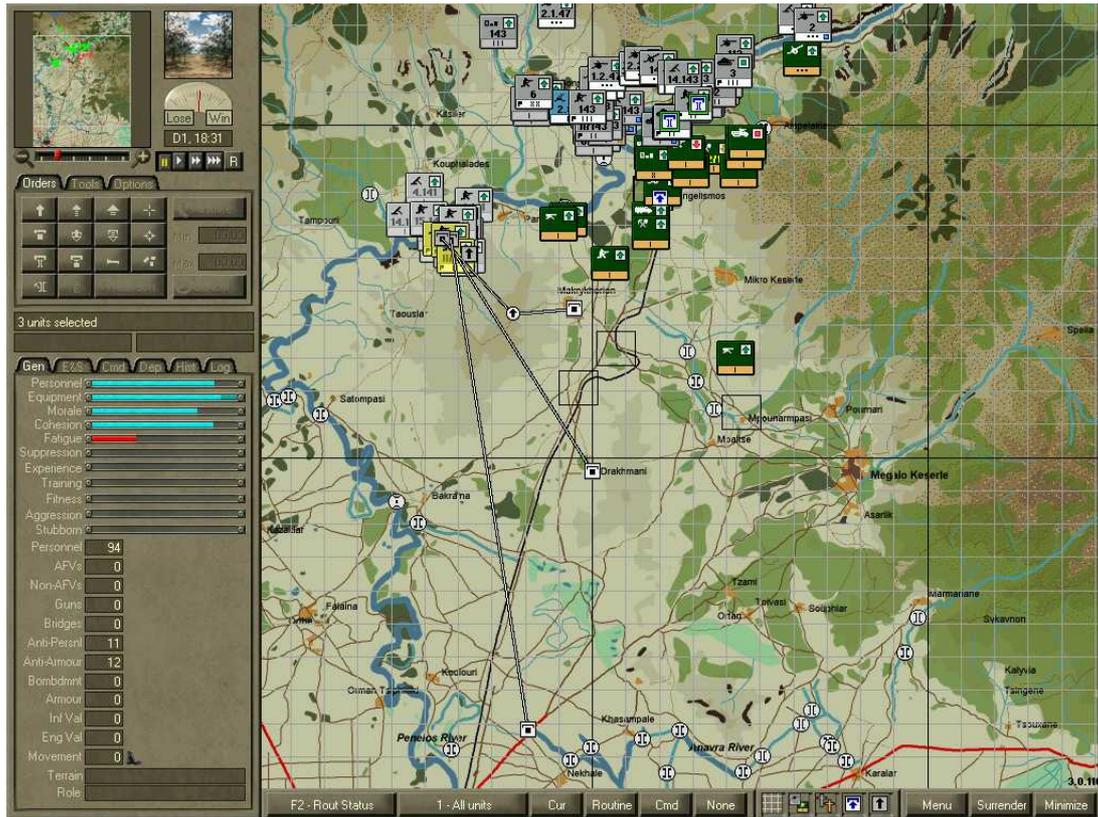
Orders are as follows (move at a normal pace; the men have done well and are tired):

141st 3rd Bn tasked to hold the Nekhale cutoff.

141st 2nd Bn tasked to hold the Drakhmani cutoff.

141st Regt remaining (1st Bn + 2 mortar plt) to hold Makrykhorion.

I have given Makrykhorion force the two mortar platoons as our forces up by Tempe will soon be driving the Allies in this direction. Those mortars will come in useful in harassing the Allied flank and rear.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 1 18:31 Now: 1 21:05

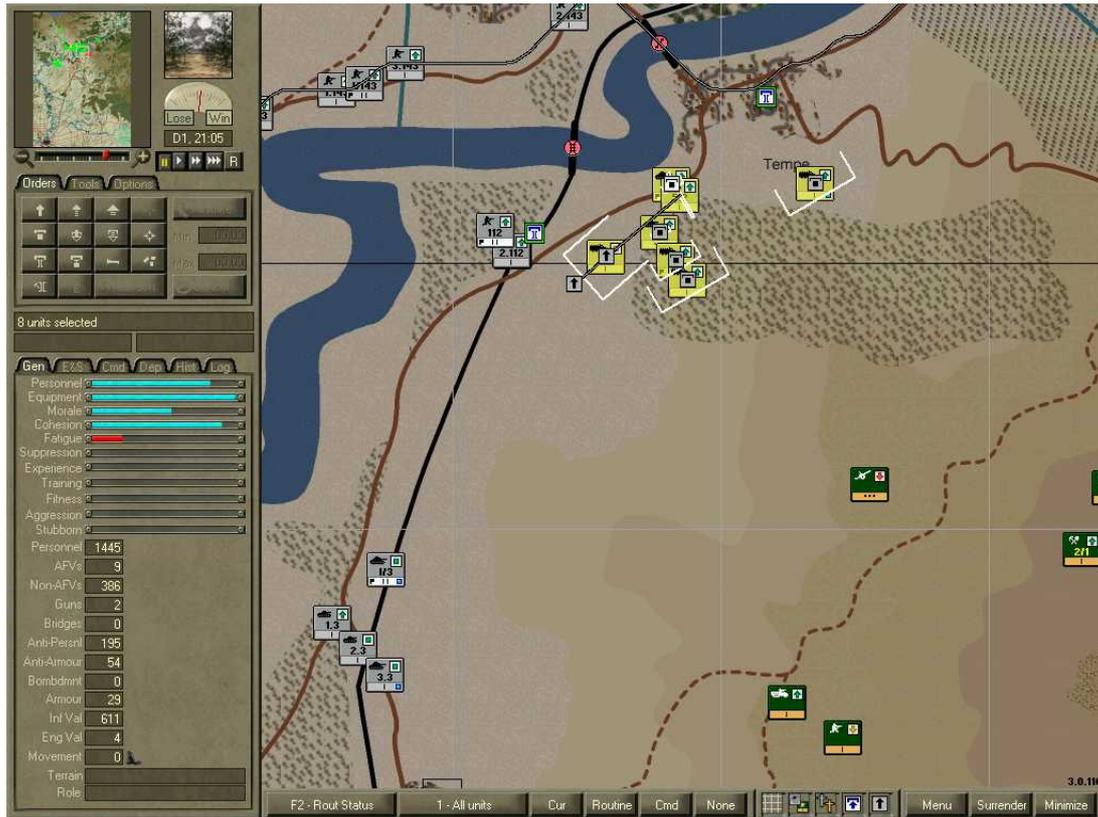
New Orders

It's dusk.

Our arty bty is now at Gonnos and was just resupplied. (From here on, I will simply let it fire under AI control.)

Pz 3 Regt is setting up its defense of Tempe.

I expect that once darkness comes, the 141st Regt should have an easy time crossing.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 1 18:31 Now: 1 21:05

New Orders

Our armor is pushing the enemy back South of Tempe near Evangelismos.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 1 18:31 Now: 1 21:05

New Orders

Order our engineering units waiting at Gonnos to unprime the bridges. It should take them a couple of hours to move out and by then it will be dark.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 1 21:05 Now: 1 22:17

New Orders

It's dark now. Order all support units to set up along the East Bank around Tempe. We'll prepare for an Allied counter-attack come first light. The 143rd Regt has yet to cross.



Start:1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 1 21:05 Now: 1 22:17

New Orders

The 141st Regt forces are on route to their new objectives.



Start:1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 1 22:17 Now: 2 02:57

New Orders

The bridges have been cleared of demolition charges by our engineers. I now form them into one force and assigned them to reinforce Tempe.

You can see that most of the support units have crossed and that the 143rd Regt is almost across.



Start:1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 1 22:17 Now: 2 02:57

New Orders

Here is the big picture.



quote:

ORIGINAL: Jim D Burns

I am very surprised how easily you repulsed the defenders. A bridge assault usually required extensive close in fighting to carry the day, but by your screen shots it appears the allies retreated before the Germans were within 1 kilometer in most cases and many were 2 km away from any Germans yet retreating.

Direct fire and artillery should cause disruption, disorder and fatigue, but given the mission the allies had, I would think only a total rout would cause their commanders to pull back. Any first year cadet knows that to abandon a strong defensive position like a river only opens their forces up to total destruction once the enemy crossed over.

I'd say support weapons and artillery are too powerful by far given these results, some hard close in infantry fighting should have been necessary to carry the day here. Even if the defenders were raw recruits, some close in fighting should have occurred before the retreat.

Jim

<Arjuna>

Thanks for your feedback Jim. I'll respond as best I can here, without having a recording of Mark's game to analyse and report back conclusively. So I'll be going on the screenshots (just like you) and what I know of the history and the game engine.

First off, most actions to secure a defended bridge are decided well before the troops actually close. The reason primarily being that most bridges and certainly the ones in Greece were very exposed with virtually no good nearby covered defensive terrain. In most cases the defending troops were easily identified at long range and systematically targeted by arty, air strikes and long range weapons. Tanks do not close unnecessarily. They utilise their best assets - ie long range firepower and armour protection. This was not

like the bridges in Holland where average visibility was only 500m due to terrain.

I agree that direct and indirect fire should cause disruption, disorder and fatigue. But that is not all they do. The most telling effect of fire is to cause casualties and casualties adversely affect a unit's morale. Once the casualties start mounting there reaches a point for the commander and for the troops where they question the feasibility of continuing with their mission. In other words once a certain casualty threshold is reached they will retreat and in some cases rout.

In COTA we differentiate between the two such that retreats are an ordered pull back while a rout is a disorganised fleeing of the field. Units and commanders have varying capacities and attributes that affect this. For units it's their stubbornness, experience, training and morale. For commanders it's their aggression and determination. Other factors also affect the result - specifically the task parameters of Aggro and Acceptable Losses. If these are low then the casualty threshold will be low and hence they will more readily concede ground.

Another factor is the task type and doctrine being employed. For instance if the force was ordered to Delay (and of course without the recording I cannot confirm this but this was the overall Allied posture) then the defenders would establish a couple of blocking positions and once the forward position was threatened or the delay route cut or threatened, then they will pull back, leapfrogging past the rear blocking position and establishing a new one. The aim of the delay force is to trade space for time and hopefully minimise friendly casualties while maximising enemy casualties. Not an easy feat for experienced troops let alone inexperienced ones.

</Arjuna>

quote:

The more I think about it the more I think the problem is available responses to incoming fire. It appears a unit either holds or retreats in the face of fire. I'd add one more response, go to ground. A unit under direct ranged or artillery fire should automatically receive an order of go to ground. They would then find the best cover within say 100 yards and go to ground. Effectively becoming pinned with a corresponding offensive fire reduction based on their experience, fatigue, disruption level, etc.

<Arjuna>

In fact there is a whole range of responses or reactions to enemy contact, fire, bombardment, air strike and assault. Units pretty much automatically go to ground when under fire. There are several deployment states - undeployed, taking cover, deployed, dug-in, entrenched and fortified. Units on the move are undeployed. As soon as they receive fire, the first thing they will do is take cover and hopefully deploy (ie occupy good firing positions) and then return fire.

The specific reaction depends on a lot of factors, including their mission, their training, experience, fitness, fatigue, morale, proximity to leaders and other reacting units, proximity to enemy, enemy actions etc just to name a few.

Units under fire have their suppression level increased. The amount of suppression varies due to a number of factors, including the terrain, the weight and effectiveness of the enemy fire, whether it is direct or indirect, training and experience and so on.

</Arjuna>

quote:

Units should only be forced to retreat if routed or if facing assault type units (Infantry, Armor, etc.). Support weapons and artillery should not be the deciding factor in capturing ground unless the damage caused is enough to cause a rout. At most it should displace a unit to better cover within a short distance of its starting location.

<Arjuna>

I disagree here. Military history, especially WW2 military history is replete with cases after case of a unit retreating in good order away from an enemy threat before that enemy assaults it. In fact most doctrine and certainly that of the Western European forces of WW2 emphasised the need when delaying to stay long enough to force the enemy to deploy for an attack but to pull out before the main enemy assault. In general the usual trigger was the second or third registration round of supporting artillery fire.

As to whether fire spt or arty should or should not be the deciding factor I think that this very much depends on the state of the defenders defensive positions. At Tempe the Allies had had little time to dig in, let alone entrench. They were not in good shape to withstand a heavy bombardment. In such circumstances hvy weapons and arty can have a field day as they did.

One of the principles of war is Momentum. Once having an enemy on the hop you want to keep him there. You do so by employing the two fundamentals of fire and movement. At the operational level you want to harrass an enemy delaying force with as much long range firepower as you can muster in order to secure the forward movement of your spearhead forces. This principle was well understood by the Germans in WW2 and was standard practice.

Having said all that I have witnessed many battles in COTA where well dug-in defenders have stood their ground against an enemy assault, where the day was only decided at the point of a bayonet or from behind an anti-tank gun firing at point blank range. Jim, rest assured that we have put a lot of work into getting the most realistic operational simulation we can. That is not to say there isn't room for improvements and fine tuning (hey there is always room for that 😊).

We do appreciate your feedback. Please don't jump to conclusions on the sole basis of your initial take on this AAR. COTA deserves more than that and you would be denying yourself a great wargaming experience.

</Arjuna>

quote:

ORIGINAL: Jim D Burns

I just think there is a problem that needs to be addressed here.

<Arjuna>

I took a look at this scenario again today and stepped through the firing code again. To keep a long story short I agree with you that the direct fire casualties from long range are too high. So I have reviewed the rates and modified weapon accuracies for direct fire across the board based on range - ie a bigger reduction the greater the distance. Essentially there is no mod at all if under 500 but up to 50% reduction when greater than 2000m.

I also interrogated the suppression code. It seems to be working OK now for bombardments but I noticed that it was nigh impossible to suppress anyone with direct fire. I have since changed this and run though the Tempe Gorge scenario. Seemed pretty good to me. I also put a mod in the Retreat code, which gets called before the suppression check, so that it now calls the suppression check and if it fails retreats in place rather than runs.

I'll be putting out a new build tomorrow and have asked our beta testers to pay close attention to this aspect. Here is a snap from the game I played showing B Coy 2/2nd Inf Bn nearly 80% suppressed and retreating in place - the suppression was due to direct fire from the German Mntn troops assaulting from the West:



Once again thanks Jim for the feedback. Maybe we should have you on our beta test team.



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ORIGINAL: Arjuna

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Once again thanks Jim for the feedback. Maybe we should have you on our beta test team. 

<Jim D. Burns>

Great to see such a quick response, I was afraid it was too close to release to see any more changes. I'm also glad I was right, I would have hated to wait your time had my impressions of what had happened in the AAR been wrong.

