HTTR mini-guide (Tutorial, AAR, tips) of Panther Games' Highway to the Reich

http://www.panthergames.com/

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 November 16th, 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.

Original forum threads at :

http://www.matrixgames.com/forums/tm.asp?m=554123

http://www.matrixgames.com/forums/tm.asp?m=554121

All text by Mark Kratzer unless otherwise indicated.

Towards the end of 2003 around the time that HTTR went gold and showed up on store shelves, I created two extensive threads in the HTTR forum which had served as a mini-guide to the game. In the beginning of 2004, a hacking incident resulted in a considerable loss of content from the Matrix Games forums including these two threads.

Fortunately, I had created an offline archive of the content which contained about 90% of what was valuable. Thus, it became possible to resurrect these two threads for the HTTR community.

First, I would like to thank Ugo "Tzar007" Marsolais who put in a tremendous amount of time and diligence in order to reconstruct these two threads manually from the archive.

Secondly, I would like to thank Dave O'Connor of Panther Games and Marc Schwanebeck and Shaun Wallace of Matrix Games for their support and assistance with this effort.

We all hope that this material will help you to get the most out of your purchase of Panther Games' latest master piece, Highway to the Reich. Remember to return to the forum often for more tips, AARs, user maps/scenarios, multi-player action and the latest news about official strategy guides, scenario expansion packs, future games, and much more!

Note, since the thread was rebuilt by Tzar007, you will notice that each post starts with "From Member:". Tzar007 did this in order to maintain the context of who was the original poster of each post.

Mark "MarkShot" Kratzer on 02/14/04.

I was doing some beta testing and I got a feeling to write an AAR for public consumption. Dave, President of Panther Games, has given his approval. So, that's what this thread will be.

So, let me lay out what my objectives in writing this AAR will be:

(1) To have some fun myself ... I often analyze, make plans, and take notes ... but I have never really published an RDOA or HTTR AAR. Although I have done a few pseudo AARs/scenario reviews as part of the Beta testing.

(2) To give you folks a sense of the game as I know that excitement is starting to build with the release of the game on its way.

(3) To get a little discussion going about the game and as appropriate Dave can jump in and answer some of your questions.

(4) To provide some tutorial insights into how the game can be played.

The style of this AAR will be that of strategy gaming/tutorial. I am not really a hardcore wargamer. So, there won't be any dissassembly/reassembly of MG42s blindfolded here or discussion of muzzle velocities or bullet dispersion patterns.

When I started playing RDOA in the Summer of 2002, I was truly clueless and was lucky to get a draw in scenarios. But countless hours of play and the old school of hard knocks taught me the basics.

So, let's begin. The screenshots and play recounted here will be from a build that could well be what ends up on the store shelves. If not, it will be extremely close. This is the real deal.

The scenario is the "Eindhoven - Para Rescue" scenario. It runs for 1 Day and 14 hours. Compared to most HTTR scenarios it is of relatively short duration and low complexity (meaning limited objectives and forces involved). {It was good for beta testing due to its size. It took me about 3 hours to play through it. Of course, rate of play in HTTR is mainly a matter of personal style.}

HTTR scenarios have both a general briefing which you see when selecting which one to play and a side briefing which you see once you have selected your side and entered the scenario proper.

The general briefing follows below:

"The drive to Arnhem is off to a shaky start!

A battalion group from 82nd Airborne Division has been driven back from its objective at Son Bridge by previously undetected troops of SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 1. The battalion has held out for 48 hours and is already exhausted and depleted.

Meanwhile, the lead battalion of the 131st Queen's Infantry Brigade has just finished driving the forward SS battalion from the northern suburbs of Eindhoven.

Will the Brigade succeed in taking the Son Bridge intact and relieving the isolated paras? Or will the SS troops bottle the English up in Eindhoven, to mop up the airborne at their leisure?

The operation must be finished quickly or it will be too late for the rest of the airborne, far behind enemy lines to the North."

I will be playing as the Allies and the Allied briefing follows below:

"Unexpected resistance has forced 2nd Bn 508th Airborne Regiment away from Son Bridge and into the shelter of the woods to the West. Bottled up there for the last 48 hours by fanatical troops of SS Pzgr Regt 1, the Airborne troops are now exhausted and depleted. Their objective remains untaken and they are in danger of being destroyed completely if

they are not relieved soon.

Your lead Bn has finally succeeded in dislodging the SS defences in Eindhoven, and the way to Son Bridge and the paras is clear. The rest of the Brigade is on the way, if Son Bridge can be taken intact then the sacrifice of the airborne troops will have been worthwhile. If the bridge is blown, you will have to find another way North.

Your ultimate objective is the St Oedenrode bridge, which you must take by tomorrow night in order for the Guards Armoured Division to conduct passage of lines on its way to relieve the landings further North."

Well, that concludes today's installment. In the next installment, we'll take a look at the objectives, the map, forces involved, ...

Stay tuned.

Well, we'll begin at the beginning. I have chosen all the default options for this scenario.

I will be playing with ORDER DELAYS = PAINFULLY REALISTIC.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with RDOA, setting this option simulates command delays as orders are passed through the chain and command and executed. It adds a whole additional dimension to your HTTR experience. For beginners, some might consider that this increases the difficulty. I think that is debatable. But for new players, you can try a simple scenario at both extremes and see what the impact it has.

Here is how things look when the game first comes up. (I will assume that you have already read the general and side briefing that I posted above. So, we won't look at those again.) Personally, I don't get too carried away look at the briefings. I try to see if they contain the answer to the any of the following questions:

(1) What is my mission?

(2) Where and how strong is the enemy?
(3) Where will enemy reinforcements come from?

Next, I usually head over to the left panel. (see image)

If you haven't already done so, then observe how long the scenario will run for. Time should have an impact on all your planning. HTTR is not an open ended game. You will often need to formulate either an explicity or an implicity time table and stick to it. This is especially true in some of the shorter scenarios running 1-3 days.

Next we move on to looking at the objectives. You can break down your review of the objectives into three parts:

Part I: What are the point make up of the objectives? This includes looking at their value and the occupation and completion components. For occupation points, you should also pay attention to their time frames. Are there any points to be awarded for destroying the enemy?

You may observe that the bulk of the points come from taking just a couple of the objectives, and this would indicate where you should focus your efforts. Other minor objectives, should be considered mainly for pushing across a scoring threshhold. HTTR has basically: Decisive Defeat, Marginal Defeat, Draw, Marginal Victory, and Decisive Victory. In some cases, the scenario designer may have used minor objectives to provide the player some hints as to what their plan might be.

In playing scenarios, it is important to keep in mind that sometimes it may be sufficient to take a few objectives and then make sure the others are contested. If they are contested, then neither side gets points. It is often easier to contest an objective than take it.

Part II: Where are the objectives located?

In some scenarios, you might have many objectives of relatively equal point values. But you may observe that some of the objectives are in close proximity. Thus, they could be attacked or defended by single force or multiple forces working together. This would make them relatively higher priority than isolated objectives. For example, a single objective located on the far side of a river.

Part III: The terrain around the objectives?

In some scenarios, there is less of a progress of making progress across a map and multiple objectives are for the taking depending how you want to go about it. With such choices, terrain can be a very big factor. How hard will an objective be to attack or defend? Perhaps in meeting engagement, you will choose to go after the ones easy to defend first and get yourself entrenched; towards the end you can make your push on the ones hard to defend and dislodge the enemy.

So, what do we see for this scenario? (see images of the three objectives; note locations on map on the right and point values on the left) {I have turned off display of units for these screen shots.}

Son Bridge Objective:

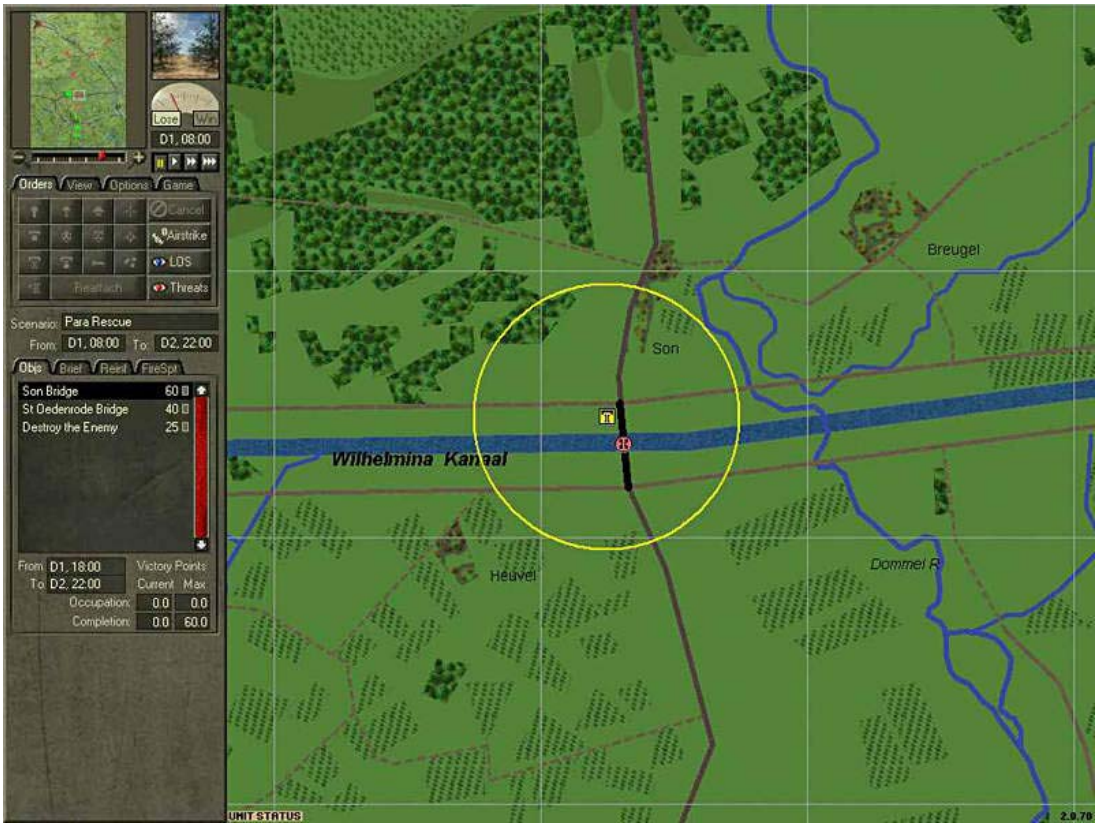
St.Oedenrode Bridge Objective:

Destroy the Enemy Objective:

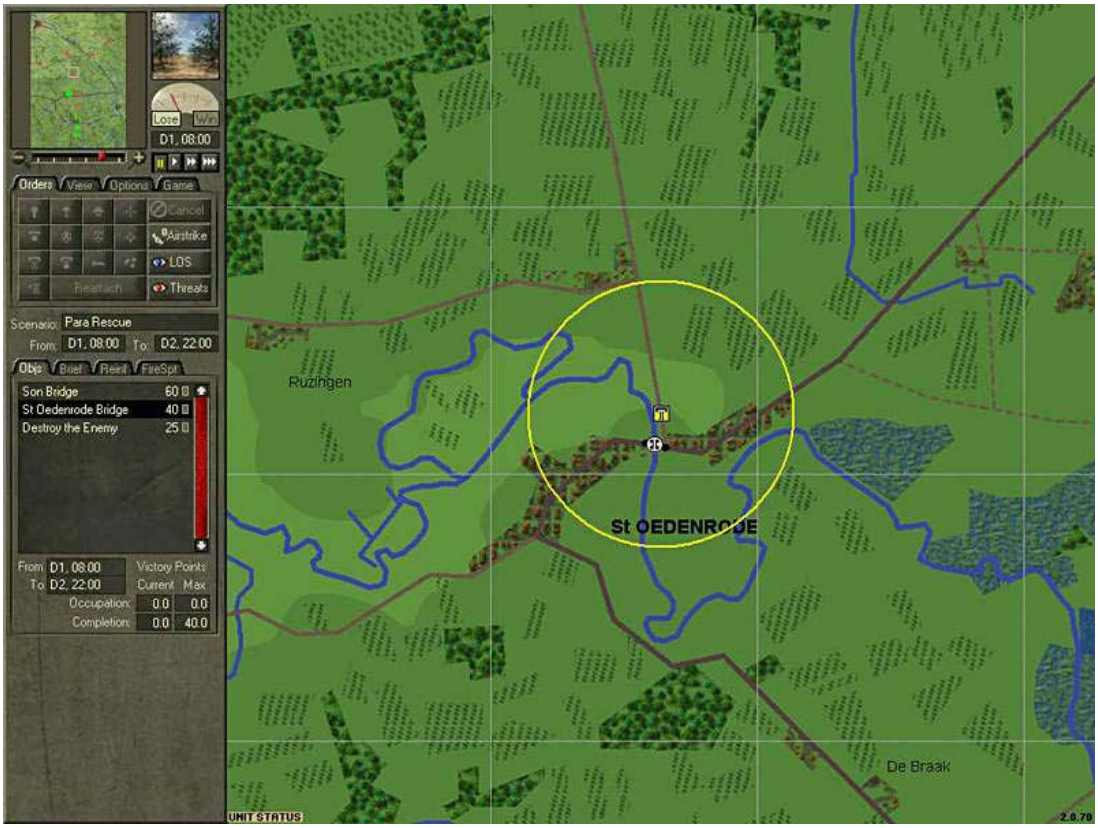
We have two bridges: the Son Bridge in the South and The St. Oedenrode Bridge in the North for which we have secure crossing objectives. Looking at the point values involved, it is clear that we will need to take both to achieve a decisive victory. There are points for destroying the enemy, but we will simply regard those as icing on the cake.

There is one other thing worth making note of in our initial analysis and that is the present status of those bridges. So, let zoom in on the bridges. When we look at the icon for the Son Bridge, we will see that it is pink. That means that the Germans have primed it to blow. So, be advised that the status of crossings can play a big role in this game both directly and indirectly. Directly, in the sense that they can represent objectives and points or indirectly, in the sense that a forces time table can severly hampered by losing a preferred crossing.

Primed Son Bridge:



Unprimed St.Oedenrode Bridge:



Okay, that wraps up today's installment. Next time, we will look at the forces on the map and composition and timing of our forces.

Your comments on this thread are welcome. As you can see, I am writing this in tutorial fashion. There are few reasons for this. I would like people who didn't own RDOA to get a sense of HTTR. I am trying to reach a broader audience who may not be hardcore wargamers. I am trying to throw in some tips and useful frameworks here and there. Sooner or later, the forum will see a surge of new players and maybe this thread will be of some use. For you RDOA players, I will try to point out some of the cool new features that Panther has added to HTTR as we happen across them.

In this installment, we'll take a look the following items:

(1) The mission.

(2) The forces and reinforcements which we have available.

(3) A simple time table.

* The Mission *

Except for a few paratroopers on the Northern Bank of Wilhemina Kanaal (The Son Bridge) our forces are starting in the South either near Eindhoven or further South down at the map edge.

Thus, we'll have to push North and take the two bridges in sequence under a tight time table.

Everything really hinges on the Son Bridge. If the Germans blow it, we are more or less stopped and lose potential points. If the Germans hold it, we are more or less stopped and lose potential points. You get the picture.

* Our Forces *

There are a number of ways to quickly see what you have to work with. First, if you play the game a lot, then you will probably get familiar with the Estabs and just be able to know what you have by looking at the names. However, we'll assume you are not at that point yet.

The way I usually do this for forces on the map is to click on the map, then up arrow to get to the senior unit, and then use the arrow keys to walk the chain of command. This is pretty quick and easy to do. You'll get a sense of what units you have and the chain of command. Often, I'll have the equipment tab pulled up on the left so I can see what the unit is packing.

With HTTR there is another very quick way to get a sense of what you have and that is to use the unit filter keys. A series of key toggles have been defined to allow you to display just certain classes of units on the map. So, suppose you want to see what arty you have, well, hit the "8" toggle key and only arty units display. This can be a lot quicker than my old method which I described to you above. On a small scenario like this, the unit filters will seem like a minor convenience and you could easily get by without them. But when you go play one of the larger scenarios running 5+ days and having a couple of hundred units on the map, you will see what an incredible time saver and situational awareness aid this feature is.

{Author's note: I have set my unit icons to use little pictures crafted by Dave. You can play the game displaying standard military symbols instead. However, this is just what I am used to.}

Well, let me you show you a few quick screenshots so that you can see how this works. I have also highlighted for you the little indicator which shows up on the bottom of the map. RDOA players will also note that the highlighted area also indicated what unit info has been selected. First, all units. Second, just arty units. Third, just the HQs. See how this works.

All Units:

Artillery Units:

HQ Units:

So, what do we have?

131st. Queens Inf Bde:
1 X Eng [motor]
1 X TD [motor]
1 X Arty [motor]
1 X LTank [motor]

1/5 Queens Inf Bn:
(4 X Inf Coy, 1 X mortar, 1 X ATG, 1 X LFlak, 1 X LTank) [motor]

2nd Bn 508th:
(3 X Inf Coy [foot], 1 X mortar [foot],
1 X ATG [motor], 1 X Eng [motor], 1 X LFlak [motor])

Now, when looking at your forces, you also what to see what will be your reinforcement situation. So, we jump over to the reinforcement tab for this. On the left side, you will a list of reinforcements. When a particular one is highlighted you will see it's icon where it will appears on the map (extreme South). For you RDOA players, I believe that additional information is being displayed in the reinforcement tab, but I forget what was added.

Reinforcements Tab:

The important thing when looking at reinforcements is to note three things: what, when, and where. We can easily see if the arriving units is infantry on foot or with transport, or armor, or artillery, etc... When looking at "when", it is often best to think of reinforcements in terms of time windows. Reinforcements in the display will often be itemized, but the scenario designer will often have many individual units arriving in a one hour window. As most of you will be playing with order delays turned on and these are waived for the first 59 minutes after arrival, then you should tend to look at these time windows and see all units arriving in the window as one or just a few task forces to command. This will vastly simplify your perspective on dealing with reinforcements and, at the same time, lead to a more cohesive plan for their use.

Here is what we see about this battle in terms of reinforcements:

Day #1, morning - 1/7 Queens Inf Bn (motorized)

Day #1, afternoon - Arty

Day #2, evening - 1/6 Queens Inf Bn (motorized)

Day #2, night/morning - Inniskillen Dragoon Guards (armor)

You will notice that I have abstracted the time frames a little. When you think about your plan and reinforcements, you may want to do this. It better reflects the realities that events are simply not going to happen at the exact hour and minute that is written into your plan. After all, this is war.