Basically what I think the adjustment should strive for is to have support weapons (direct

fire and artillery) suppress the enemies return fire enough to allow your assault units to close and carry the day. They should also cause casualties of course, just not enough to force consistent retreats unless the firepower being directed at the unit by said support is extremely heavy and sustained fire.

If it's possible to differentiate range penalties by weapon types, I'd give rifles 100% at 200 meters and reduce their effectiveness out to 500 meters (say 30% at 500). It was a rare case to have an accurate rifleman at 500 meters range, but most men could hit what they were aiming at at 200 meters or less.

Thanks for the beta team offer, but alas my available time is sporadic at best, so I'm afraid I'd be a disappointment as a beta tester (not reliable enough for consistent input). I will spend time with the game once released and will gladly continue to post my impressions here though.

Jim

P. S. Thanks for your tireless efforts, this is truly a ground breaking system for wargaming and will probably prove to be a classic for years to come.
</Jim D. Burns>

quote:

ORIGINAL: Jim D Burns

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<Arjuna>

We already attenuate accuracy for individual weapons over range. Most weapons have five range bands. EG a 303 rifle has the following accuracies:

50 - 90%
100 - 81%
200 - 65%
300 - 46%
400 - 28%
500 - 14%

What I did was apply a further global accuracy Mod where the range > 500m. So while this will not affect rifles (they can't fire at ranges beyond 500m anyway) it will affect MMG etc.

</Arjuna>

A little side note here. You will notice no informational messages (they usually appear scrolling from the top of the screen in red, green, yellow, and blue) in my screenshots. This is because of the way I do these AARs.

The battle has already been completed. But rather than simply take screenshots at selected moments, I make save games along with personal notes. This allows me a much greater deal of control when later getting screenshots to display the situation. (It also helps with testing, since when problems are found there is a very detailed record from which to retrace events.)

The message log which the game displays is not stored in the save game. Thus, despite quite a few informational messages (objectives changing hands, supplies being delivered, units routing or surrendering, ...) having displayed while I played, you will not see any in this AAR.

A new COTA feature allows you to filter these messages or turn them off entirely. There is

also a tab where you can display and filter all messages for the current gaming session.

Note: The individual unit log messages are stored in the save game and available on reload. What I am referring to above are global messages.

Start:1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 2 02:57 Now: 2 05:03

The sun is beginning to come up. (I once again demoed the improved environmental roll over text.)

We have spotted two concentrations of the enemy: East of Tempe and to the South at Evangelismo (a newly active objective). Some fire is being exchanged around Tempe.

Tempe is well defended and the 143rd Regt is continuing to cross.



Start:1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 2 02:57 Now: 2 05:03

Here is the situation further to the South.

Another new objective active, Makrykhorion.

I have highlighted the 141st 3rd Bn. Notice, their unit info boxes and the task line has become straight and not showing a route. These units are resting at the moment. The AI has done this automatically based on their fatigue. (as mentioned previously your units are not robots and exhibit realistic behavior and receive revised implicit orders and paths provided by their AI commanders)

We see that our armor has also taken much needed rest near Makrykhorion.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 2 05:03 Now: 2 07:43

New Orders

Here is the big picture. Good progress in the South. Our armor is on the move again.

The 143rd Regt has pretty much completed their crossing.

The enemy are concentrated around Evangelismos. We need to drive the enemy back and take it. Additionally, we need to pull our motorized infantry out from Tempe and start them heading South towards Larissa.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 2 05:03 Now: 2 07:43

New Orders

The 143rd Regt is given orders to form up along the river and attack South towards Evangelismos.

Unlike before, this is not a hasty action. This will be a deliberate and well formed attack. I have specified various task parameters (look at the left panel). Since the enemy is fairly scattered about and the attack will cover about 3km, I deem it prudent to attack in an arrowhead formation so that the flanks are adequately covered.

I have chosen not to reincorporate any support weapons (mortars and guns) directly into the attacking force. A review of the situation shows that the closest mortar platoons will be able to cover most of the attack engagement area. By the time that our forces are moving beyond their cover, the enemy should already be reeling back from the attack. If we knock them back far enough, they will come in range of the mortar platoons setting up at Makrykhorion.

Once again, I am giving macro-management orders and letting the AI handle the details of this attack for me. (There are two levels of AI command here - regiment and battalion.)

Looking at the command tab, I estimate that it is going to take 4-5 hours for this attack to get rolling.



Start:1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 2 07:43 Now: 2 08:36

New Orders

I would like to extend the reach of my arty. I order them to move South 2.5km.

(micro-managing again)



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 2 08:36 Now: 2 11:57

The big picture to the South.

Our armor has reached Larissa.

We now hold Makrykhorion and are making good progress elsewhere.



Start:1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 2 08:36 Now: 2 11:57

Here we see the 143rd Regt beginning to execute their orders to form up for the attack on Evangelismos.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 2 11:57 Now: 2 12:54

Here we see the 143rd Regt beginning the attack on Evangelismos. The thick black arrows in the unit info box on the counters indicate that they are assaulting. (Note the difference in the level coordination of this action compared to our effort at the bridges. But this type of coordination comes at a price; it takes time.)



Start:1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 2 12:54 Now: 2 13:44

The attack progresses well.



Start:1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 2 13:44 Now: 2 14:46

New Orders

The enemy has been driven back from Evangelismos and beginning to take fire in their rear from our forces at Makrykhorion.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 2 13:44 Now: 2 14:46

New Orders

Evangelismos will soon be passable.

We order our motorized infantry under the command of Pz 3 Regt HQ to make their way from Tempe to Larissa.

I won't show a screenshot, since I would need to zoom out so far that it would just appear to be a cluttered mess.

They will take a few hours to get moving.

Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 2 14:46 Now: 2 18:39

Here we see our motorized infantry on the move to the South of Evangelismos. You will notice that they are no longer traveling in road column formation on the road. They have shaken out into a different formation for better security, since the AI commander is responding to nearby enemy activity. When the threat disappears and the AI commander feels that they are secure, he will switch back to road column formation on the highway traveling via bounding overwatch.

At Panther Games, AI means what the words actually say.

Also, note due to the new COTA handling of offroad movement, their progress has slowed to a crawl.



Start:1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 2 14:46 Now: 2 18:39

We are doing okay in terms of points and scoring so far. Note, the green objectives (we own those) and the Win Meter at the top.



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 2 18:39 Now: 3 02:13

It's the early morning hours now.

I have skipped here informing you of one order. At 2 20:53, I ordered our armor to form a defensive line facing North to the North of Larissa. I did this just in case any enemy units manage to get by us in their effort to escape through Larissa. If this happens, they will meet our dug in tanks at the outskirts of town.

Our motorized infantry is 15km from Larissa now.

We hold all the objectives which were assigned to us.

As you have might guessed already, it's long since been over for the Allies. (However, when I am done with this AAR I will discuss how the Germans could have lost, and how to effectively approach this scenario as the Allied commander.)

I'll pick this up again with the Sun coming up on the final day.

Remember your comments and criticisms are welcome. However, if they are too military/historical hardcore or of a technical nature about game mechanics, then I will defer them to Dave.

The game isn't perfect; no game is. But it is as close to perfection as you can find in the current market of games, and it is a blast to play.

Take care.



quote:

ORIGINAL: elmo3

What are the Allied brigade and division units with the three boxes in the upper left of the counters? I assume they are supply depots. If so the brigade depot in the 18:39 shot is way off the road. Seems odd. I would think they would bug out to the "rear" along a road at the first sign of trouble.

If they are depots can they be captured as the Germans planned for the fuel depot near Stavelot in the upcoming BfTB? 😊

I have included a more detailed screenshot of your unit in question.

It could be a base, but remember there is FOW and reliability of this information ain't so hot.

Now, I used my little beta tester cheat toolset to check the situation out. :) Well, it is, in fact a base. It is on the move with orders to displace down the road to the South-West about 5 clicks.

Normally, bases will stay in the rear between the front line and their SEPs (supply entry point). However, remember we have overrun the Allied positions and also cutoff their retreat. So, what's a base going to do? I believe the Allied SEP is at Larissa. Sort of right where my armor is now camping. So, the Allies are completely cutoff from supplies (from the SEP and from their base). However, this is the least of their problems right now. At the moment, the thing in greatest demand are their German phrase books, since they need to start practicing how to say "Nicht schiessen! Wir ergeben uns!" auf Deutsch. :)

For those of you at home, an easy way to simply check things in a save game is to save it and when the battle is done, simply reload and surrender at that point. Then, you will see everything as it was.



quote:

Hi,

Just curious as to how one could tell by looking at the highlighted units on the map that they were no longer in road formation. To someone who hasn't played HTTR et al there doesn't seem to be any obvious indication.

Rob.

Rob,

Now that I am back at my laptop, I'll give provide some screen captures along with my previous answer to your question.

First, you'll unit roles in the side bar like this when they are breaking out into a more

secure formation.

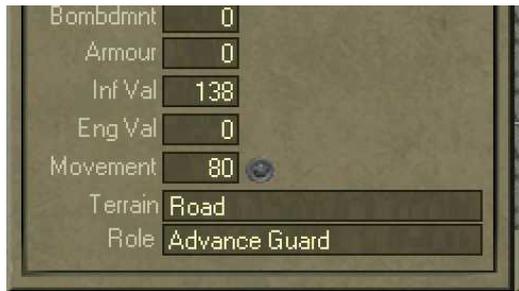


Here we see the same group of units that you had asked about approximately 8 hours later.

The AI commander no longer feels there is a threat and they are once again traveling in road column formation. Notice, the very narrow footprints and that all movement paths follow the road.



You will see unit roles for road columns such as ...



And ...



Start: 1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 3 02:13 Now: 3 05:01

New Orders

The sky is just beginning to show a little light.

You'll notice that my armor and motorized infantry are down at Larissa.

7 hours remain in the scenario. If you look at the Win Meter in the top left hand corner, you will see that I am just shy of a decisive victory. Exiting these units at Larissa will secure my decisive victory.

This is the objective labeled "Assemble at Larissa" in the objective list.



Start:1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 3 02:13 Now: 3 05:01

New Orders

I group all these units together (just do the old mouse drag routine) and give them an order to exit.



Start:1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
Last: 3 05:01 Now: 3 12:01

GAME OVER

And here is the final situation to the North.



Start:1 12:00 End: 3 12:00
 Last: 3 05:01 Now: 3 12:01

GAME OVER

And here is the final situation to the South.

You will notice that none of my units exited at Larissa. As a result, this got logged as a bug.

Had this been working right, then the units will dissappear from the map and you'll get a message. With COTA there are no predesignated units to exit. However, you must satisfy the requirements set out by the scenario designer which can be specified in armor ratings, anti-personel ratings, bombard ratings, etc... I have exited units in other games, but these units wouldn't go (and I tried everything).

So, the final result was a marginal victory. And this is now on Dave's task list to investigate. :)

Besides giving you a chance to look at COTA and pick up a few insights, one of the nice things about this thread is that it has provided you, the customers, with a chance to see what goes on behind the scenes. As you can see Panther is extremely responsive within the limits of its resources unlike companies which at best use the testers to catch bugs. The testing team is made up of a fairly diverse set of individuals from those who have done extensive historical research to having military service experience to someone such as myself who has neither but has been in systems development for 20+ years.



I said I would talk a little bit more about the scenario itself when done.

The force ratio here was something like 10:3 (Axis:Allies) with the Allies having two excellent terrain features to work with: a river and a wooded road choke point to the far North.

So, how can the player lose when playing the Germans?

Remember, I took a hasty attack approach in this AAR. I had played this previously as the Germans and instead took a deliberate attack approach and suffered a marginal defeat. What went wrong?

(1) The deliberate attacks allowed the Allies to reach their defensive positions and dig-in. That vastly improved their situation.

(2) The deliberate attacks along with enhanced defensive situation of the Allies ate up precious time that the Germans did not have.

(3) An unopposed attack generates much more fatigue than an unopposed road march. Remember the 141st Regt and 143rd Regt are also on foot and have a lot of ground to cover. Having the 141st Regt perform a deliberate attack exhausted them to the point that they had difficulty accomplishing their other objectives to the South-East.

Alright, let's flip the scenario and look at it from the Allied player's perspective. I am not going to do another AAR, but I will sketch in broad strokes a successful plan:

You cannot mass any place as the Allies, even at Tempe. It's not a question of "if the Germans will make it across the river, but more like when and in what condition". So, you have to spread your forces very thin.

You will have two arty batteries and near the end platoon of armor will show up at Larissa

to help out. Your entire force of three battalions is on foot.

You are in a hasty defense situation. You have to hustle individual companies to defensive positions immediately. They have to get to cover, halt, and dig-in before the Germans are upon them. Otherwise, what happened to the Allies in my AAR will happen to your men. If they can get dug-in, they will fair much better.

To the North, a well placed company in the woods along the road can tie up the German column of tanks and trucks for an extended period.

You will only want to place a scattering of companies along the river and hold half back in reserve and to exit.

You should set your HQ units significantly back from the action so that they don't get overrun. If HQ units should happen to be in a retreating or routing state, then they will be incapable of relaying any orders to their subordinates.

Your arty should be towards the South well clear of being overrun. They can sit on some objectives for you and also be close to Larissa when the time comes to bug out.

At Tempe, you have some good defensive terrain and it is quite feasible to blow a bridge or two if it comes to that. (The AI does this automatically if it feels it can no longer hold the crossing. This happens when you give the a deny crossing order to your units.)

To the South, there isn't any good defensive terrain around the crossings. The good terrain there is too far set back from the crossings to be effective at night. The best terrain in a couple of cases is, in fact, on the far bank. So, you are going to have to place a couple of companies over on the West Bank.

A suicide mission you say. The situation here for the Allies is that not everyone is coming home and they know it.

If you set up your defense well, then Pz 3 Regt is going to get stuck for a long time. By night fall, you can still have the Germans shooting it out with you at the river crossings. If a defending company breaks, you can try placing a blind slow barrage on the crossing point to slow the Germans up. Eventually, the Germans will regroup and come at you hard and force the issue.

As the sun begins to set, it is time to order unengaged units away from the fighting to Larissa to exit. They will get moving at night fall. It's going to take the remainder of the clock to reach Larissa.

Those units engaged along the river must stay and hold to the last man.

If the river to the South is crossed by the Germans, then you can set up an understrength battalion on the high ground to the West to protect the route South and your artillery.

You can use your late arriving armor platoon to move up the road and delay the Germans at various blocking positions if Pz 3 Regt has broken through.

This plan is good for a marginal victory. I don't know if a decisive victory is possible. In my opinion, the scenario is possibly 6-12 hours too short for the Allies to make it to Larissa to withdraw. They have a lot of ground to cover and start off pretty fatigued to begin with, and, of course, they are being shot at.

However, you may find yourself much more proficient at this game than I am. So, let me know if you succeed in getting a decisive victory as the Allies!

Here, a screen shot of the Allies blowing the bridge when I used the above plan.



Well, the Almighty and Powerful Oz aka Dave O'Connor, has fixed another bug. :)

Here you see my same units at Larissa beginning to finally exit.

It's back to testing for all of us. So that, hopefully, you will never have to experience your glorious decisive victory snatched away by a dastardly and insidious line of C++!

:)



I think I'll reproduce this below, since there is more information about COTA improvements, trends, and how the system compares to other games people are familiar with.

quote:

Ray,

Both the HTR and COTA AARs were relatively small scale both in terms of duration (2 days or less) and number of units involved (around 50) on one side. Both games come with much larger scenarios that go from 8-12 days with with hundreds of units. When I say units, I mean counters here with the smallest in scale being companies, support weapons platoons, or tank squadrons. The highest level HQ on the map would be the corp.

At the moment, the only thing limiting scenarios being even of larger scope are:

(1) CPU cycles ... as you know this results in many more calculations for pathing, LOS, and combat resolution as map size increases and unit counts go up.

(2) The UI might require some more filtering tools and OOB improvements to further reduce clutter. HTR had added friendly unit filters and a small counter view and enemy intel filter. COTA further refined the filters and added an OOB display along with an ability filter and manage global messages.

COTA took a further big step towards a future day of much larger scenarios by adding a realistic supply system. Less of an issue for small scenarios, but as they get larger, realism would be further reduced without supply routes and movement of supply via the road network.

So, the system is inherently and highly scalable both from a UI point of view and a game

mechanics point of view.

(1) It does not suffer from being unable to scale up like the Combat Mission series due to exponential work load on the player as unit counts go up. With HTRR/COTA, the work load for the player increases gradually despite vastly increasing unit counts.

(2) It does not suffer from having to abstracting low level combat and leave the details to imagination like in Victoria, HOI, and HOI2. You can command at the high level, but can follow the battle at a much lower level of detail; similar to CWBR.

(3) It does not require a two level game system coupling two disparate levels such as the Total War series, Close Combat 4/5, and the upcoming Combat Mission Campaigns.

(4) Although sometimes, I have to admit wishing I could watch some of this in 3D. 2D and counters is much easier to scale and one could argue more realistic when one contemplates command at higher levels.

Back to my AARs ... Well, given how much work it takes to compile notes, do screenshots, and write them, that accounts for why I pick the smallest scenarios to use. Otherwise, everyone would be playing the game before I even completed my AAR! Also, I like small scenarios, they are very easy to illustrate the games flexibility in terms of allowing micro/macro management side by side. Finally, small scenarios are better for writing tutorials. Another one of the testers, Gary, likes to do AARs, but he generally prefers large scenarios for his AARs. His AARs tend to focus more on the battle itself and less on the game play.

Here we see another new COTA feature - RUN UNTIL. This will run the game at the maximum speed until the particular time is reached and then pause.

Tip #1: You can speed this up by:

- (1) Turning off all message displays.
- (2) Having no units selected.
- (3) Minimizing the game (it will run in background).

Tip #2: You can know while at the Windows desktop doing other stuff that the game has paused:

- (1) {assuming you are running XP} Start the Windows Task Manager and minimize it to the System Tray. The box will show 100% bright green when the CPU is maxed out.
- (2) Set RUN UNTIL in the game and minimize it.
- (3) When the Windows Task Manager goes dark green in the System Tray, then COTA has paused.

I am sure you can think of various uses for this feature:

- (1) Turn off order delays and play in turn oriented fashion with X hour time updates.
- (2) Run quickly to the end of a scenario which you have won already and want to claim your victory.
- (3) Run through nighttime hours which are typically slow due limited LOS and resting.
- (4) If you have a marginal PC and want to play through some of the larger scenarios.
- (5) Etc ...

I bring this up, since I am going to use this feature to quickly rerun my save game from before with the new build so that I can get my units to exit and collect my decisive victory.



Finally, here is my decisive victory for this AAR as result of Dave fixing the EXIT bug and getting a new build out to us.

You can see the Win Meter at the top left is past the 3/4s mark. Basically, the game awards decisive defeat, marginal defeat, draw, marginal victory, and decisive victory. However, there are cases where the Win Meter will not accurately predict the ultimate outcome at game conclusion. (I forget the reasons for this.)

You'll notice the green objectives and the little white vertical progress bars next to the objectives showing points accumulated against the possible points which were available.

Lastly, you can see the almost 13:1 kill ratio achieved by the Germans which shows just how costly it was for the Allies to get caught on the move, lacking prepared positions, and overrun.



Here is a look at the new exit objective introduced with COTA.

I scored 14 out of a possible 25. Details as to how that breaks down are shown further below with actual/possible.

The numbers represent abstract normalized values of combat ability in various categories of anti-personel, armor, and bombardment. (This is explained in the manual.)



Here are a few quick tips (new; not covered in my HTTR tips)

(1) Setting a bombard duration down to 1 minute is a quicker way of canceling the barrage than deleting the task, since there is no order delay with changing the duration.

(2) Calling in fire missions manually is faster than waiting for the AI. Although not exactly an order delay, there is some delay for the fire mission to be ordered.

(3) The AI for on-call arty seems to prefer not to call fire missions on contact's that are poor, even though they are current. Of course, you can call them in yourself.

(4) You cannot drop arty on your own troops, the AI has a "friendlies in the way" fail safe mechanism. This can be used to keep the enemy under barrage until the very moment that your troops close with them.

(5) Even when arty has stood down from on-call fire missions due to fatigue, you can push them to give beyond the auto fatigue threshold rest cutoff by manually ordering them to bombard. (Not sure if the same can be done with all units.)

(6) If you have tried to coordinate a plan, but something is running behind schedule and you need to halt other forces, but you don't want to have to re-input the entire plan later, then try switching the force's formation to in-situ. This should get them to pause in their tracks after the order delay has been applied. Later, change the formation back to whatever it was and after the order delay, they should get on the move again.

Earlier in this thread Dave had explained how regular supply is evaluated every 12 hours. It was asked whether, things are constrained by that or can resupply move quicker when it is needed.

Here is an example of supply being pulled as opposed to pushed.

The log for my arty bty in urgent need of shells. They ran through their stock of shells in little over an hour. (I was testing Dave's latest tweaks as per our discussions with Jim Burns in this thread.)



Here you can see six emergency resupply requests for the supply depot. It is pretty certain that one or two was from that arty bty.



Based on paying attention to this while playing. This unit is getting resupplied at 2X the rate of normal resupply.

An example of cut supply lines (red lines = bad; green lines = good); mine unfortunately!

Our base is to the East and the fighting is to the West. And a German unit has managed to block the road (not sure what they are exactly; suspect motorized infantry or engineers).



Here is another view using the unit info box showing that my supply line has been cut.



Here is a view using the ammo display for the unit info box. Light gray is fully stocked with ammo. You see that the situation although worrisome is not immediately critical.



Tip: Consider turning off routine messages by setting your global message filter to urgent. With the new supply system, you get blasted with so many supply related messages that it is very easy to miss messages for arriving reinforcements and airstrikes. Both have a time critical element. The former has order delays waived for 59 minutes and the latter is only available for 20 minutes.

Tip: When approaching a scenario where you are on the defensive, besides examining enemy approaches, terrain, and your force structure; make sure to check the deployment status of your units via the deployment unit info box (F5 key).

There may be times that despite what your optimal plan calls for that you find units already dug-in or entrenched. Entrenching could easily take a day or more (I do not have exact figures available) and is a significant force multiplier. Thus, such units would be very hard for an enemy to dislodge. So, when you observe such deployments try to work them into your plan as opposed to discarding all the effort your troops made to prepare their positions before you arrived on the field.

Below is an example of such a unit (see unit info box and see deployment status in the left panel).



Tip: Two good ways to review your implemented plan before starting a battle.

(1) "=" key will show all units having orders and use the mouse to drag select the entire map. That's your entire plan.

(2) To see just the high level stuff. Try the "2" key which will show all HQ units and use the mouse to drag select the entire map. Since HQ unit orders usual represent the large battle force orders, this will filter out micro-managed arty/mortars, micro-managed support weapons, and single unit recon missions. Thus, leaving you with just the big picture.

The AI when generating orders on your behalf works in steps. This is most noticeable for orders such as attack, but occurs with other orders as well. Thus, you must be patient, since the AI apparently not following your orders is just due to you looking at an intermediate step.

For example, I have ordered this Bn to set up for a reverse slope defense in some dead space (see the parameters on the left panel and the yellow footprint template). However, it looks like the AI is ignoring me here.



Now, one minute later on the clock. And you can see the AI has issued new implicit orders which conform to my intentions as the commander. The previous screen shot was just an intermediate step.



I only learned this recently myself.

I always had the impression that when you see the engagement status box on the counter (bottom right) as white (meaning surrender) that the commander of the unit was waiving a white flag and looking to surrender his command. And I always found it odd that the unit would move around quite a bit and not actually surrender to the enemy.

Well, I recently found out that it means that some of the personnel are surrendering and not necessarily the entire unit. It's more analogous to casualties and strength being lost.

Sadly, this unit is one of mine. The Luftwaffe keeps hitting them with air strikes!



<JeF>

And now my reactions :

quote:

ORIGINAL: MarkShot

For those who are interested, this scenario took me roughly about 4-5 hours to play. This includes thinking time, playing time, making some notes, making save games for later use, and chatting with other beta testers.

You shouldn't be afraid by this 4-5 hours figure. Normally one day in the game play in roughly an hour. That is for HttR and on a sub-GHz machine. 2 days scenario in one sitting are very feasible.

quote:

For those of you who have read my HTTR guides, you know that I am very fond of time tables, recon, carefully planned attacks with multiple axes of advance, etc... Well, you'll see none of that here. :)

Which prove once again that you can play this game in various ways. And, as Mark pointed out afterwards, even change style mid-game.

quote:

Finally, in this battle, I made extensive use of manually issuing fire missions to my arty bty. (the other alternative is to simply leave your arty under AI control) This was required and did have a decisive impact. Given the frequency and fluid nature of such orders, we will not consider these to represent new "order cycles", but instead I will just describe this aspect of the battle in broad strokes.

Great way to show how to deploy and use your arty decisively. I usually tend to be lazy and let the AI control my tubes. Not as efficient.

quote:

(2) In general, fatigue rates have been increased. For longer (time duration) operations, you are not going to be able to push a single force through days of hard action. Night fatigue rates have been increased to be more significant than they were in HTTR. Additionally, terrain slope will also play a role.

Nice touch. Though it will be a bit more difficult or the player. We'll need to be more carefull with our digital men.

quote:

Tip: If you let the AI control your arty and mortars, the ROF (rate of fire) will always be slow.

Really ? Can't you put your units on-call by assigning a defend order with the ROF you want ?

And if you choose a high ROF on an attack, won't the arty attached to the attacking formation use a high ROF ?

quote:

So, how long will it take for them to start acting on new orders. I would say about three hours.

Again, for newcomers, don't be afraid by the value. MarkShot likes to play with the highest setting (painfully realistic). Other settings will give you lower values, but it will never be zero. I never played past the "realistic" setting (ok maybe once to try it out). I resent the world "painfully" negatively. 😞

quote:

Useful to decide whether COTA is the right investment for you?

No ! 🤖

I was sold long ago.

quote:

Useful to help you to learn to play the game?

You bet !
Thanks again.

</JeF>

JeF,

Good to hear from you!

ROF for bombard when done by the AI is always = LOW. Or put another way, the ROF parameter only applies to direct fire weapons unless you are giving a bombard order.

I thought if you completely turn off order delay, then you get practically instantaneous order response. In my opinion when you first get the game as a first time player, you should play a game or two like this just to see how the interface works.

Regarding arty usage: In the latest build I am now testing, an arty barrage alone on dug-in troops is less likely to cause them to displace. However, the same barrage on troops on the move is now more likely to shatter them.

As I pointed out earlier, global messages are not stored in the save file.

Tip: If you get reinforcements or an air strike right before saving a gaming session to resume later, then you might want to write down the time of the event, since you will have no idea when you reload at what time the air strike or waived order delays for the reinforcements will expire.

Tip: It may also be good to jot down the time a key order is issued to a force, since it is not recorded anywhere, but you will need that base time in order to estimate when the order will be executed.

<Joe 98>

quote:

ORIGINAL: MarkShot

Tip: If you get reinforcements or an air strike right before saving a gaming session to resume later, then you might want to write down the time of the event.....

This is a classic case for making use of computers to improve wargaming.

To add some kind of low quality text based note pad to the game. The note pad would be accessed via a menu and saved together with any save game file.

When you open the save game file the note is available to you.

</Joe 98>

C:\WINDOWS\notepad.exe

That will work fine and leave Dave and team devote their programming talents to the stuff that only they can do. :)

Yes, the map brightens and darkens with the sunrise and sunset. That's been in since HTTR

<Arjuna>

quote:

ORIGINAL: Joe 98

quote:

ORIGINAL: MarkShot

Tip: If you get reinforcements or an air strike right before saving a gaming session to resume later, then you might want to write down the time of the event.....

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When you open the save game file the note is available to you.

-

Good idea.

TT2560 - UI - Add Notebook to Game and save with Saved Game

</Arjuna>

<Arjuna>

Well actually Mark the casualty effect of arty on undeployed forces has not changed from HTTR to COTA per se. Rather we have toned down the casualty effect on deployed and dug in forces. Further we have increased the suppression effect across the board and we have modified the reactions units will take such that units already deployed or better are more likely (not guaranteed) to stay put rather than run away when under bombardment.

</Arjuna>

A lesson I just learned from playing a scenario two times (First time, I surrendered. Second, decisive victory.)

Situation: You are forced to attack in the face of heavy air and arty over open terrain.

Approach:

(1) During the day, dig-in and weather it as best you can.

(2) If it is not possible to be out of view of the enemy, then, at least, try to be reverse

slope to limit the amount of direct fire which your positions will have to take.

(3) At night fall, attack. This eliminates the enemy's air support. Arty support will be diminished due to two factors. First, the enemy will experience greatly reduced LOS. Second, for units that close with the enemy his arty will be prohibited from bringing in fire so close.