In some games reinforcements are quite vague and happen almost like unexpected bonuses in the midst of battle. As you can see in HTTR except for the time frame, they are pretty definite. So, in any less than trivial scenario, you should make sure that you integrate them into your plan. For example, this may mean that your initial forces on the map primary task might not be to engage the enemy. Perhaps, their mission will be to secure a good fire base location for arty or secure a key highway so that the follow on heavies can move into the battle quickly.

* The Time Table *

I often find it helpful to construct a simple time table. This is particular true of shorter scenarios before proceeding. In longer scenarios, you can put forward a time table, but there will just be too many unknowns to really employ it to guide the entire battle. You'll simply have to replan a few times on the situation evolves. However, with this scenario we can easily put forward a time table to which our adherence will be a good measure of our chances for victory.

Phase I: Prepare Push on Son (1 08:00 - 1 14:00)
Phase II: Take Son (1 14:00 - 1 22:00)
Phase III: Prepare Push on St. Oedenrode (2 06:00 - 2 12:00)
Phase IV: Take St. Oedenrode (2 12:00 - 2 22:00)

You will notice that I have left some slack during the morning of Day #2. If my troops are making good progress, then they may get some rest before entering into battle on Day #2. If they are not doing as well as I expected, then they may have to fight on through the night.

That concludes this installment. Next, time we'll prepare our initial plan, issue orders, and kick off the game and follow the battle.

Stay tuned for more AAR, more new features, more tips, and more screen shots.

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 HTTR 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 succint 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.

Having explained all that. Our examination of this battle will focus on the following moments.

Day 1 @ 08:00
Day 1 @ 08:58
Day 1 @ 10:55
Day 1 @ 11:59
Day 1 @ 12:11
Day 1 @ 13:12
Day 1 @ 13:48
Day 1 @ 14:46
Day 1 @ 15:03
Day 1 @ 16:43
Day 1 @ 17:19
Day 1 @ 19:58
Day 1 @ 20:47
Day 1 @ 21:31
Day 2 @ 01:09
Day 2 @ 13:26

Prior to each of these moments, I analyzed the situation. Through my analysis, I concluded at each of these moments that a key juncture had been reached. Having arrived at that realization, I then issued new orders to some of the units under my immediate command.

Of course, you don't have to pause the game while playing and you can simply issue orders on the fly whenever the mood grabs you. But I presented this discussion, since for me as someone who was learning to play, I found it to be a useful framework and discipline to improve my skills. It made me very concious of my role as the commander and the interplay of cause and effect.

Fear not, in our next installment, we are going to focus on the actual plan and issue some orders. {I just wanted to give some flavor to those of you who do not own a copy of RDOA (Panther's first game).}

Okay, it's time to begin constructing our plan. In a nut shell, we will need to seize two bridges in sequence with a tight time line.

{Regarding the use of military terminology ... I am neither a veteran, hard core war gamer, or historian. So, my use of terms may be somewhat off at times. Please don't be offended.}

An important part of any plan for an HTTR scenario is the establishment and use of fire bases. I will use the term arty for units with a bombard capability (indirect fire) of medium to long range (beyond 3km). I will use the term fire base to mean a concentration of arty units in relative close proximity (1-3km).

Before we cover fire bases, let's back up for a minute and talk a little bit about why arty and mortars are important. Arty and to a lesser extent mortars are going to play a key role in the success or failure of any plan. This is due to three main reasons:

(1) They represent a significant portion of your overall fire power concentrated into a small number of units.

(2) They are one of the few things that can reach out an touch the enemy and when handled properly cannot be touched back (meaning that unlike your line troops your guns may be able to avoid suppressive direct or indirect fire themselves). This can increase their effectiveness relative to units with similar fire power ratings such as armor.

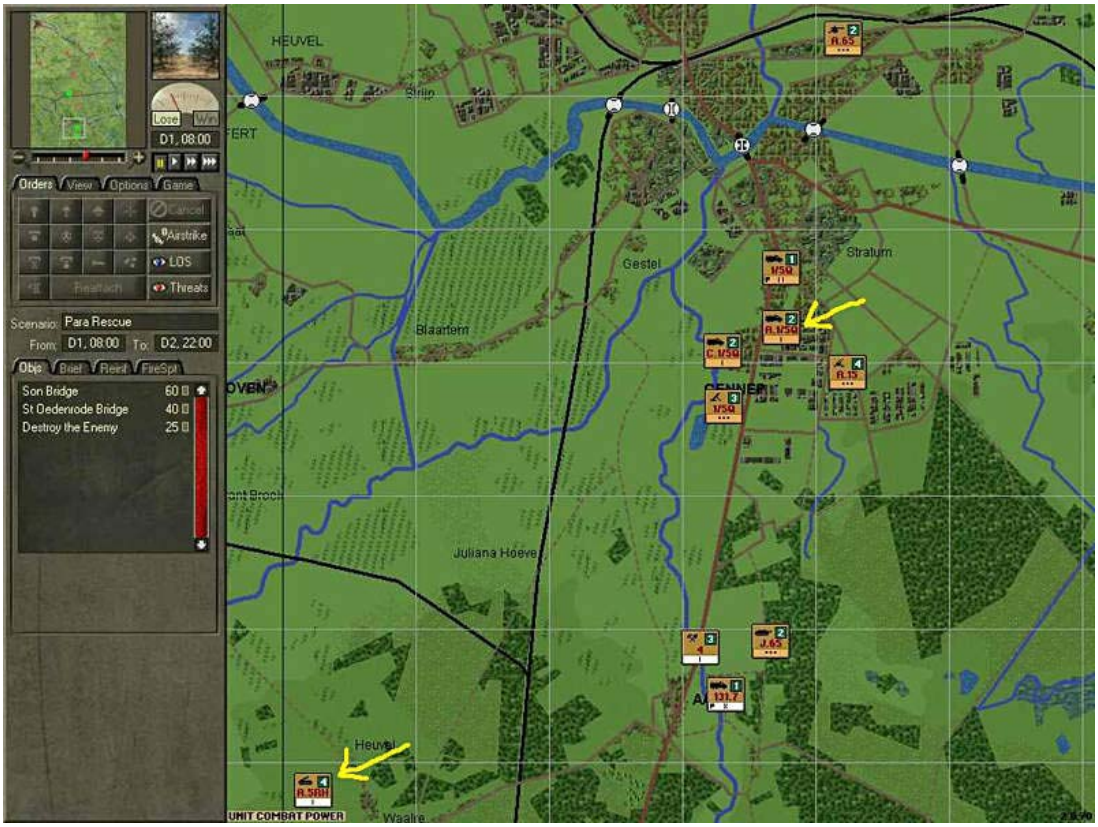
(3) Their reach allows them to be deployed to fire to maximum effect immediately when your units on the move make contact. The moving units can return fire, but they are not nearly as effective as if they were in prepared positions and dug-in.

To illustrate point #1, let me show you the arty unit filter for some of our forces with the combat power info selected. {Note, that the unit filter will include big guns, mortars, anti-tank guns, and light flak.} Unit icons can display various unit info in the upper right hand corner. There is a wealth of information displays to choose from. Below is a unit icon with the unit info box highlighted with combat power displayed.

Info Box: Combat Power

Here is another screen shot comparing the relative combat power of a self propeled gun regiment (8 Sextants) with that of a motorized infantry company (126 soldiers). We see the former displays the value 4 and the later 2. The important thing to note is that combat power is a logrithmic scale (similar to the Richter scale used for earthquakes). Thus, the arty unit displayed contains two orders of magnitude (100X) the fire power of the infantry company as opposed to just doubled.

Comparison of Combat Power:



When you have some experience with HTTR, you will see just how important arty is. On the attack, it can dislodge stubborn defenders or make them so supressed that your forces can overrun them. On the defense, if you catch the enemy massing for an attack at the right time, you can delay their attack preparations by as much as 12 hours and cause up to 30% casualties without them ever firing a shot.

A fire base is a concentration of arty at a location that puts its guns in range of the terrain upon which you are conducting operations. Additionally, a good fire base will make sure that your guns are protected. Of which the best protection is that no one knows that they are there in the first place.

You can easily check the range by selecting the bombard order to display the range circle (the blue circle) and then canceling it. RDOA players will also notice a new black circle. This is a new feature indicating the minimum bombard range for the unit. So, we see in this screen shot below that our single arty unit will not do us much good where it is currently located. It cannot put shells in the area of either bridge.

Artillery Range:

So, why create fire bases as opposed to simply letting your arty be scattered across the map? (In larger scenarios, you could easily have 6-12 big gun units. In this one, there will only be 3.) Since your arty is such a valuable asset to you it is a primary target for the enemy arty. If your arty gets badly mauled, you will be severly handicapped. If your arty is engaged by line units and has to relocated, then it cannot be servicing fire missions and it is temporarily disabled.

By using one or more fire bases, we can improve the security of our arty units. We can locate them in an unlikely spot to see enemy action with low visibility from afar. At the same time, we can take some line forces in reserve and establish a defensive perimeter. The perimeter will first prevent the enemy from getting close enough to see what is inside the perimeter and target it, and second prevent the enemy from overrunning our arty if they come in strength. One thing I should point out is to remember that your arty does have a minimum range. Thus, it may not be able to service fire missions in its own support. The answer to that problem can be to have more than one fire base or sprinkle a few mortars into the the mix.

Let's look at the four key issues that pertain to effective management of arty: location, movement, security, and employment.