(4) If the best happens, you might even be able to get dug-in partially unmolested before his air support returns the next morning.

(No screen shots as I don't want this thread to be full of spoilers, but for the AAR; rather just tips out of any particular context.)

<Arjuna>

Good advice Mark. I would add that any covered terrain should be sought after during daylight as this will limit visibility for direct, arty and air strikes.

</Arjuna>

quote:

ORIGINAL: Joe 98

Do the maps change colour after dark to represent night time?

-

<Arjuna>

Yes. The map darkens at dusk and even more at night and lightens at dawn and even more at day.

</Arjuna>

<JeF>

Mark,

I finally found some time to read through all this this morning and you're still managing to post more. We'll never be able to follow. 😊

Good work as always Mark. The big screenshots are a good idea. The "zoomed in" ones... maybe not : to pixellated.

As pictures are worth thousands words, you manage to write to much as usual. 😊

As I wrote to you yesterday, CotA seems sufficiently different from HttR that seasoned players like me might learn a few things by reading your tips and it is the case. I even saw that Dave learned how his game was working. 😊

Seems a very fun battle to play and I'm really looking forward to play it.

BTW, what was the historical outcome of the battle ?

JeF.

</JeF>

Some thoughts on what a single company can accomplish when a road block is not feasible ...

If a single company gets time (2-4 hours) and the right terrain (woods or town), it can set up quite a formidable road block for motorized forces. This has been covered in the past posts. Additionally, it was mentioned how in COTA due to off road movement rates for vehicles that this will be more effective than it was in HTTR.

However, what to do when you only have time, but the road passes through clear terrain? Here is what you can do, but note that this is going to work best in daylight, since you are not actually going to create a road block.

Take your company and find some decent cover not too far (0.5-1.5km) from the road. It would also be good if this position is somewhat elevated. Dig-in there.

Although this will not stop the enemy, it will really slow them down. Slowing them down is often good enough to run them out of time they need to accomplish their objectives and/or buy time for your troops to get somewhere and dig-in.

Why is this going to work?

(1) If you can bring fire on columns moving down the road, then the enemy commander will be obliged to shake out into a better defensive formation. This will take some time. However, most importantly once the enemy does this, it could be 3-5 hours before they form up into road column again (even if there is no more threat). So, you have probably, at a minimum, bought yourself a few hours.

(2) Once the enemy shakes out into a better defensive formation, then his movement rate is going to be significantly degraded due to off road travel. This could cause him to perhaps suffer as much as a 75% degradation in his movement rate.

(3) If the enemy commander deems that your position is strong enough, he may even elect to assault it. Stopping and assaulting your position could easily cost 2-4 hours.

(4) Finally, if your company can call in mortar or artillery fire, then they may even succeed in routing some enemy units and holding their position for quite a while against vastly superior numbers.

<BK6583>

Mark,

Your excellent online tutorial for HTTR (as well as the equally excellent strategy guide) really helped me get into this wonderful game. I do have a question (or a belated "Tips" recommendation for COTA). Is there any way to code the AI to employ/deploy its artillery any better? Right now I would say that that is the AI's biggest failing in what is otherwise a very good (dare I say perhaps the best wargame AI out there?) opponent. But geez, it gets really stupid with its artillery. I've had to make my own house rule to not fire on AI artillery that's sitting on clear terrain in plain view or which sometimes even appears to join right in with the rest of its forces conducting an assault.

Bob

</BK6583>

<Arjuna>

Bob,

I personally have spent many hours improving the firebase code. While there may still be a rare case of it choosing a bad location our testers haven't reported any wayward ones in a long time. 😊

</Arjuna>

Bob,

In addition to Dave's answer, a couple of things to keep in mind while playing COTA:

(1) The unit type graphic when playing with non-mil symbols (and I suspect mil symbols too) does not make a distinction between artillery and field guns (however, the game mechanics does make a distinction). The former can bombard (indirect fire), but the latter are direct fire only weapons. Thus, you are going to see "gun units" moving forward in an assault group similar to mortars (ie. movement to contact). These would be your or the enemy's field guns and that is as it should be.

(2) There may be cases of some units equipped with guns that can fire indirect, but the unit is configured as a direct fire unit. Steve Long once explained it to me ... basically indirect fire requires special training of the unit. Just because a unit has a capable gun doesn't mean that they can actually do it. In COTA equipment tab for your units, it will list the gun as direct fire only.

Here is a sample:



By the way, we are aware that the text description makes it overrun the display space.

<BK6583>

Mark,

That's an excellent point and I learned that the hard way when I placed a unit with an arty symbol and couldn't understand why the heck it wasn't using indirect fire until I looked real close at the equipment listing. That said, I have checked and all too often those arty units in my LOS were, in fact, indirect fire units. In several Nijmegen scenarios as the Allies, the AI left a slew of mortars and field artillery units just north of Nijmegen across the WAAL in plain LOS to my units. In other similar scenarios, the AI had mortar and field arty units seemingly milling around south of Nijmegen itself. At any rate, glad to hear that this has apparently been addressed for COTA.

Bob

</BK6583>

<Golf33>

Actually on Crete most of the Allied guns were missing parts (like sights for example) and I dare say firing tables would have been in short supply as well. Where you see "direct fire" in the screen shot above, it is telling you that this gun would normally be capable of indirect fire but in this unit it is missing its sights and can only fire direct.

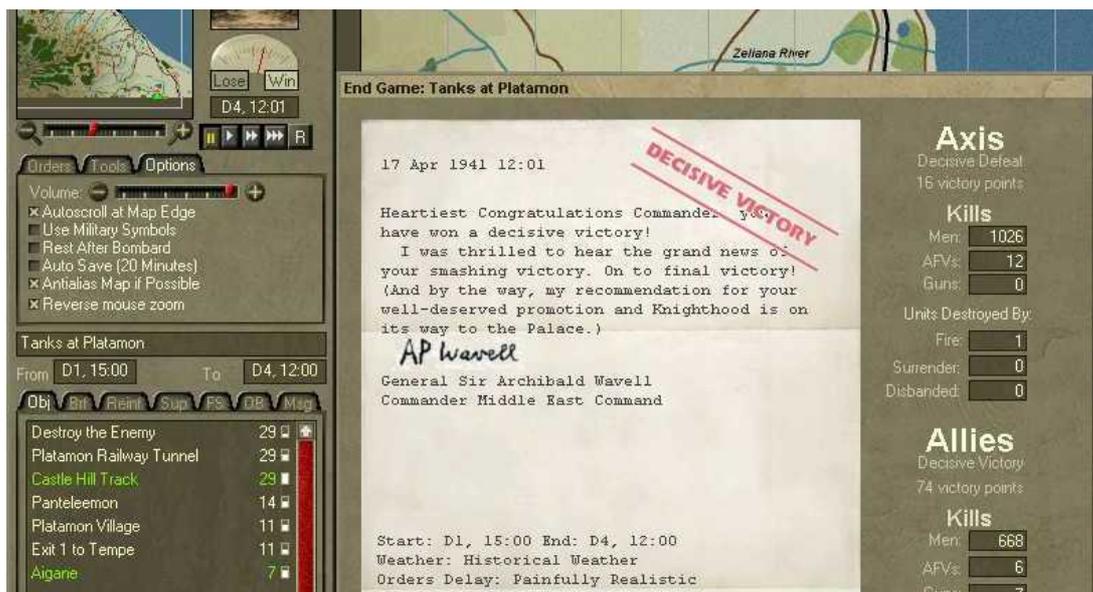
Just a very minor nitpick, it's not "field guns" that can't fire indirect - it's "infantry guns". Field guns are a class of artillery defined by trajectory and calibre and are normally indirect-fire equipment.

Regards
Steve

- - -

Here is a little example to illustrate our previous discussion on how the Win Meter can be misleading at times.

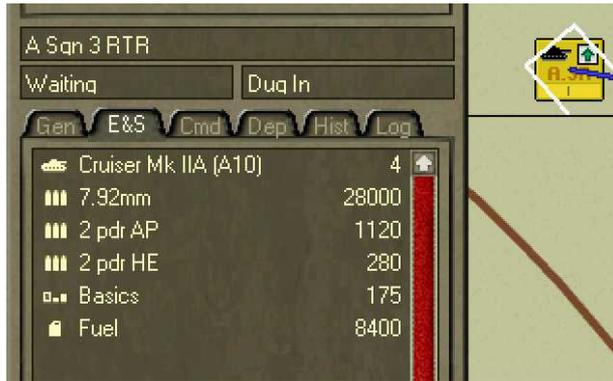
You'll notice that based on the Win Meter that I would have received a Marginal Victory. However, the actual result is a Decisive Victory. In other words, "it ain't over until the fat lady sings" ... or is that when Herman Goering sings?; I forget.



Here is a tip for those of you who are like me, wargamers but have yet to reach the level of supreme grog. Meaning that you are not a walking version of compilations of Jane's WWII weapon reference publications.

I am just about to start a new scenario. I see that I have some tanks available, "Cruiser Mk IIA (A10)". It has taken me long enough to understand what the capabilities of a Sherman, Panther, or Tiger is. But who knows what this thing is. Is it bull dozer with a boiler tank over it as armor and a light machine gun for fire power? "A10" ... hmm could it have a rapid fire gattling gun firing explosive armor piercing rounds? (maybe the wrong designation or wrong era)

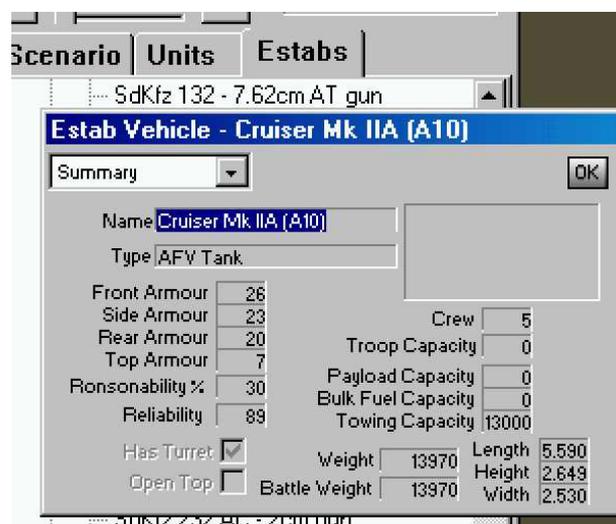
I need some help!



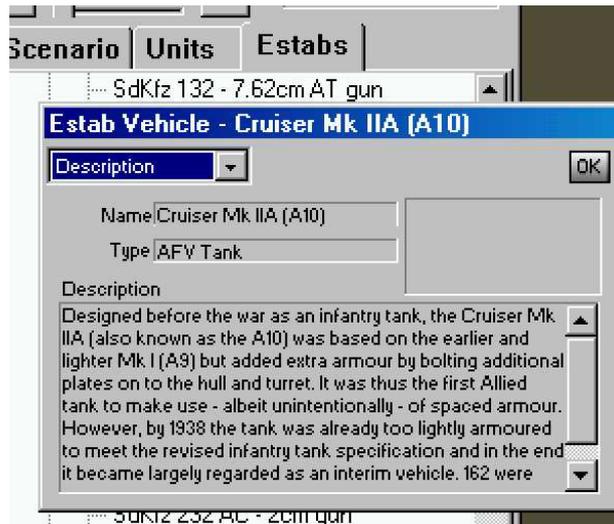
Here is what you can do:

- (1) Run SM (scenario editor) - the install should create a shortcut for this. Otherwise, it will be SM.EXE.
- (2) Open any scenario from the file menu. I suggest using one of the tutorials so you don't actually spoil for yourself one you are going to play.
- (3) Go to the left panel's ESTAB tab. This contains the complete database of what is in the game.
- (4) In this case (it works like Windows Explorer), select "equipment" and then "vehicles".
- (5) Scroll the list to find the object you want and double click on it.

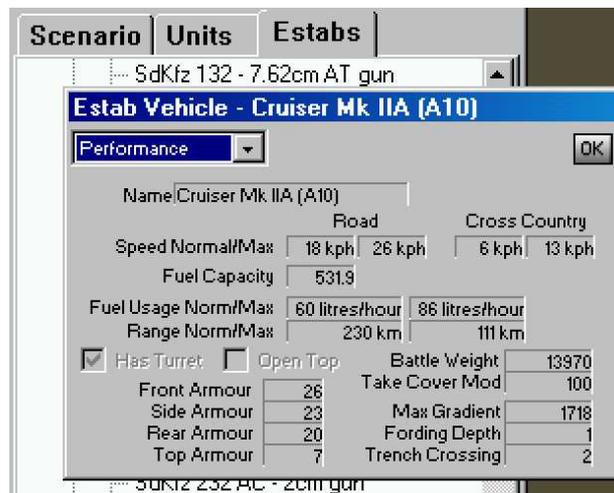
What you get (1) ...



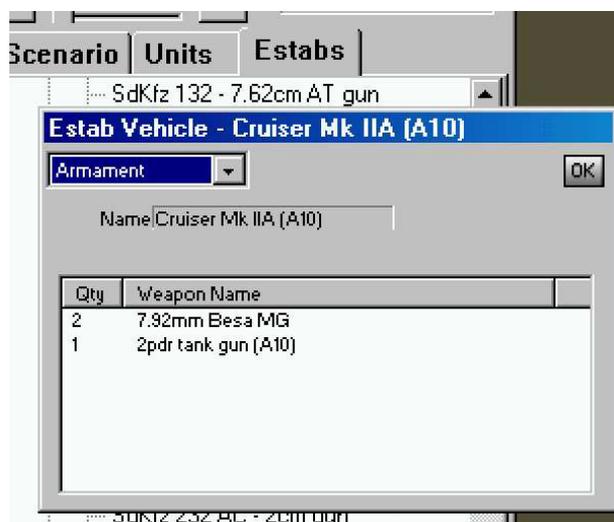
What you get (2) ...



What you get (3) ...



What you get (4) ...



<RayWolfe>

Yea, but it doesn't tell you never to get in one if you want to live! Unless you're up against some even worse Italian offering of the same period. 😊
Ray

</RayWolfe>

<Deathreader>

Hi,

Nice feature for equip.info. Its too bad though, that it isn't available read-only directly in the game as a database ref. If you want to know, should it really have to be nec. to shut down the game and then launch the editor?? Wishlist item??
Still love the system though!! 😊

Rob.

</Deathreader>

quote:

ORIGINAL: MarkShot

It's on the wishlist.