* Movement *

Before moving arty, you want to make sure that they have a safe route to take. Ideally the route should not only be under your control, it should be free from enemy observation as well. Otherwise, they can shell it.

* Location *

When you deploy your arty it should be to a safe location. What is safe? First, and most importantly is should not be seen. So, get some woods, hills, or villages in between it and the enemy. Second, have some defensive forces in the vicinity in case the enemy just happens across it. Third, choose good real estate. A bad choice would be right off a major highway in enemy territory. Roads are likely to see enemy movements. Another bad choice

is often right at one of your objectives. Objectives are magnets for the enemy and do not provide your arty with a low profile situation. (An exception might be if the objective is located in a large city and you have a huge dug-in force defending it.) Another problem with objectives; it also becomes likely that you will see massed enemy concentrations within your arty's minimum bombard range. Thus, making it ineffective.

* Security *

We covered this above. Protect it from prying eyes and those who might wish it harm.

* Employment *

You can choose to leave the positioning of your guns under the direct command of the AI or take control of this yourself. For mortars, it depends very much on the situation. It's an interesting discussion, but one we are not going to have time for. For the big guns, I think this is something you are better off doing yourself. They are simply too critical to not make them part of the top level plan.

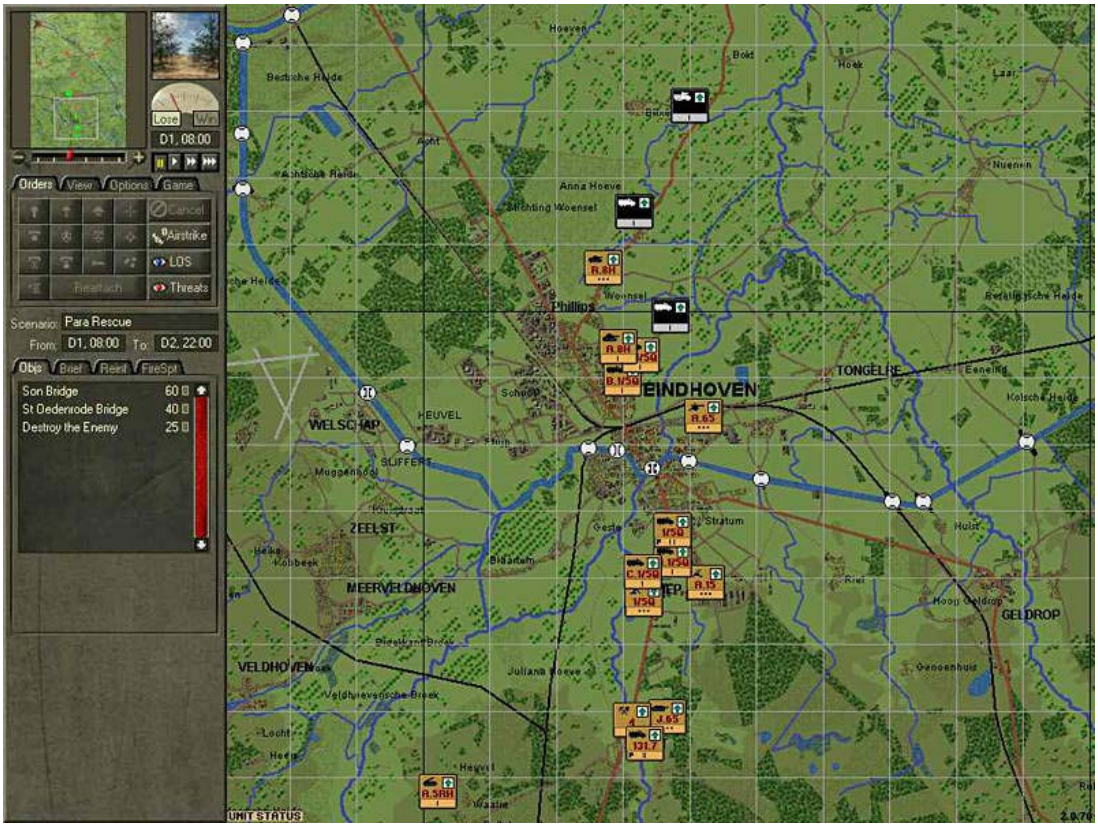
In terms of fire missions, you can either let the AI choose the target coordinates or pick them yourself. I tend prefer letting the AI do this. My reasons are: First, it is somewhat distracting from the overall battle. Second, the AI does a decent job. Rarely does it shoot at empty space or low value/vague contacts. You can see this when you are on the receiving end. There is one very important exception where you MUST call in your own fire missions and that is when trying to secure primed bridges. We'll cover that during this AAR.

Well, that was a lengthy discussion of arty and next time we will be prepared for the first step of our plan - selecting and establishing our fire base.

By the way, fellow beta tester and now Panther employee, Steve "Golf33" Long is a former arty officer. So, if you really want to learn something, ask him some questions. All the lessons I included above were simply the result of getting slapped around by the AI.

In my last installment, we talked at great length about arty. Here is a look at the area around Eindhoven.

Eindhoven Area:



The bottom line of all that discussion is that Eindhoven will become our initial fire base for this scenario. Intelligence shows a relatively weak German presence North of Eindhoven. In contrast, we are going to soon be coming up this road in force. It is my estimation that the German units to the North Eindhoven will not be making a stand, but instead scrambling to get back to the Son Bridge and hold at that location. Why? It's clearly the most defensible terrain feature standing between their main position and the Allied advance. (That's what I would do.) So, setting up a fire base at Eindhoven is relatively low risk and will put Son in range of our guns.

Below we see the orders issued to the arty unit to get up to Eindhoven ASAP and deploy in support of the operation. Also, an engineering unit will provide some local security. I also want to hold the engineers in reserve in case I have any demolition work for them to do like unpriming bridges. Note, the command parameters given to the arty unit (selected by highlighting their order marker on the map.)

Orders:

Now, let's move up to Son on the North Bank and see what the situation of 2nd Battalion 508th Para Regiment is. We know that this Bn is at the point of exhaustion. How? First, it tells us that in the briefing. Tip -> Second we can see that by selecting the HQ and then hitting the down arrow while holding the shift key to select all subordinate units. This gives combined info on all selected units at the right. Look at that fatigue level!

All Subordinate Units Selected:

I could have also selected unit fatigue to display in the info box for all my units on the map. As you can see, those paratroopers are exhausted compared to the fresh forces to the South.

Fatigue Level:

Given their extreme state of exhaustion, I am not expecting too much from them. I will be pleased if they can act in a supporting role in taking the Son Bridge. Here is the mission which I want to give them.

(1) Harass German units pushed back from Son when the main attack is underway. There are two ways to look at my plan to harass the Germans. On one hand, by cutting off one of the German escape routes, won't I be making the attack harder? Yes, that could well be true. On the other hand, if the Germans get expelled from Son, they will most certainly regroup and counter attack. Thus, the more damage I cause now, the less likely they are to counter attack and the less effective a counter attack will be. So, in my view, harassing them is a good idea.

(2) Place mortar fire on enemy units opposing the attack on Son.

(3) Prevent German reinforcements from reaching Son from the West.

Initially, I am going to order most of them to get a little rest in place for the next 58 minutes.

We see that below.

Rest Order:

I will have my ATG (anti-tank gun) unit, move to the tree line to prevent movement from the West along the trail (dashed brown line). I will have my engineers set up a road block in the woods to the South. I will have my mortar unit move 1km to the East to get closer to the impending action and also be protected within a safe perimeter of paratroopers. See the orders below.

Other Orders:

For you RDOA players, I'll mention another HTTR improvement. You heard it hear first, since Dave forget to mention this in another thread. In RDOA, you will see that ATG units don't really live up to their full potential. That was because they were effectively classed in the same group as arty which do not behave like front line troops (meaning they are not particularly robust when faced with direct attack). In RDOA, ATG units supressed and broke very quickly. ATG units have been tweaked in HTTR. They are much more robust when they get dug-in to a tree line or town edge and cover a road or open area.

In our next installment, we'll go back to our forces in the South and complete the initial set of orders. In specific, we'll look at Phase I which was to prepare the push on Son. Also, we will learn about the importance of recon and how to conduct it in HTTR.

Tea time! (No, I am not British; actually, American, but I just felt like saying that. It sort of adds some historic flavor.)

Remember the time is Day #1 @ 08:00. The battle has yet to begin. We have a preliminary time schedule drawn up and have issued some initial orders. We are now going to finalize orders for the remaining forces on the map.

However, before issuing the final orders, let's talk about two key concepts intelligence and reconnaissance.

Throughout the game as the commander, you will receive reports about enemy activity (location, activity, composition, ...) limited by the fog of war. (A useful new feature in HTTR is the intel filter of which there are three settings: all reports, recent reports, and current reports. I tend to mainly play with recent reports selected. Recent Intel gives you a good idea of enemy intentions without unnecessarily cluttering up the map or appearing to visually inflate enemy strength. Current Intel is useful when you have an air strike available and you are looking to see where to use it.) At the very start of the game, you

are likely to have intel reports scattered across the map. But there after, you will mainly tend to receive intel reports in relatively close proximity to your own positions. This does not mean that the enemy isn't concentrated and waiting for you someplace else. It simply reflects the reality of mainly being able to develop a picture when you are close enough to see or hear the enemy. (Along those lines, the level of available intel at night falls drastically compared to the day. This has its implications and you should keep that in mind when constructing plans.)