Note: No need to shut down the game to run the scenario editor to check the equipment info.

Hi,

As always, thanks for the quick & timely responses. Your tips and tutorials motivated me to purchase HTTR a couple of weeks ago. Am having a blast!!!! 🎮🎮

Rob.

<BK6583>

Markshot,

Ok - I have to ask the dumb question: How are we supposed to use this?

</BK6583>

Bob,

See post #227 of this thread discussion items 6a-c. It shows how this technique can be woven into a larger plan to slow and hurt a much larger enemy force than one's own as they advance towards and beyond your initial position.

Also, see post #122 in the HTTR thread:

<http://www.matrixgames.com/forums/tm.asp?m=554121&mpage=5&key=>

Please be advised that beyond the tutorial AAR which opened the thread, I am intentionally not providing an excessive amount of contextual information and big picture examples. As with my HTTR threads before, I want this to be a thread of tips and not one of scenario spoilers. The idea is that the reader will be introduced to a collection of techniques which he/she may then use as building blocks in constructing his/her own strategies while

playing the game.

Now, if those don't help you see how differential sighting can play a pivotal role in a particular battle. Then, please come back with some more precise questions as to what part you are having trouble with. Like:

- (1) Does this technique buy you anything on the attack?
- (2) How much lead time does that company need to get situated?
- (3) What good is this at night?
- (4) How can I get them set up there without them exposing themselves unnecessarily to enemy observation?
- (5) Must it be a company on foot or will a motorized infantry company do?

That would be helpful, since it's hard for me to know where to begin when you simply say "I don't get it". I am not trying to be troublesome. Rest assured when I got RDOA (HTTR's predecessor) in 2002, I was well beyond hopelessly lost. In fact, I was still in such a state of command confusion when I joined the beta team. Luckily while on a couple of month trip to China, I found the time to play/beta-test the game quite a bit. Only then, did things start to become clear to me. However, even now, it seems that I am still picking up things almost every time I play.

Thanks, Bob.

<BK6583>

Markshot,

Point very well taken. I guess was I was trying to ask is since I can't switch sides and see what the bad guys see, how can I ascertain what terrain features will actually afford me this LOS "protection"? If I really can't ascertain this, then my dumb question was how can I plan a defense based upon this seeming lack of knowledge. I hope this is maybe a tad less mudier than my earlier post.

Respectfully,

Bob

</BK6583>

Bob,

Thanks. What you are asking is now much clearer to me.

First, a little bit about how I play. I always pause when giving orders. Except for bombard orders/changes, I always create a save game before and after. I started doing that a long time ago when I was trying to learn the game, since I could then try something different without having to replay from scratch. In any case, I have maintained that habit until today (I rarely ever back track and try something different) for two reasons. First, it is invaluable when beta testing, since when issue arise I have reproducible examples I can turn over to Dave. Second, it allows me to go back to completed games later and cull out examples for tips.

quote:

ORIGINAL: BK6583

... I guess was I was trying to ask is since I can't switch sides and see what the bad guys see ...

So, getting back to your question. That entire game was completed playing it just as you would when you purchase it. The planning and execution was done without any beta cheat tools. However, after completing the game, I thought their usage would help to better illustrate my point. Thus, the presentation using the beta cheat tools. You should have no problem achieving the same results that I did.

quote:

ORIGINAL: BK6583

... ascertain what terrain features will actually afford me this LOS "protection"? ...

Okay, I went to the back of the HTR manual to view the various tables of terrain affects to see if I could get you some documentation on this. However, the tables are really presented with symmetric LOS in mind as opposed to differential sighting. Thus, they only address the theoretical maximum LOS through the particular terrain type. There is a little note below one of the tables that says "Units moving and firing are easier to see.". So much, for providing you with hard numbers.

So, let me tell you what I believe to be true and probably is (both of HTR and COTA):

(1) Open terrain meaning lacking buildings and/or trees will tend facilitate spotting of a unit present in it.

(2) Closed terrain such as woods and towns will tend to diminish spotting of a unit present in it.

(3) The lower the deployment status (halted units always start to go through the deployment cycle) the easier units are to spot. Undeployed -> Taking Cover -> Deployed -> Dug-in -> Entrenched -> Fortified Represent increased difficulty in spotting a unit.

(4) In conjunction with #3 movement makes units easier to spot.

(5) Firing makes units easier to spot.

(6) Units with AFVs or motorised units have a higher profile and therefore are easier to spot.

(7) Foot infantry has a small profile and is relatively harder to spot.

(8) Increased distance within the range of maximum LOS reduces spotting.

(9) Relative unit size impacts how easy it is to spot.

Now, that is what I believe and needless to say there are many questions as to how those things interact with each other. Also, there are whole host of other questions like:

(1) Is spotting ability reduced when a unit is in motion?

(2) Does firing at night make a unit easier to be spotted?

(3) Will overcast (dim lighting) reduce spotting capability in an asymmetric fashion?

(4) Will weather such as rain as opposed to dry still conditions reduce spotting as it generates noise in the environment?

So, going back to your question of what did I know and how did I use it to create the desired affect:

(1) I chose a point of observation with a view to a major road that provided the enemy a way to travel along their axis of advance. With the severe movement restrictions that exist

in COTA compared to HTTR, this is critical.

(2) The position picked was itself unlikely to directly along the enemy's path but rather adjacent to it. Making it less likely that the enemy would stumble upon the position.

(3) I chose an elevated position, since it would afford the greatest field of view over the area of interest. The proverbial "high ground".

(4) I chose woods (not an orchard or light woods) as it would offer the best cover to hide my presence.

(5) I didn't really have motorized infantry available to me, but if I did I would have still chosen an infantry company on foot. Why? In COTA, woods are impassable to motorized infantry. Also, infantry on foot should have a lower profile. (You could do the same technique with motorized infantry along the outskirts of a town.)

(6) I chose a position set back from the road by about 2-5km. This will tend to discourage unit from getting involved in a fire fight with small arms. However, if your intention was to block instead of observe, then you should be between 0.0-2.0km.

(7) I made sure there would be at least six hours or so before the enemy were in the area so that they would have time to dig-in.

(8) I made sure that their orders would have them take internal trails through the woods to get into position as opposed in front of the tree line along the ridge which might skylight them for the enemy.

There you have it in as much detail that I can give you.

Is it guaranteed that they won't be spotted? No, nothing is guaranteed. In fact a unit in the same tree line 3km to the North-West with the same mission was spotted and pounded without mercy by German arty.

You'll know it worked, as I did, if you see everything that is going on, but you are not taking any significant fire or arty.

Remember differential sighting also means you see them before they see you. So, if you had them spotted for six hours before they spotted you that means for six hours your guns could be hammering them. That's worth a lot.

Also, remember that even though your unit is spotted, a dug-in unit in a tree line is not that easy to dislodge without an actual assault. If the enemy doesn't assault their location, then they can continue to fulfill their mission. If the enemy does assault their position, then it means he has ceased making progress towards where he was really intending to go. Either way that company will make a significant contribution towards delaying the enemy's progress.

Well, that was quite a discussion. I hope that makes it all clear.

<Golf33>

quote:

ORIGINAL: MarkShot

quote:

ORIGINAL: BK6583

... ascertain what terrain features will actually afford me this LOS "protection"? ...

Okay, I went to the back of the HTTR manual to view the various tables of terrain affects to see if I could get you some documentation on this. However, the tables are really presented with symmetric LOS in mind as opposed to differential sighting. Thus, they only address the theoretical maximum LOS through the particular terrain type. There is a little note below one of the tables that says "Units moving and firing are easier to see.". So much, for providing you with hard numbers.

Actually, the numbers in the manual indicate how close the enemy needs to get before they can see one of your units when it's in that type of terrain.

I don't have the manual to hand right now so I am making the numbers up but to roughly illustrate what I mean:

Let's say Woods have visibility of 500m. You have an infantry company deployed in the edge of some woods. This means the enemy has to come within 500m of your infantry company in order to have any chance of spotting them. Meanwhile, the enemy is in open ground so your infantry company can see them while they are much further away.

Remember that the visibility numbers in the HTTR manual refer to a deployed infantry company in perfect weather conditions. If your unit is moving or firing, or it is composed of guns and vehicles, then it will be easier to spot (the enemy may see it from further away). If the weather is less than perfect, it will be harder to spot (the enemy will have to get closer to have a chance to spot it).

Regards
Steve

<BK6583>

Markshot,

Very, very clear!! I'm definitely impressed - I've been floating in and out of this forum and HTTR and you ALWAYS seem to take the time to provide timely and accurate answers. I salute you!

Respectfully,

Bob

</BK6583>

quote:

ORIGINAL: Major Disaster (from the new features thread)

...

9. Msg finder. When a msg says (for example) 6 Coy retreating it would be nice to be able to click on the msg and instantly find 6 Coy.

...

I just found out that if you click on a message in the message tab, it will select the corresponding unit on the map. If you double click, it will center that unit on the map as well and bring up the general tab.

Note: This only works from the message tab and not the scrolling messages on the top.



quote:

ORIGINAL: Arjuna

Re using the on map messages. Just hit the End key to select the last one and thgen the Page Up and Page Down keys to navigate up and down the list of on-map messages. Hit the Home button to select the sending unit. Too easy. 😊

Yep. Folks were aware of that, but they were wanting to be able to mouse click those messages too. Well, at least, they can do it from the message log.

Regarding: Airstrikes

I only just realized this today, since I usually just hit the "S" key to target and pretty much use it as soon as it is announced.

Here is another little improvement that probably Paul slipped in. A count down timer for airstrikes. Although I don't know what min/max do, since they appear to always be the same. Perhaps when you have more than one strike pending they are different.



<Golf33>

quote:

ORIGINAL: MarkShot

Here is another little improvement that probably Paul slipped in. A count down timer for airstrikes. Although I don't know what min/max do, since they appear to always be the same. Perhaps when you have more than one strike pending they are different.

Yes. One shows the time until the first airstrike turns into a pumpkin, the other shows the time until the last airstrikes disappears.

Regards
Steve

Thanks, Steve.

So, going back to Bob's question and using what Steve said and flipping to the back of the HTTR manual (Dave is still working on the COTA docs), we have the following:

- (1) The enemy was in clear terrain moving as a mixed force of infantry, motorized infantry, etc...
- (2) My infantry company was on foot dug-in to heavy woods.

According to the following section of tables, my unit could spot the enemy out to 10km, and the enemy would have had to approach to within 0.2km to spot my unit. Of course, personal experience tells me that well before 0.2km, my unit would have given away their position due to laying down fire upon the enemy.

Now, it is possible that setting ROF=LOW and AGGRO=MIN may diminish the chance of my unit revealing their position by firing upon the enemy, but I haven't really played around with that in this context. Dave, would that have mattered?

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Movement</u>		<u>Visib</u>
		<u>Mot</u>	<u>Non</u>	
<u>Vegetation</u>				
	Heide	28	50	1667
	Orchard	6	37	400
	Lt Woods	12	40	1000
	Hvy Woods	4	30	200
<u>Ground</u>				
	Airfield	100	100	2000
	Marsh	3	20	1000
	Broken	8	37	400
	Polder	5	35	500
	Clear	20	50	10k

Outside, it is a gloomy and overcast Sunday afternoon in the North East of the USA. Inside, I am sitting in my office surrounded by piles of paperwork which has accumulated over the last few months.

I am left with a tough decision. I could either clean up these piles by 12/31/05 or work on this thread some more.

I'll have to mull this over a bit ...

:)

When I had started this thread and presented my AAR, I had stated that one of my goals was to "Point out some the new features/changes since HTTR". I had also stated that one of the most significant improvements in the game engine, supply, would not be addressed by my AAR due to the nature of that particular battle.

Well, I am now ready to talk a little bit about supply. I am by no means a supply expert. Hopefully, Eddy and Ray will pop by later to give some of their insights.

Here you see a section of the coastline of Crete.

I will playing as the Germans. Where you see the red highlight is where I will be having para drops. Where you see the purple X will be the location of my supply base.

The scenario will run for a little over three days with everyone being on the ground within the first few hours.

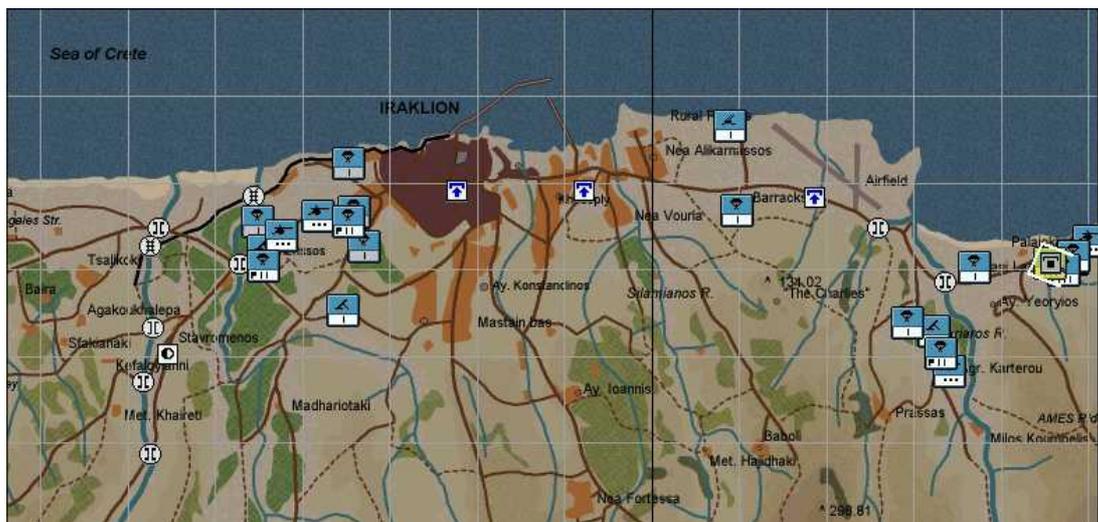
I have decided to concentrate my efforts on the town of Iraklion to the West and the Airfield to the East. Also, observe that the location of my supply base is to the extreme East.



We are about 3+ hours into the scenario and everyone is on the ground.

I have turned off the display of enemy units and I am using small counters on the moment. (The actual battle is not really of interest for what I want to demonstrate.)