So, as we have just noted, you will usually have a passive intel picture where your forces and those of the enemy have run into each other on the map. In contrast, recon is an effort to develop an active intel picture. You will issue orders for the sole purpose of gathering information about the enemy. It's the difference between being stuck in a dark room and reaching out with your hands to feel ahead or simply putting your arms down and walking face first into a wall. Which would you rather do?

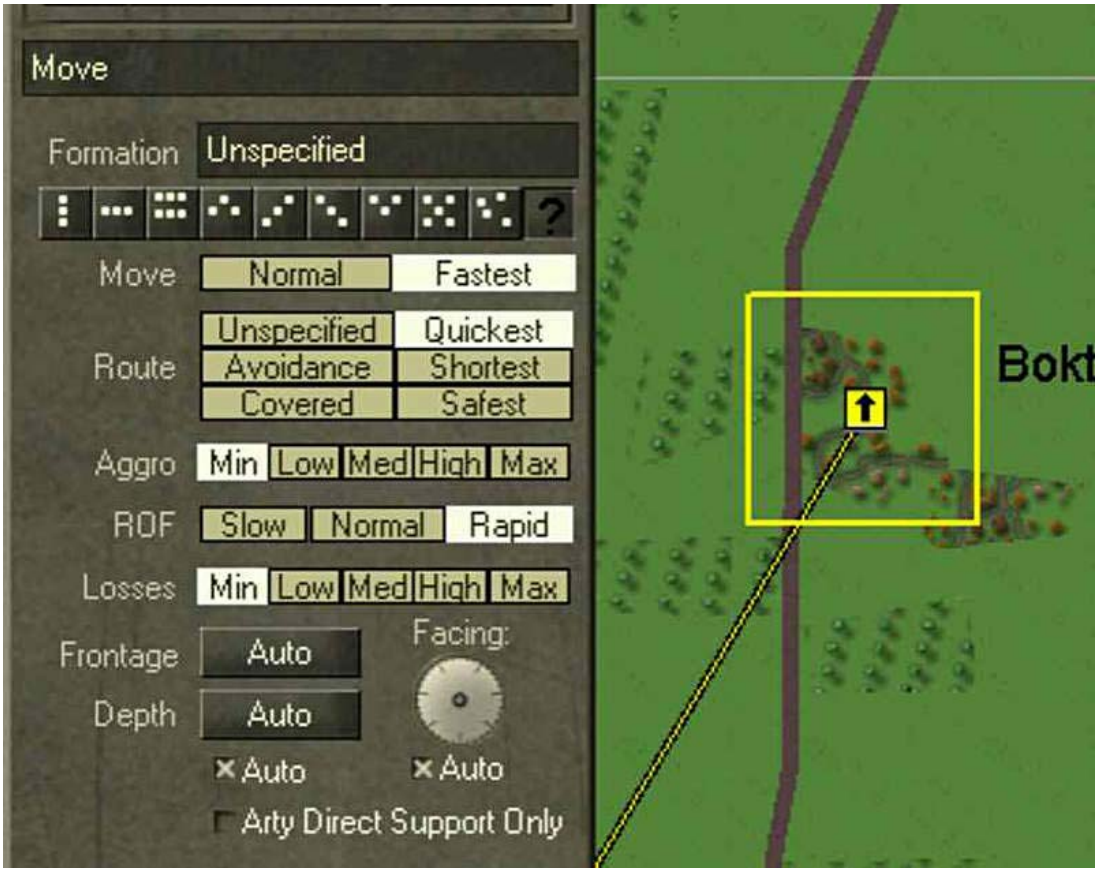
Let's discuss some basic rules of thumb for recon in HTTR.

(1) You will want to select units with motorized transport. You want them to be able to cover ground quickly. Also, you want them to be able to disengage from the enemy if possible to continue on their way. After all, recon does not mean search and destroy. My favorite units for recon will tend to be armored car platoons or light tank platoons. Recon orders (movement or defend) should only be given to forces of a single unit and not multi-unit forces. Single unit forces travel very fast. Multi-unit forces are much more focused on security and will use overwatch techniques to travel. (This will increase their life expectancy at the cost of slowing them down greatly.)

(2) When issuing recon orders you should generally try to travel on roads. First, roads are the fastest way to cover ground and you usually want to get as much information reported back as quick as possible. Second, you may be trying to operate in a 58 minute time window (explained below). Third, the enemy will tend to travel by roads. So, you are more likely to find him when using roads. Fourth, you are often trying to find a path for your forces from Point A to Point B which is clear or with limited resistance. The best path for your forces are usually roads (fastest travel; least fatigue).

(3) Recon orders are either MOVE or DEFEND in HTTR from one place to another (for a single unit, the outcome of either of these two orders are pretty much the same). You will want to set the order parameters as shown below. The idea is to travel fast while trying to avoid getting into a protracted fire fight with the enemy. However, when you do come under fire, then return the maximum amount of fire possible in order to disengage. Try to have your recon orders terminate at a location where the unit can still do some good. Some example, the site of a future FUP (where they can serve as advanced eyes), an objective (perhaps it will be vacant and you will be able to pick up points without a fight), a key road intersection which is likely to see enemy reinforcements pass by, ... My point is that if your recon unit lives long enough to reach its destination, then make it worthwhile. (The reality is that recon units often get sacrificed.)

Move Order for Recon Unit:



(4) If you play with ORDER DELAYS enabled, then arriving reinforcements have 60 minutes during which order delays are waived. At time T0, take a few armored car units from the reinforcements and sending them rapidly down potential routes which the larger force could take in order to attack a major objective is an excellent idea. At time T+59, you pause the game and based on the experiences of your recon units, you give your orders for the larger force. By doing this at T+59 as opposed to T+60, you save many hours of order delays in your force getting underway. By using recon, you make sure that your force will actually arrive where they are going or not loose 1/2 day and 10% of their strength on rout.

(5) Another good time to conduct recon is when one part of a plan is winding down and the details of the next phase will need to be developed. In such cases, 3-4 hours (order delays in effect) before that point in time is reached, you should issue recon orders.

(6) Since adding or removing units from a force can force their commanders to rework their plan for carrying out their orders (resulting in long additional delays), if you intend to perform recon it is best to keep those units separate. You don't want to commandeer them from an attack in progress.

Before wrapping up this discussion of recon, there are two more points I want to make.

(1) Sometimes a single unit may be issued orders with an intent that is multi-functional which can include recon as one of the underlying reasons. For example, Unit 1 is given orders to go from Point A to Point B. If Unit 1 happens to run across the enemy, then they will enhance the active intel picture. If Unit 1 fails to run across the enemy, then they will set up a road block at Point B. At the roadblock, their purpose will now be to screen for enemy movements (provide early passive intel reports) and to delay enemy movements down the particular road.

(2) Sometimes you may send a unit on a recon mission to encounter the enemy despite the fact that even without intel you are certain the enemy is there in great stength. For example, the map has five 5 point objectives and one 60 point objective. Where do you

think the enemy might be? So, why do that? Well, suppose you have a very impressive fire base assembled, but your forces marching to attack will probably not make contact with the enemy for 9 hours. What good are those guns doing for you? If you send a recon unit into the enemy strong hold, then your guns will have a target list to fire upon. Furthermore, since in 14 hours, you will most likely be attacking that strong hold, then wouldn't it be nice to have already caused some damage before the attack begins? (Your armored car unit will likely be no match for what they encounter. But your artillery will make the enemy pay a dear price for decimating that armored car unit.)

Okay, we didn't get to issue anymore orders, but we are ready to and we will in the next installment. However, I got to run. (As you can see, I am trying to establish a strong conceptual base upon which orders presented in this AAR will be made. Readers, let me know how this approach is working out for you. Thanks.)

In our last installment, we discussed recon.

In a little bit, I will discuss the approach I will take towards the Son Bridge. But, it is clear that I need to know what is going on along the highway from Eindhoven to Son. Thus, we have a recon mission up the highway to Bokt. I have intentionally stopped it short of 1.5km of the Bridge.

Let me state a very important point when dealing with bridges: When dealing with enemy garrisons sitting on top of bridges which are primed with demolition charges, you need to be careful not to make them unduly nervous.

So, a little over zealous recon could loose us the objective.

Screen shot for the orders below:

Remember my time table?

Phase I: Prepare Push on Son (1 08:00 - 1 14:00)
Phase II: Take Son (1 14:00 - 1 22:00)

The reasons I broke that into two distinct phases as opposed to Phase I - Take Son are:

(1) A long distance attack on Son is going to get sloppy. A sloppy attack will be a risky one that might cause us to loose the bridge. We want a crisp attack that will seize the bridge intact.

(2) By Phase II, we will have our fire base set up and possible other reinforcements at our disposal.

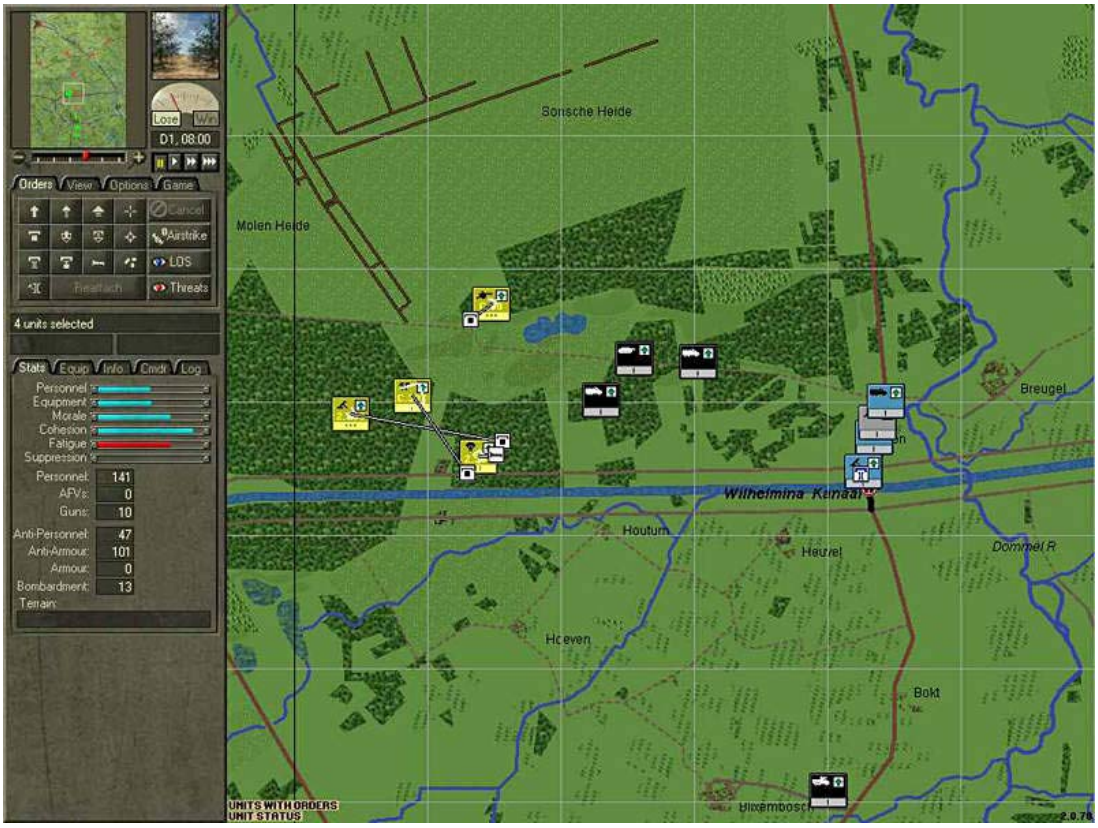
So, to achieve Phase I, we want to drive in reach of Son and stop. Once in reach of Son, it will be possible for our arriving reinforcements to move North unmolested to prepare for the final assault. I am envisioning then two attacks. The first, will push in range of Son and secure its position. The second (reinforcements) will FUP (organize) South of the first's line and then attack Son while passing through the first force's lines.

My Bde will FUP in Northern Eindhoven and drive to within 2km of Son. In reality, their orders are going to take them even closer to Son than that and I am being very careful where I place the task marker. Attacking units will exploit beyond the task marker during their attack. So, I need to be careful. I don't want to the German garrison to feel that they are about to overrun and that their situation is hopeless.

See screenshot below:

That's it. This is the complete set of initial orders. To see what this looks like (only units with orders directly from me are selected by current filter; remember some of those you see have subordinates under their command) ...

Orders North:



Orders South:

The battle begins - FINALLY! (I knew some of your thought I was incapable of getting to that moment.) Actually, I think the pace of this discussion is going to pickup, or so I hope.

In our next installment, we'll see what happens from:

Day 1 @ 08:00
Day 1 @ 08:58

We'll review what has happened during:

Day 1 @ 08:00
Day 1 @ 08:58

Elements of the 2nd. Bn 508th. Para Regt made progress consistant with their orders.

My recon element made it up to Bokt and met very minimal German resistance. This is very significant and we will come back to that in a minute.

See screenshot below:

To the South, our fire base is established and the 131st. Queens Inf Bde is beginning their push North. I have highlighted the 131st. for you so that you can observe their attack formation and also note thick black arrows in the unit info box on the icons. These units are assaulting.

See screen shot below:

It's Day 1 @ 08:58 and we have arrived at our first juncture in this battle. How did I determine that?

(1) At Day 1 @ 09:00, order delays will kick in for all the units which you see on the map. If I give them new orders now, they will carry them out immediately. At 09:00, the same orders will require hours worth of delays.

(2) My recon just told me that the Germans are unable to prevent movement up towards Son. There is no need to fight my way up to the area of the bridge. Thus, it is time to revise the plan.

(3) The 2nd Bn. 508th. were getting some rest. It's time to give them updated orders before the delays kick in.

Here are my new orders:

(1) 131st. Queens Inf Bde (rejoined by the engineers) will move directly 2km South of Son to FUP and attack. Now, there is a certain risk with eliminating Phase I and going immediately to Phase II of the operation. I had assumed that by Phase II (seizing Son) that I would have all my arty in place and another Bn. Also, the 2nd. Bn 508th Regt would have established their harassing position along with bringing their mortar platoon in range. So, then why abandon Phase I? Well, the flip side of sticking to plan is that for every additional minute it takes to reach Son, German reinforcements are also heading their to join the fight and those Germans already their are digging in and improving their defensive situation. So, I perceive that I have momentum and will take the initiative. The biggest risk factor is the limited arty support to suppress the bridge defenders as opposed limited number of attackers. (I'll explain more about this later.)

(2) 2nd Bn. 508th. are ordered to move East towards their harassing position and with the mortar platoon also moving somewhat further East.

Revised orders North:

Revised orders South:

Note that the dim lines show the current orders in effect and the white lines show my new orders.

Let's talk quickly about concepts once again.

The placement of FUP points is an art. Too far from the actual attack task marker and your attack will not be very cohesive and your troops are likely when not making progress to fall back quite far to get organized. Also, the reserves will tend to remain quite far back from the fighting. Too close to the actual attack task marker and the enemy may well observe them and rain down arty on them. The attack will end up being very disrupted and chances for success will be quite reduced.

Good FUPs balance these two extremes and always attempt to avoid observation where possible. This means when possible put woods, villages, hills ... between you and enemy observation. Also, remember that armor attacks best over open ground and that infantry attacks best through woods and urban areas. So, select an axis of attack appropriate to the forces involved.

I also wanted to talk about managing mortar platoons. You can take command of them and have them deploy in a specific location or you can leave them under command of their battalion commanders. There are reasons to support doing it either way. I'll share with you my thinking.

(1) When you have a very good picture of where the enemy is and what they are doing and you can safely set up your mortars in range of the engagement area, then I would say take direct command. By doing so, you will accomplish two things. You will avoid your mortars inadvertently coming under enemy fire. Your mortars will already be deployed and immediately ready to provide supporting fire for your infantry companies.

(2) When you do not have a good picture or need to attack over an extended distance (more than 2km), then leave your mortars under your Bn commanders control. The mortars will advance with the rest of the assaulting troops. When contact with the enemy is made, they will deploy and provide supporting fire.

In our next installement, we'll examine the time period of:

Day 1 @ 08:58
Day 1 @ 10:55

We'll review what has happened during:

Day 1 @ 08:58
Day 1 @ 10:55

To the North:

Elements of the 2nd. Bn 508th. Para Regt are now pushing towards their harassing positions on the German's West flank around Son. Given my alteration to the plan, they will probably arrive too late to play a key role. The ATG unit looks like they may have spotted some German reinforcements coming in from the West.

See screenshot below:

To the South:

The 131st. Queens Inf Bde moved North with only token resistance from the Germans. They are just beginning their attack to seize the Son bridge. I have highlighted the 131st. for you so that you can observe their attack formation and also note thick black arrows in the unit info box on the icons. These units are assaulting.

See screenshot below:

It's Day 1 @ 10:55 and we have arrived at another juncture in this battle. How did I determine that?

(1) The 131st. Queens Inf Bde just began their attack.

(2) We need to put suppressive fire on the German positions by the bridge to reduce the risk that they will blow it.

Do remember before that I said that I mainly let AI manage targetting arty, but that there is one very important exception? Well, this is it. Your attack on a bridge can be proceeding superbly one minute and the next minute; BOOM - the bridge goes up on smoke. The best recipe that I have learned for seizing primed bridges is:

(1) Put suppressive arty fire near the bridge. At the start of the scenario, note the intel and location of defending units. Those that are entrenched are not going anywhere. When you bombard the bridge area, then lay it on that location. Put as many arty/mortar units as you can afford on spreading fire around the bridge even though you don't see any targets. You can set the ROF (rate of fire) to slow.

(2) If you have lots of arty, then leave some on call to handle targets of opportunity and urgent requests for assistance.

(3) You can make the fire mission very long, since you are going to manually cancel later anyway.

(4) Start the fire mission as soon as the attack kicks off, don't wait until you are in contact with the enemy.

(5) Don't worry about friendly fire casualties. The barrages will be lifted if your troops advance into the the line of fire.

Taking this approach will greatly increase your changes of the enemy not being successful in blowing the bridge.

This is why I said that my skipping immediately to Phase II is somewhat risky. I am less concerned about an unsuccessful attack (I can always try again) than I am about getting the bridge being blown from underneath me. More arty support would definitely have been welcome.