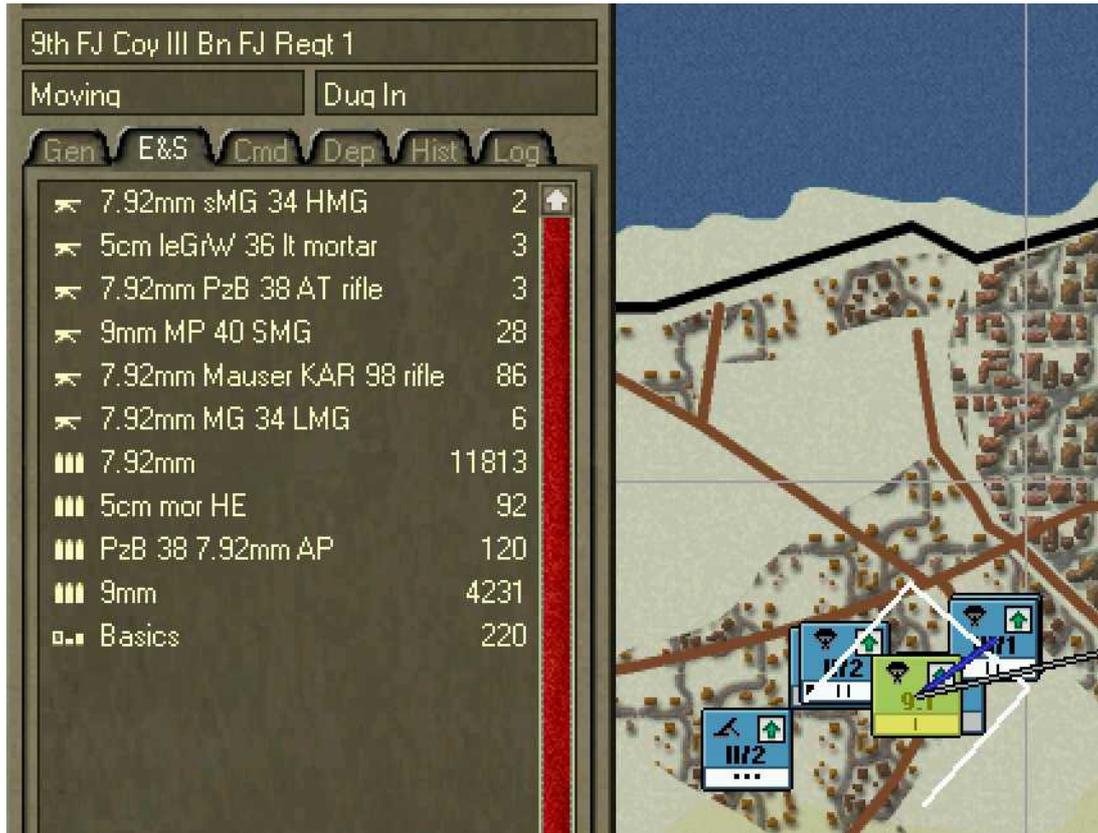
The highlighted unit is my one and only supply base.



It's about 8-9 hours later and 10-11 hours into the scenario.

Here we see a typical company that is part of the West Force.

Notice, their stocks of ammunition and basics (food and water).



Another screen shot taken at the same time as the last.

Here we see a typical company that is part of the East Force.

Notice, their stocks of ammunition and basics (food and water).



We advance the clock by about 24 hours to the following morning; about 1.5 days into the scenario. Here is the same typical company from the West Force.

You'll observe that although they still retain about 75% of their strength, their supply situation ammunition, food, and water situation has gone critical. In fact, there are companies that are in much worse shape with little left to do but fix bayonets. (Now, I have to admit that I exacerbated this situation by not instituting a policy of strict ammo conservation; mean ROF=LOW.)

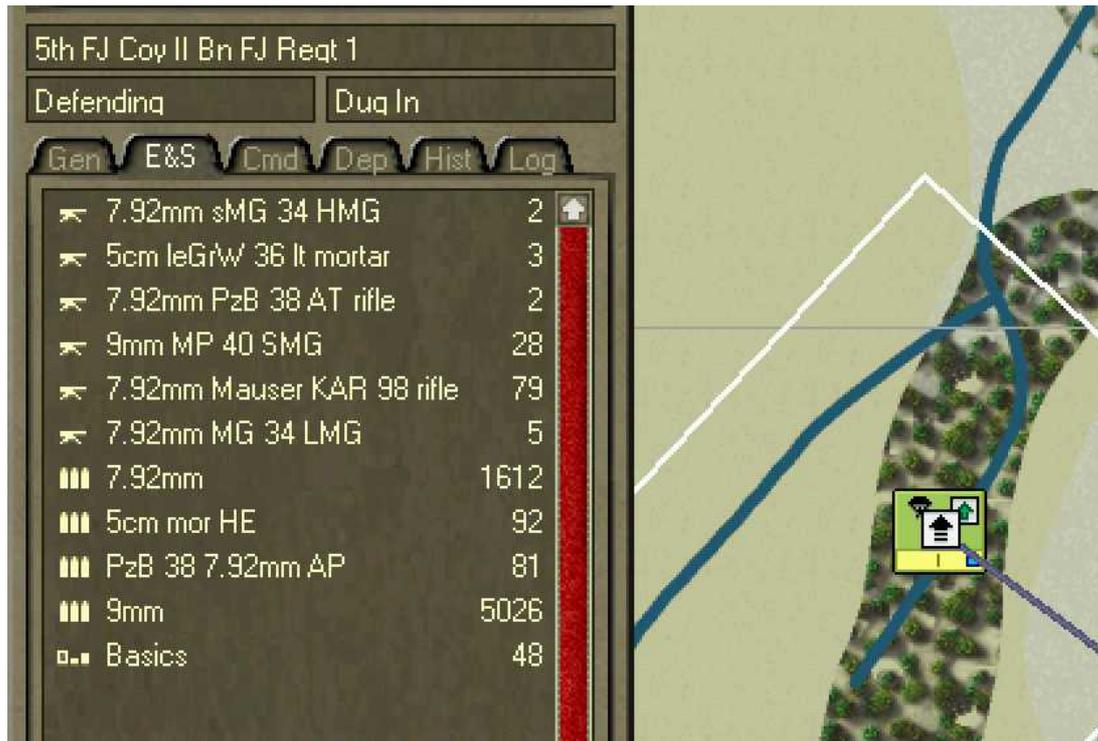
The West Force has cease to be an effective fighting force due to being cutoff from supply. Later, I will make a desperate attempt to disengage them and make a forced flanking march to the East to get them resupplied. (It will fail.)



Another screen shot taken at the same time as the last.

Here is the same typical company from the East Force.

You will observe that they are not lacking any the tools of the their trade. As such, they and their fellow companies are still very much in the fight.



And just so you don't think that they have been sitting in the rear letting others do the fighting, here is their unit log. As you can see, they have been giving a very good accounting of themselves.



This represents a vast improvement (and change) over HTTR that has been made with COTA. In HTTR, despite all the para drop scenarios which it offered, this simply could have never happened. In HTTR, every unit received their full allotment of supply at 03:00 everyday of the scenario regardless of their location or situation on the map. But not in COTA. In COTA, you have to protect your bases and keep your supply lines open. Or in the worst case (cutoff), as I had failed to do here, enforce ammo conservation and pull back assuming a defensive posture.

In this next screenshot, we will look at the graphic representation of supply line status which is in the game. First, be advised that this graphic representation may or may not appear in the final game as you see it here (and have seen in other screenshots presented by Dave). There has been some discussion about the presentation and utility of these features.

What you see here are two features which I have turned on. One is the supply line connector feature. It shows where units are drawing or trying to draw their supplies from. The other is the unit info box showing supply status. For both features RED = bad (out of supply) and GREEN = good (in supply).

However, this is what I want to point out to you of how this feature works (and why I don't make too much use of it myself). Unlike all the other information displayed in the game, this information (meaning the colors) is not updated in realtime. The color is relative to the last time supply connectivity was checked. Additionally, the computation for each unit's supply connectivity is computed at different points in time.

So, if you display this stuff, then take it as a sketchy summation. I think in the larger scenarios, the supply line connector display may be useful for you to check where various units are drawing their supplies. I personally don't have much experience with that yet.

Here is what I have been doing to follow supply (everything below is complete real-time information):

(1) It is pretty intuitive. The supplies go by trucks. Thus, if you can look at the map and trace an unthreatened motorized route from the base to the unit, then the supplies probably can get through. If not, then you got problems.

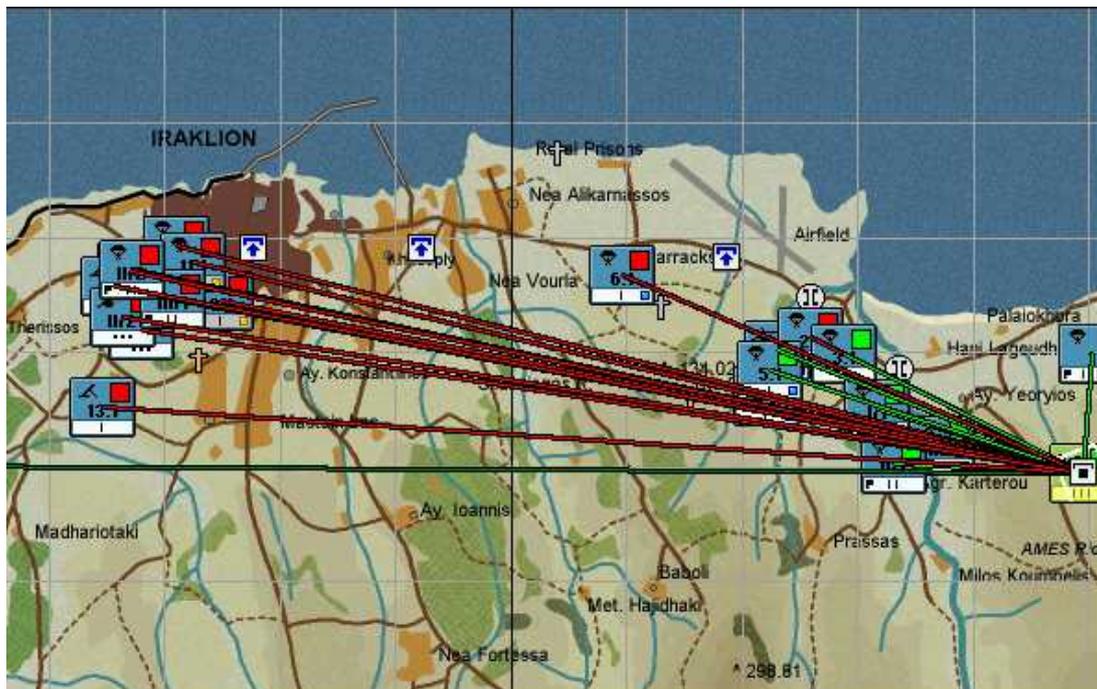
(2) There are a number of ways to check on supply status.

(2a) You can display the equipment tab for the unit and check the exact stocks. Line items that are dim and at zero are bad news.

(2b) You can display the unit log and see if it shows being resupplied. Units actively in combat will show roughly 4 resupplies/day.

(2c) Depending on what message filtering options you have display for top of the screen display and/or the global message tab in the left side panel, you will get supply related messages. These will tell you when supplies are getting delivered, not getting delivered, and when loss among the transport column occur.

(2d) F7 gives you at a glance in the unit info box supply status by cycling through multiple presses. You get: ammo (not arty), arty ammo, basic supply, and fuel. Working from that, you can easily drill down deeper to find out if a unit or force is in trouble and out of supply.



Now, besides avoiding the situation where your units or a force gets cutoff from supply, you also want to avoid the dreaded base under threat situation. Yes, a base can dig-in and

protect themselves, but you really want to avoid that. Since it means that everyone grabs a rifle and stops loading up trucks.

Here is what the warning looks like.

D1, 07:53 - Sir, Luftlande SturmRegt Base is under threat and cannot despatch supply columns.

Here is what Dave had to say about protecting your bases on the Beta Testing Forum.

quote:

ORIGINAL: Arjuna

If the enemy has firepower influence over the base's occupied area. There doesn't have to be actual fire. You need to secure the perimeter around the base such that the enemy cannot project fire onto them - as a rough rule of thumb allow 2500m, less if blocking terrain between the base and enemy. In the above picture you have enemy within 1500 - 2000m with a demonstrable LOS.

My final insight and warning to those of you who will venture into the world of COTA MP.

Currently, the AI is not programmed to go after supply lines or explicitly protect them. For SP, in practice, I have not noticed this being a big issue. As it turns out, the messy nature of battle if you are not careful (and the aggressive amoeboid nature of the AI) can easily result in your units/forces being out of supply. Additionally, many attacking or defending or withdrawing scenarios have objectives situated at key road junctions or have objectives laid out in a linear fashion along a line of advance. Thus, the AI simply being driven by the scenario designer will implicitly protect its supply lines and/or go after yours.

With all that said, if I was playing MP, I would not be complacent. I would be very careful to make sure that my supply lines are protected in a lengthy scenario and maintain a fast reaction security force in case your opponent should manage to threaten them. Be warned, "Yakstock" one of my fellow beta testers is just waiting for Dave to release COTA. He has been cutting circles through the water for months waiting for fresh meat thrashing about in the surf. :)

Okay, that's it for me. I have to get back to those stacks of paperwork.

Even though questions may arise in the HTTR forum if I deem them worthy of a COTA tip, I will add them here.

quote:

ORIGINAL: Tzar007

2) Let's say you detach some arty units and put them under your own command to move them in a safe and strategic spot. After they're finished moving and are setup, you are satisfied with their position, want to reduce your unit load on your HQ and so you reattach them back to their parent unit. But in doing so, the parent unit decides it does not like their positions and have them move somewhere else, and that screws up the coverage you wanted to have with these arty units. Is there anyway to prevent that, or once a unit is reattached, tough luck, it's the parent unit that decides what's happening with these units ?

quote:

ORIGINAL: MarkShot

(2) You have to move all your gun units individually to create your firebase. However, once they have all arrived at the firebase, then you could group them together as a force and give them an in-situ defend order. This should reduce command load while leaving the force still under your command and in place. Myself, I don't do that since I like the fine control that keeping them separate gives.

From the Beta Forum tonight:

quote:

ORIGINAL: MarkShot

I have just knocked back the enemy's attack. I want to counter-attack and push to the next objective. I can:

(A) Order a regular attack with a single waypoint (hopefully FUP in place) and then attack.

or

(B) Order a move with a line a formation and shortest path (infantry).

Option-A will carry more punch, but take longer. Option-B will have less punch, but perhaps better exploit the enemy's retreat after his failed attack.

So, which would you do and why?