Here are my revised orders below (just a fire mission really for my mortar and arty units):

In our next installment, we'll look at the time period of:

Day 1 @ 10:55
Day 1 @ 11:59

We'll review what has happened during:

Day 1 @ 10:55
Day 1 @ 11:59

To the North:

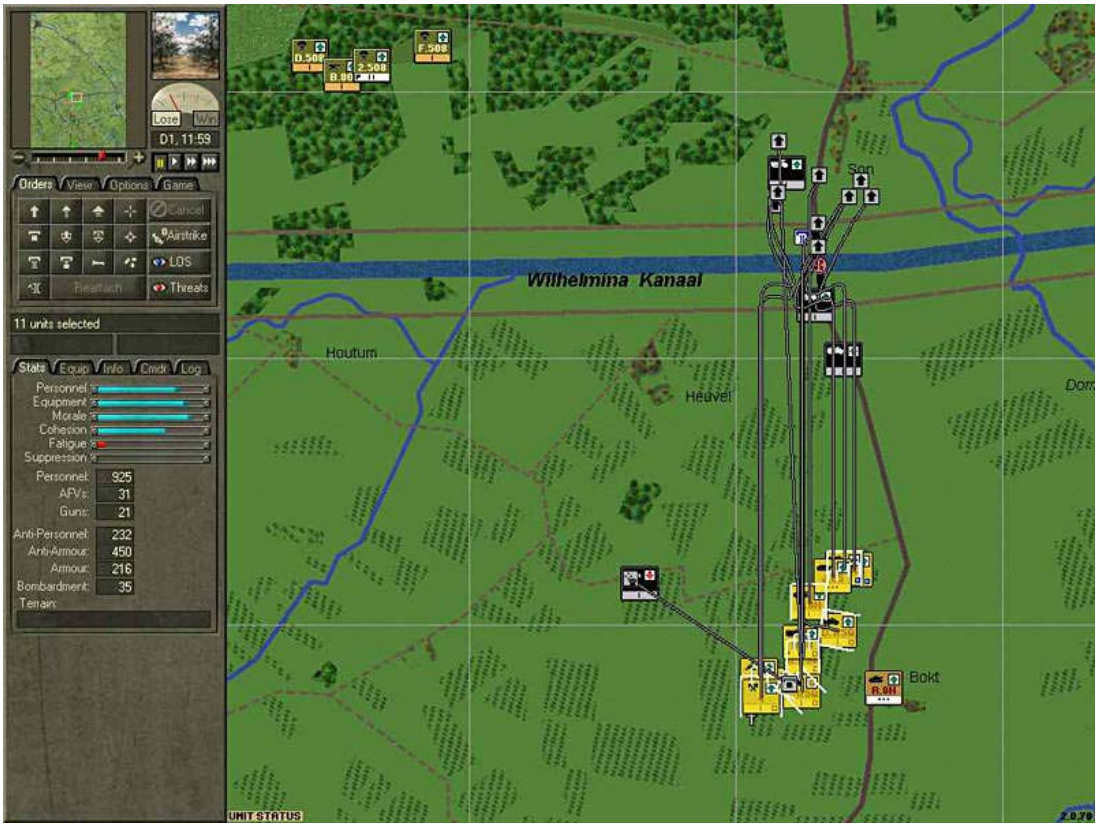
Elements of the 2nd. Bn 508th. Para Regt are advancing. The ATG unit is exchanging fire with German reinforcements coming in from the West. RDOA players will note the new Log Tab on the left of the screen.

See screenshot below:

To the South:

The 131st. Queens Inf Bde has advanced about one half the distance to the bridge. They are beginning to receive some enemy arty fire.

See screenshot below:



To the extreme South another Bn, 1/7th Queens has just joined the party:

It's Day 1 @ 11:59 and we have arrived at another juncture in this battle. How did I

determine that?

(1) Reinforcements have just arrived and are awaiting orders. Nothing more; nothing less.

I want to use the new Bn to continue apply pressure to the Germans defending at Son. It is often a good idea to attack an enemy from a number of different axis. That is what we will do.

We are already attack from the South. We cannot attack from the North as that is what the fight is about in the first place. We can either attack from the East or the West.

An attack from the East presents a number of problems:

(1) I have no roads leading me that way.

(2) The Germans are likely to have the area by the Ferry up there under observation if they have the bridge primed.

(3) There are a number of minor rivers which the attack would have to traverse.

An attack from the West looks like a much better choice:

(1) I have a highway leading to the FUP point.

(2) A German presence around the FUP point is unlikely or the 2nd. Bn 508th would have spotted some Germans along the canal.

(3) I can limit the number of minor rivers needing to be traversed.

My new orders will be to have Bn, 1/7th Queens to attack from the West.

See screenshot below:

In our next installment, we'll look at the time period of:

Day 1 @ 11:59
Day 1 @ 12:11

We'll review what has happened during:

Day 1 @ 11:59
Day 1 @ 12:11

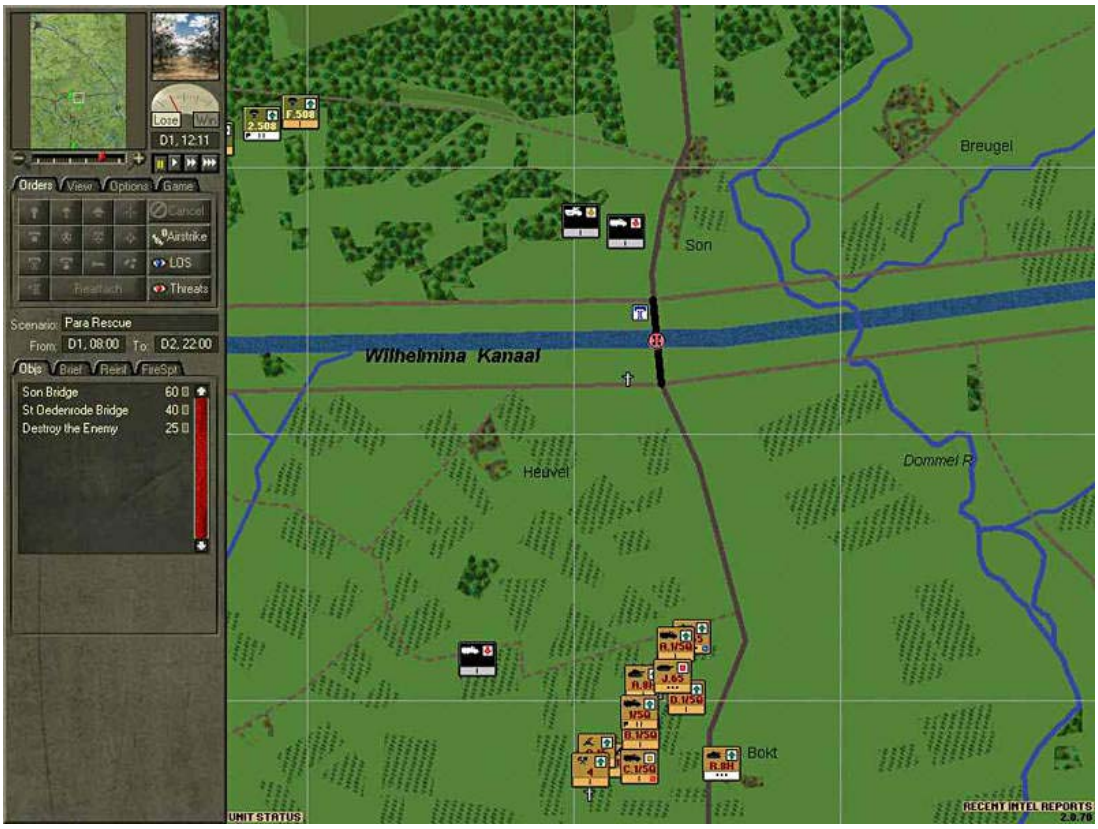
To the North:

Elements of the 2nd. Bn 508th. Para Regt are continuing to advance, but they are still pretty much being pushed beyond the point of exhaustion. As said before, they are not going to really make it into the fight for the bridge.

To the South:

The 131st. Queens Inf Bde is making progress under enemy fire. Lead elements are now only 1km from the Son Bridge.

See screenshot below:



To the extreme South another Bn, 1/7th Queens is getting underway to their FUP to the West of Son. Note, the small black arrows in the unit info box indicating move orders. Although I gave attack orders, to the Bn Commander he is commanding his subordinates and that is why we currently see move orders.

1 / 7 Queens' Orders:

It's Day 1 @ 12:11 and we have arrived at another juncture in this battle. How did I determine that?

(1) The 131st. Queens Inf Bde appears to have momentum and I believe that they will make it to the bridge. I should be able to send in the engineers who were assigned to the 508th on a mission to secure the crossing and get rid of those German demolition charges. They should have reasonable change of success as the defenders are having to deal with shelling and the assault coming from the South.

(2) The 2nd Bn 508th. will not make it into the fight. On the other hand, we still have a couple of companies of Germans trying to make it the bridge from the West. What if the those two companies are only the lead elements? The 2nd. Bn is in a decent position to stop those Germans cold. Fresh German reinforcements could still throw back my attack on Son if they make it there in time.

My new orders:

(1) The 2nd. Bn 508th will block the path going through the woods where they are. The associated MG company will set up to cover the approach to the woods.

(2) The engineers are to make their way to Son to unprime the German charges on the bridge. E Company is to shift their position a little bit to the South and take the engineer's road blocking role.

You will notice that in this single game, I have both macro-managed and micro-managed. I have ordered attacks and left the details and coordination up to brigade commanders. I have also tasked individual companies to block a road. As I said, HTTR scales smoothly and seamlessly. Why? Well, because it mimics real life. There are no obtuse abstractions here to manipulate.