Thanks.

quote:

ORIGINAL: Arjuna

The two predominant factors here are the depth and state of the enemy forces (are there enemy force dug in behind the attacking ones that are now falling back and are all enemy routing). If the enemy is routing and there's not much behind them I would do a Move in Line with Aggro set to Max. Otherwise I would mount an attack with the FUP in-situ (ie first waypoint where the Subject is).

Another factor to consider is the moveType of your forces. Mot forces have reduced orders delay and hence can launch an attack quicker. but they can also start a Move quicker as well. Foot will take more time and this may mean that the enemy will have time to regroup before you get to him.

Some more supply thoughts ...

Unlike HTTR where your axis of advance could mainly be chosen based on your force, the opposing force, and terrain ... in COTA, one should always consider making their axis of advance coincide with their supply line.

This can constrain what you do quite a bit.

Of course, if you are fully stocked and you are sure that you can take the objective in a single day, then you might risk going out of supply. But if your attack should bog down even if you are winning, you may not be able to see it through to a successful conclusion.

In any case, unlike HTTR, you must be careful to cover the rear and its flanks. Although you may not be vulnerable to a weak probe in a contest of arms, the weak probe could well deny you your supply and have a much greater impact than its strength would suggest. (Consider this similar to how a small enemy unit holding the high ground with a lot of arty on-call can lay down a lot of fire power.) Well, a small enemy unit to the rear can effectively deny you a lot of fire power if you are not careful.

Another way to know if a unit is out of supply even if its stocks seem fine, if you go to the unit log and do not see "resupply requested", "resupply on the way", and "resupply arrived" messages over a 6-12 hour period, then you are probably out of supply. You should have supply even when no combat takes place, since the troops need basics (food and water).

<Joe 98>

Pause
Slow
Medium
Fast

and "R".

What is "R"?

If it is "Replay", is the Replay file a separate file. If it is it can be uploaded to fan's web sites, for others to download, to take the place of a traditional AAR 😊

</Joe 98>

<Arjuna>

RunFastUntil - lets you run the game as fast as possible till a specified time. It opens a dialog in which you set the time.

</Arjuna>

quote:

ORIGINAL: Deathtreader

Hi,

Nice feature for equip.info. Its too bad though, that it isn't available read-only directly in the game as a database ref. If you want to know, should it really have to be nec. to shut down the game and then launch the editor?? Wishlist item??

Still love the system though!! 😊

Rob.

One other clarification. The player can edit (modify/create) new maps and new scenarios. However, the Estabs (OOB, TOE, ...) cannot be altered by the player.

The game comes with an application for modify/create maps and another for scenarios.

The absence of a similar application for Estabs is the result of a design/business decision by PG.

A little more information on keeping SM.EXE open while playing (just checked via Windows XP Task Manager):

(1) It doesn't seem to burn any CPU in background.

(2) With 512Mb RAM and other apps running besides COTA and SM.EXE, I still have free memory available.

So, no reason to not run it concurrently if it helps you understand the equipment involved.

It seems COTA has quite a few scenarios of the type (for the Allies) where you must perform a fighting retreat. Meaning:

- (1) Hurt the enemy.
- (2) Slow the enemy's advance.
- (3) Preserve as much of your force as you can to fight another day (exit the map).

Some insights on how to approach this. If done properly, the following approach will work even when facing an enemy force composed of armor and/or motorized infantry while your own force is entirely on foot but for some heavy weapons units.

* Mobile Forces *

(1) Set up blocking positions along likely axis of advance by the enemy (like roads) with at least two forces covering an axis. One force forward and one force back.

(2) Set up your arty fire bases such that their maximum bombard range covers close contact with the forward force. Throughout this whole evolution remember to keep pulling back the fire bases so that they do not get overrun. Ideally, there should be two blocking positions in front of them most of the time. Have them displace at night, since there most likely won't be too much to shoot at. If you feel you need fire support at night, then have them displace in two shifts so that there are always some batteries ready to shoot.

(3) To prime the whole situation such that the forward force can get dug-in, you may need to take a single company and push them considerably further forward to buy a few hours and give your guns something to shoot at. (Such companies aren't going to make it home.)

(4) You will have your two forces per axis withdraw by reverse bounding overwatch (in leap frog fashion). Check the force order delay, issue orders to the forward force to pullout prior to sun down such that when they commence their march night will have fallen.

If they are being pressed hard by the enemy, then you may want to use the [W]ithdraw command. But keep in mind that this will cause the creation of a rear guard. It is quite possible that the rear guard may well be guarding the rear when the Sun comes up. In which case, they are going to catch hell from the enemy. This will most likely result in you having to write off the rear guard and having a considerably weaker force assembled at Phase Line #3.

If your force was able to dig-in and had ample arty support, then it is likely that the enemy did not close considerably. In which case, you should be able to simply issue a [D]efend order for your force to move to the next blocking position as long as no one leaves their foxholes before it gets dark. This should allow you to make much better time and guarantee that the whole force is ready at the next position.

* Static Forces *

What is described above constitutes your active or mobile forces. Additionally, you should contemplate some limited inactive or static units.

(5) A few anti-tank gun units much further back positioned along key road junctures on the outskirts of a village and given time to entrench can cause considerable delays for the enemy.

(6) A few companies of infantry on foot placed further back such that they will have time to dig-in/entrench along the axis of advance can also spell trouble for the enemy. The best positioning will have these companies situated along an elevated tree line flanking the axis of advance (2-4km off the road is about right). This will accomplish a number of things.

(a) Due to differential sighting, you should have eyes on the enemy while being unobserved yourself. Your on-call arty can easily work with this to attrite the enemy. {I hope to produce some examples of differential sighting screenshots when I conclude my current game.}

(b) Even if spotted, they will be hard to dislodge dug-in into the woods.

(c) Their flanking fire can be very disruptive to the enemy. He'll be forced to deploy off road and this will slow down his advance as his movement rate is cut and he switches to a defensive formation. Further, this will keep him in your arty kill sack even longer.

PS: There is a delay command that Dave completely recoded (since HTTR) which is supposed to work wonders. I have yet to really experiment with it. However, if anyone gets some really good results with it. Then, please post here and explain to us how it can best be employed.

And that concludes this evening's tip.

<sterckxe>

quote:

ORIGINAL: MarkShot

PS: There is a delay command that Dave completely recoded (since HTTR) which is supposed to work wonders. I have yet to really experiment with it. However, if anyone gets some really good results with it. Then, please post here and explain to us how it can best be employed.

Well, I experimented a bit with the delay order, so here goes :

You know that company you mentioned above, the one that would act as a sacrificial lamb and which you wouldn't expect to make it back. That's the one you give delay orders with multiple fall-back points. Works wonders to delay an advancing force on a single axis, as it should. Another advantage of the delay order is that you can specify yourself where the unit will retreat to as opposed to the retreat path chosen by the AI when a defending unit gets dislodged.

A disadvantage is that when it delays too long and gets surrounded or cut-off it's toast. When to fall back is a decision taken by the AI which gets it right most of the time i.e. fubars it regularly - just like Real Life (tm) :)

Greetz,

Eddy Sterckx

</sterckxe>

I am back this evening, as promised, to talk a little bit about differential sighting. I first heard this term used by Jason Cawley on the Battlefield forums.

Differential Sighting - When Side A can see Side B, but Side B cannot see side Side A. Somewhat more loosely, we can say When Side A sees Side B significantly earlier than Side B sees Side A.

Differential sighting provides Side A with a number of advantageous over Side B. What are they?

(1) Intel. Side A's commander will be forewarned of Side B's intentions possibly hours or days before Side B reaches that conclusion. Thus, an element of surprise that Side B thought it had could well be incorrect. Further Side A could well deploy reinforcements exactly when and where they are needed.

(2) If Side A has substantial arty resources to call upon, then they can rain it down on Side

B.

(3) Side A may also lay direct fire upon Side B with impunity if their position is not spotted.

LOS is not always a two way street since real human eyes involved. So, a column of tanks lumbering down a road may well be visible to infantry dug-in and camouflaged along an elevated tree line with the Sun at their backs. Where as for the tank column, it may be almost impossible to spot the infantry on the ridge.

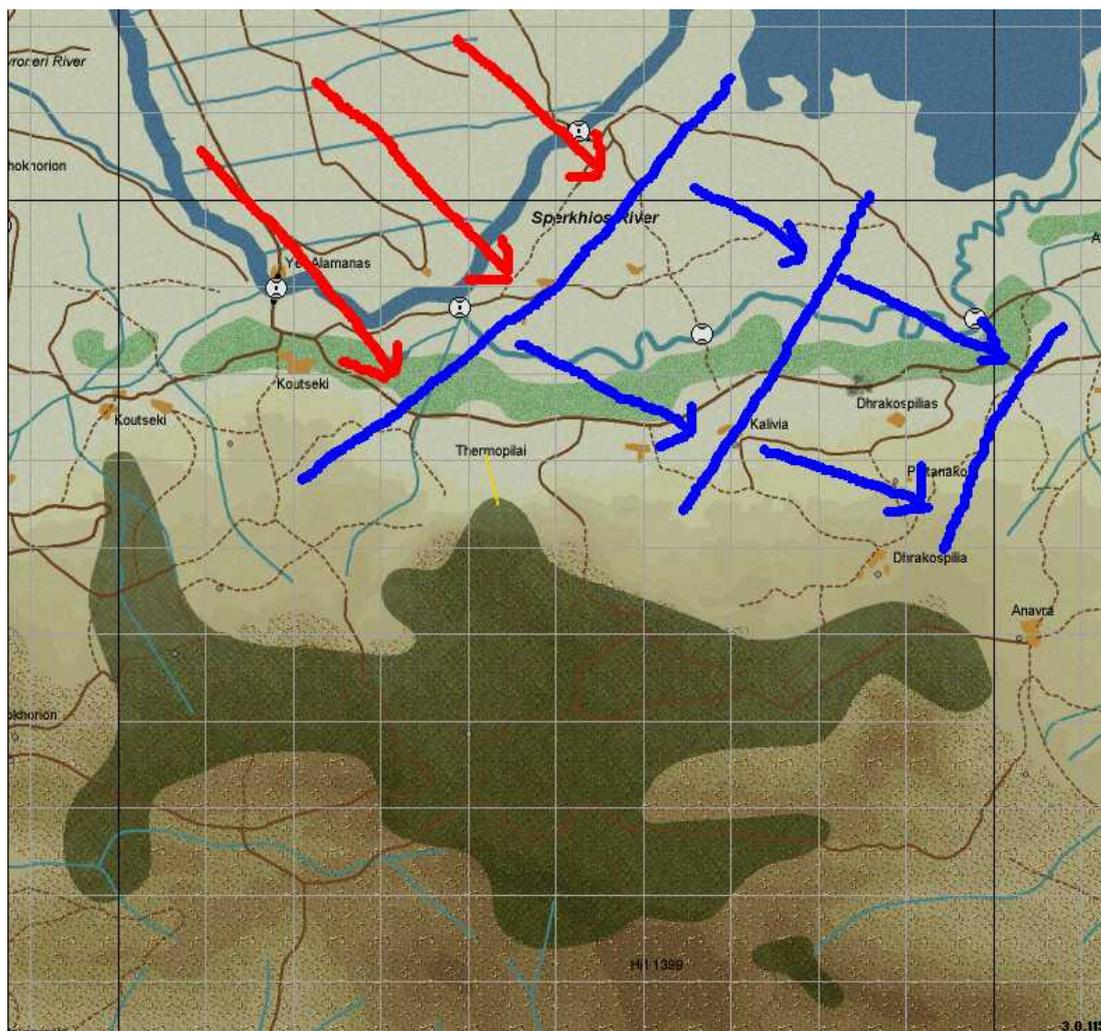
Does differential sighting occur in COTA? You bet your last bullet it does!

Now, the last time I had discussed this concept was with HTTR. At that time, I was forced to FUP in the open, but it looked like I was clear from enemy observation. All day long arty rained down on me and my attack was a mess. Only after completing the scenario from the AAR map did I find that a enemy unit had me under observation the whole time. As a side note, you should draw that conclusion if you find yourself in a similar situation.

But the reason I am back to discuss differential sighting in COTA is that, now for the first time, through the magic of beta tester cheat tools, I can put together a good conclusive example of how you can benefit from it.

Here you see a small section of a battle which is going to take place over a period of a few days.

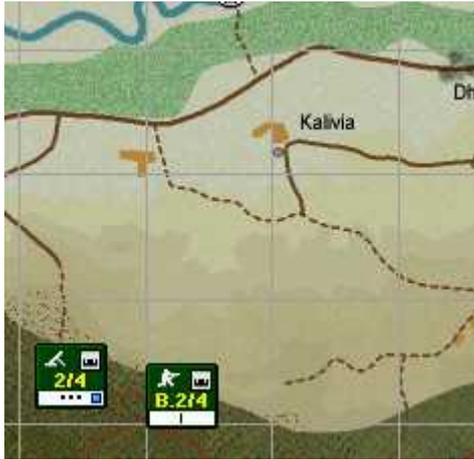
I am the Allies (Blue) and the Germans (Red) are the enemy. My mission is to perform a fighting retreat at various phase lines while the Germans advance.



Like any good commander, I study the map and terrain prior to planning my strategy. I notice a decent size woods with a elevated tree line over looking precisely through the area that the Germans must pass. I confirm the superb tactical advantage this position conveys by using the LOS tool. (Of course, the screenshot and conversion to JPG doesn't really do it justice.) The red dot is the actual spot from which I am checking LOS.

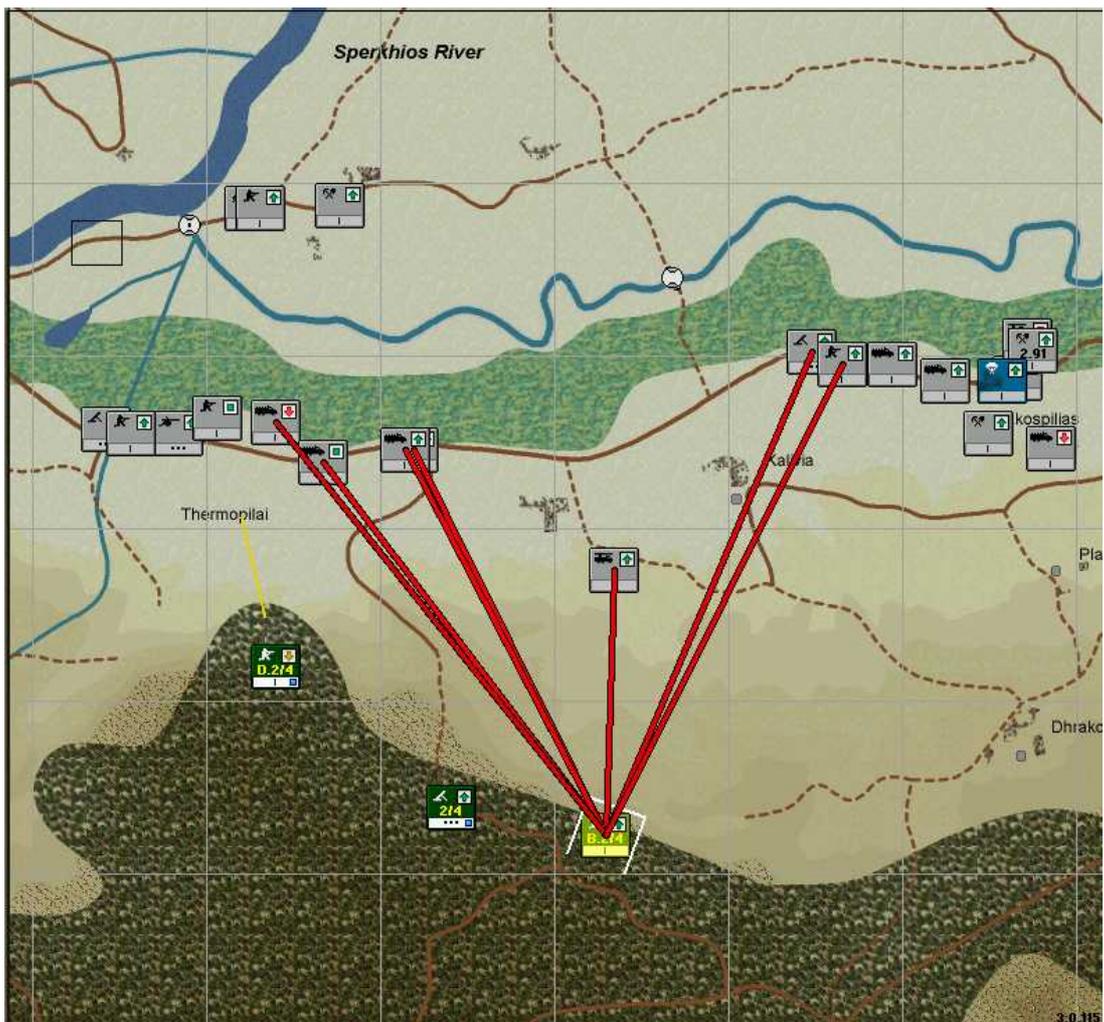


Here you see them dug-in (the unit info box now shows the deployment status) along with a mortar platoon in case the enemy spots them and tries drive them from the high ground.



Now, let's see what happens when the Germans show up?

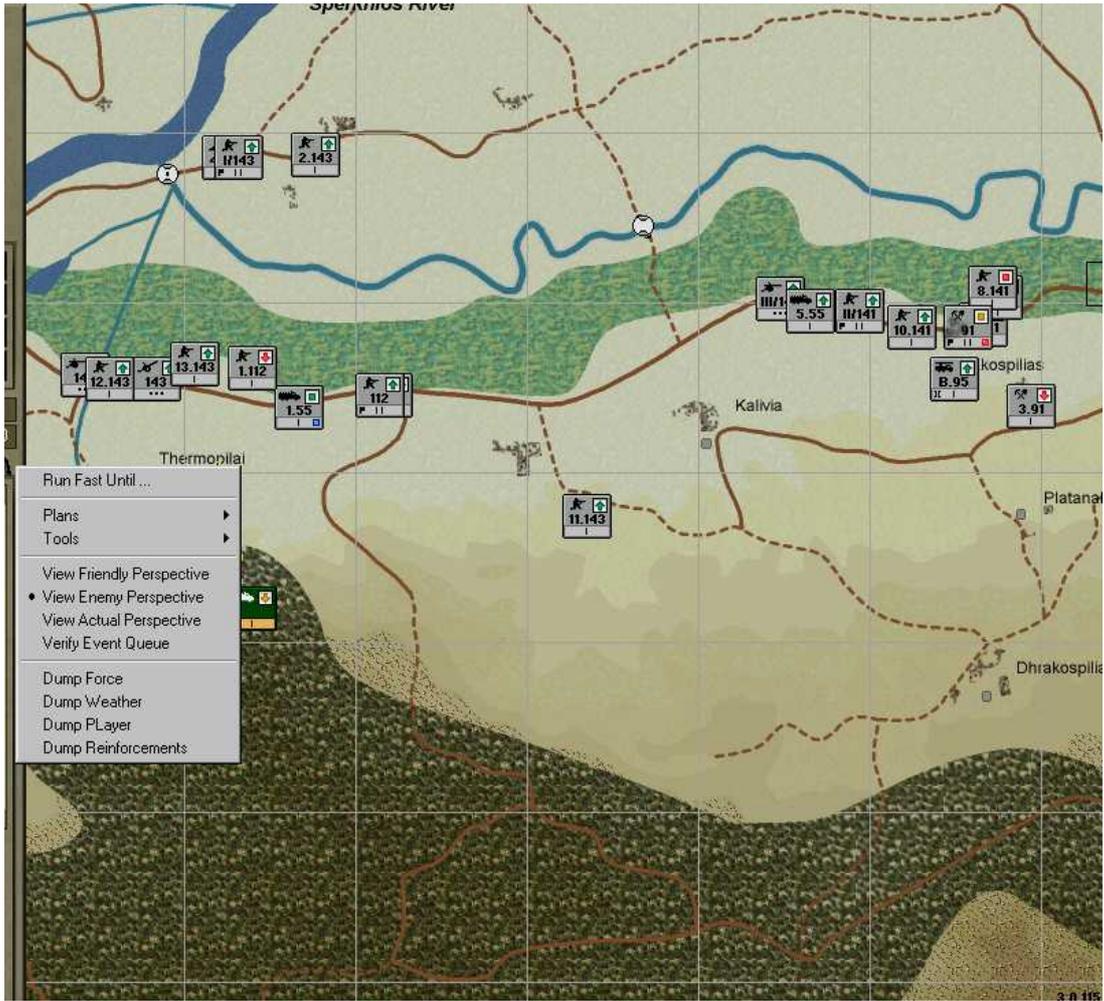
Here you see the company selected with the TLOS (threat LOS) tool. As you can see, they have solid sighting of numerous German units making their way down the road below them.



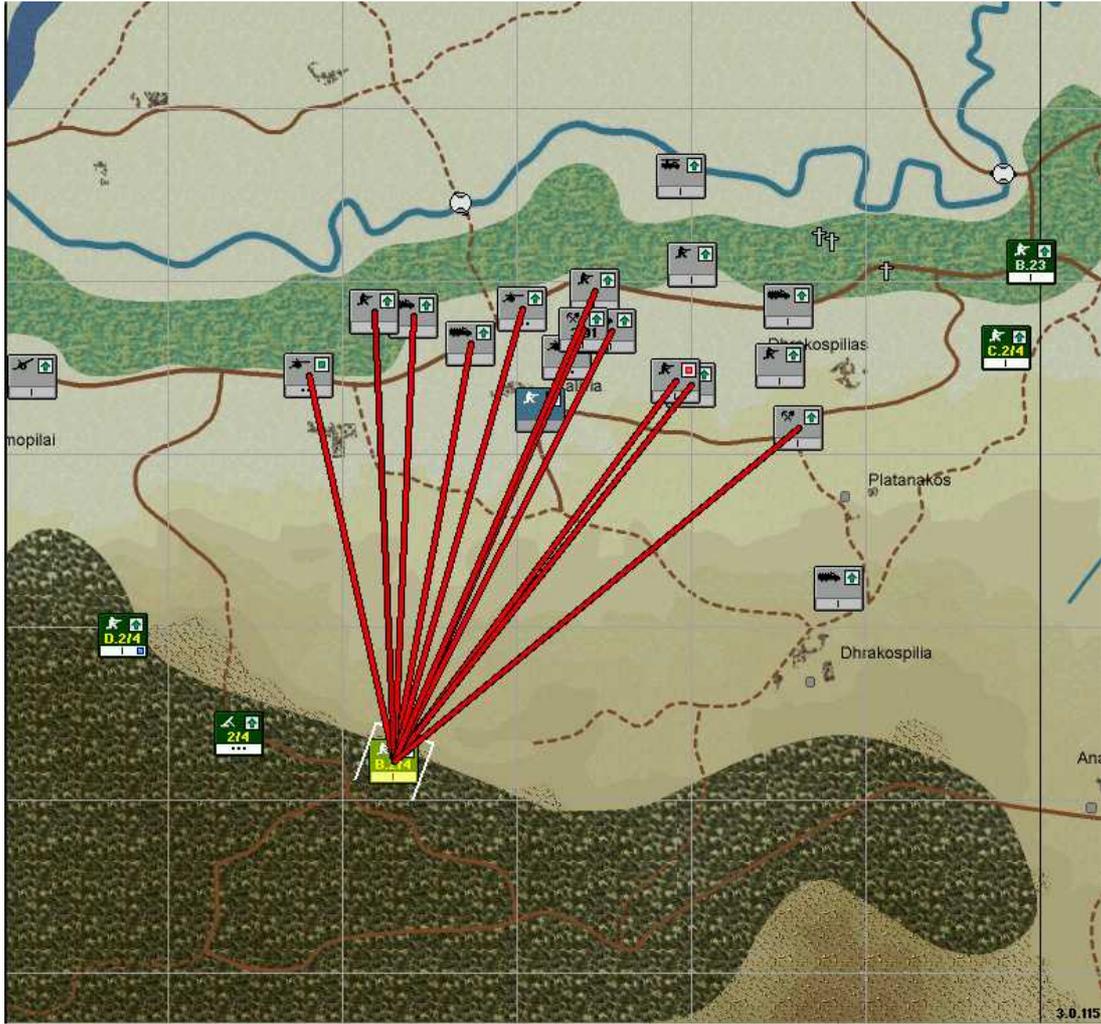
Beside calling in arty fire missions, they have also sent some ordinance down range themselves rather than letting the fire base have all the fun.



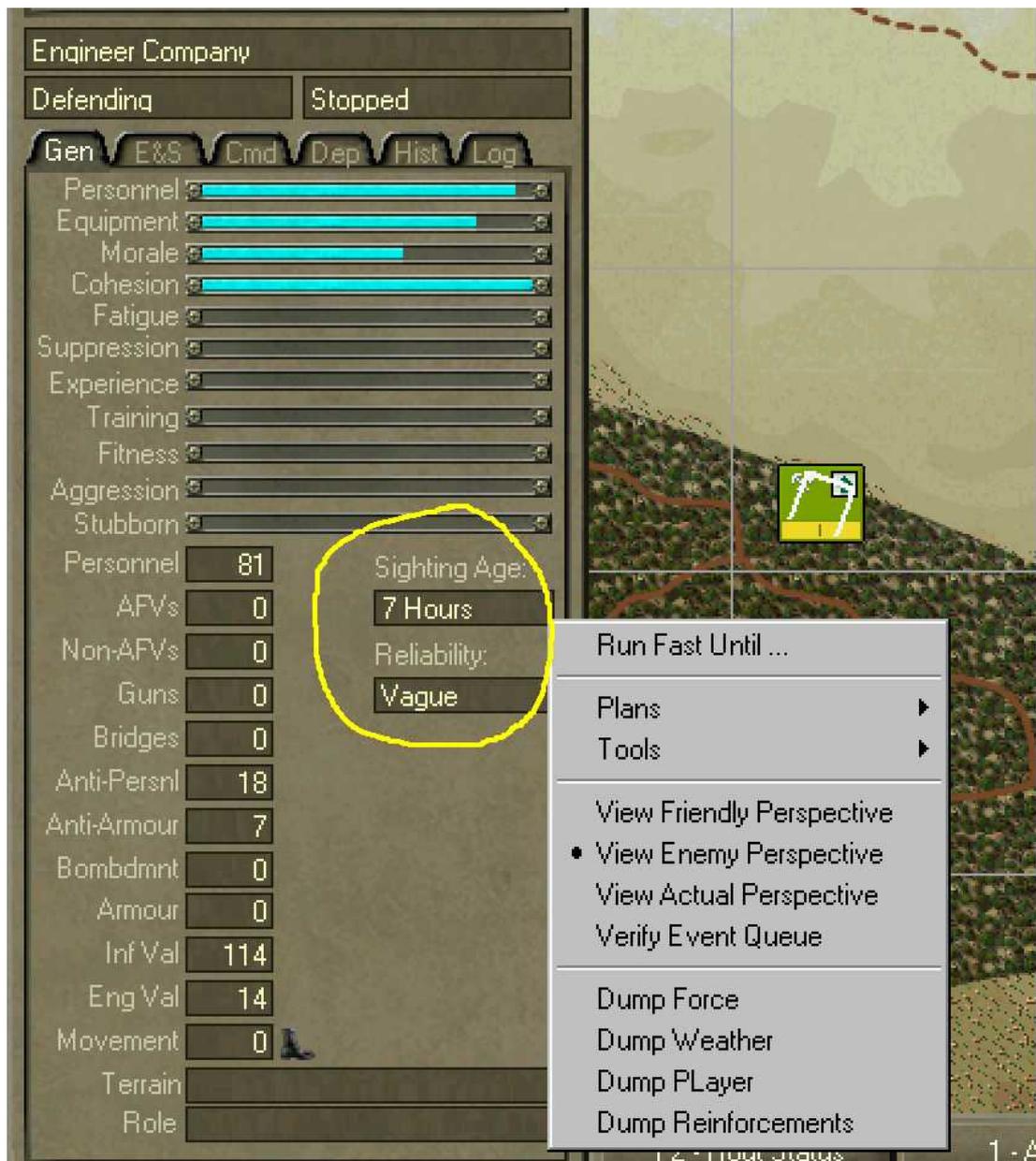
Using my beta tester cheat tools, here is what the Germans see. Notice that they have absolutely no idea that the company of infantry is up there.



Here we are looking at the same ground 8 hours later in the mid afternoon. Again, observe that we have excellent information on the Germans.



And this is what the Germans have after getting stomped on for 8-9 hours by my arty. Someone caught a vague glimpse of something in the trees about 7 hours ago. No doubt, the German commander has more important things on his mind than to go chasing after every demon spotted in the trees by shell shocked privates.



And that, my friends, is differential sighting in COTA.

Your faithful reporter and beta tester from the Front,

MarkShot

<out>