See my new orders in the screen shot (note the purple in the unit info task display which indicates that new orders have been received; which is from me, their commander):

New Orders:

In our next installment, we'll look at the time period of:

Day 1 @ 12:11
Day 1 @ 13:12

We'll review what has happened during:

Day 1 @ 12:11
Day 1 @ 13:12

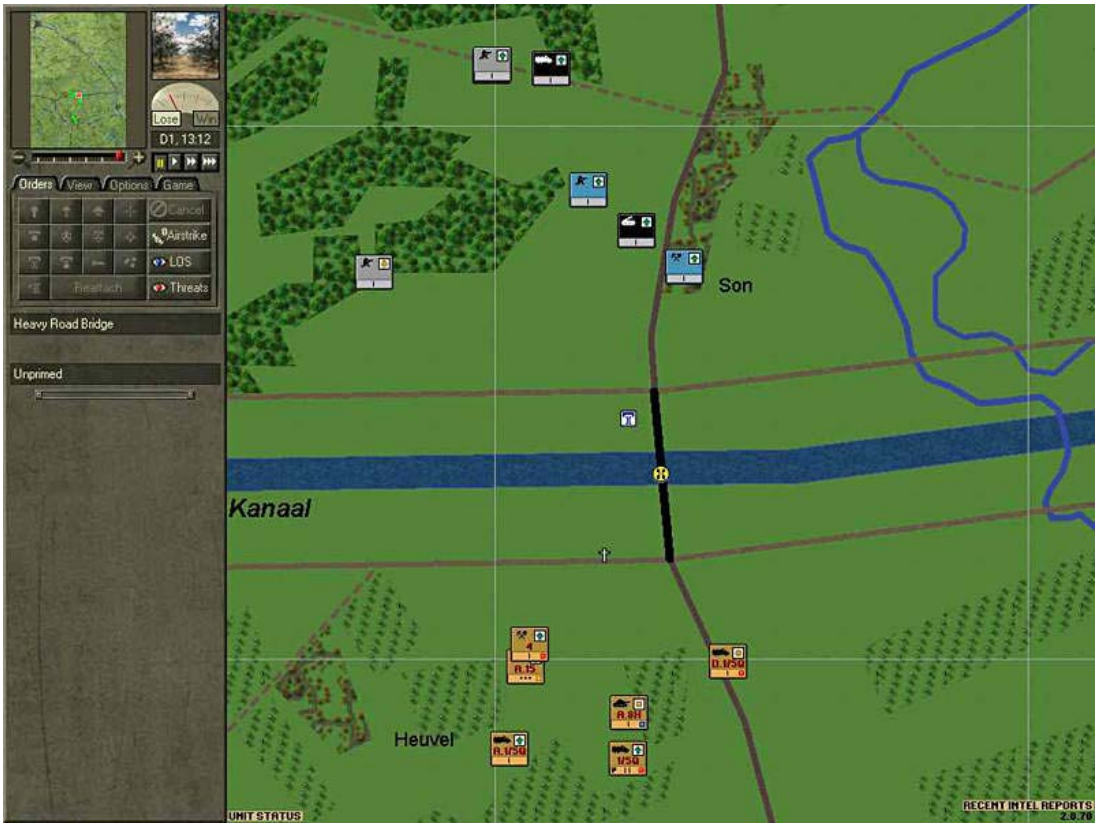
To the North:

No real change.

To the South:

The 131st. Queens Inf Bde have almost reached the Son Bridge and Germans are falling back. But most importantly, the Germans tried to blow the bridge and failed. Note, that the bridge icon is no longer pink and see the side panel primed bar. We still don't actually control the objective; it does not have a green perimeter around it. (see screenshot)

Germans Fail to Blow the Bridge:



It's Day 1 @ 13:12 and we have arrived at another juncture in this battle. How did I determine that?

(1) There is no longer any immediate threat of having the bridge destroyed. Now, it is simply a matter of making a successful attack across the canal and breaking the German defense. My arty no longer needs to pound the area around the bridge. They can once again service fire missions requested by engaged units.

My new orders:

(1) Put my arty by Eindhoven back on call.

(2) Have the 508th associated mortar platoon move closer towards Son and go on call.

(3) The 508th associated engineers are no longer needed at the bridge. Have them set up a new road block.

See my new orders in the screen shot:

In our next installment, we'll look at the time period of:

Day 1 @ 13:12
Day 1 @ 13:48

We'll review what has happened during:

Day 1 @ 13:12
Day 1 @ 13:48

To the North:

No real change.

To the South:

The 131st. Queens Inf Bde is within 0.5km of the Son Bridge. 1/7th Queens is almost at their FUP. Soon, they will join the attack. We still don't actually control the objective; it does not have a green perimeter around it.

See screenshot below:

To the extreme South, an arty unit just arrived.

Artillery Unit Arrived:

We should note that we are now back on schedule more or less with the original plan. Remember?

Phase I: Prepare Push on Son (1 08:00 - 1 14:00)
Phase II: Take Son (1 14:00 - 1 22:00)

It's Day 1 @ 13:48 and we have arrived at another juncture in this battle. How did I determine that?

(1) By now, I am sure you have figure out that whenever there are reinforcements it is time to stop and issue some orders. Minimally, to the reinforcements and possibly to other units if the plan should be revised.

My new orders:

(1) We need to think about moving our fire base further North. We will have Son soon and we need to be able to strike targets up by St. Oedenrode. A little South of Bokt about 2km South of the Canal is a good choice. It will put us in range of St. Oedenrode while still being having the German positions at Son beyond our minimum targetting distance. Also, we have a strong presence around Bokt and own the South Bank. Our arty should be safe there. So, the reinforcing arty battery will move directly up to the new fire base and deploy.

See my new orders in the screen shot:

In our next installment, we'll look at the time period of:

Day 1 @ 13:48
Day 1 @ 14:46

We'll review what has happened during:

Day 1 @ 13:48
Day 1 @ 14:46

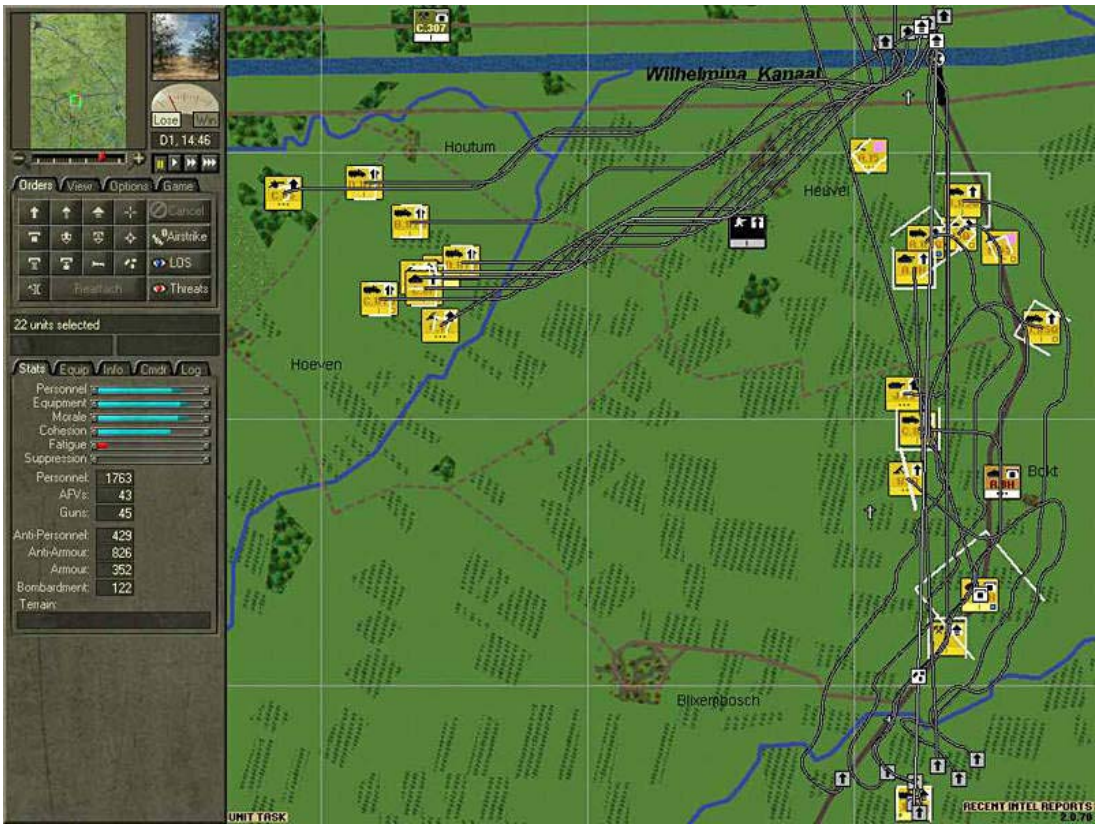
To the North:

The Germans continue to come under heavy fire.

To the South:

The 131st. Queens Inf Bde's attack has finally faltered. Note, all the movements paths by their command to fall back and regroup. On the other hand, 1/7th Queens is fresh and beginning to press the Germans with a new attack. We also see our new fire base getting established.

See screenshot below:



To the extreme South, another arty unit just arrived.

It's Day 1 @ 14:46 and we have arrived at another juncture in this battle. How did I determine that?

(1) Reinforcements ...

My new orders:

(1) Have the arriving arty battery move up to our new fire base.

(2) Everything else is pretty much going according to plan.

See my new orders in the screenshot:

In our next installment, we'll look at the time period of:

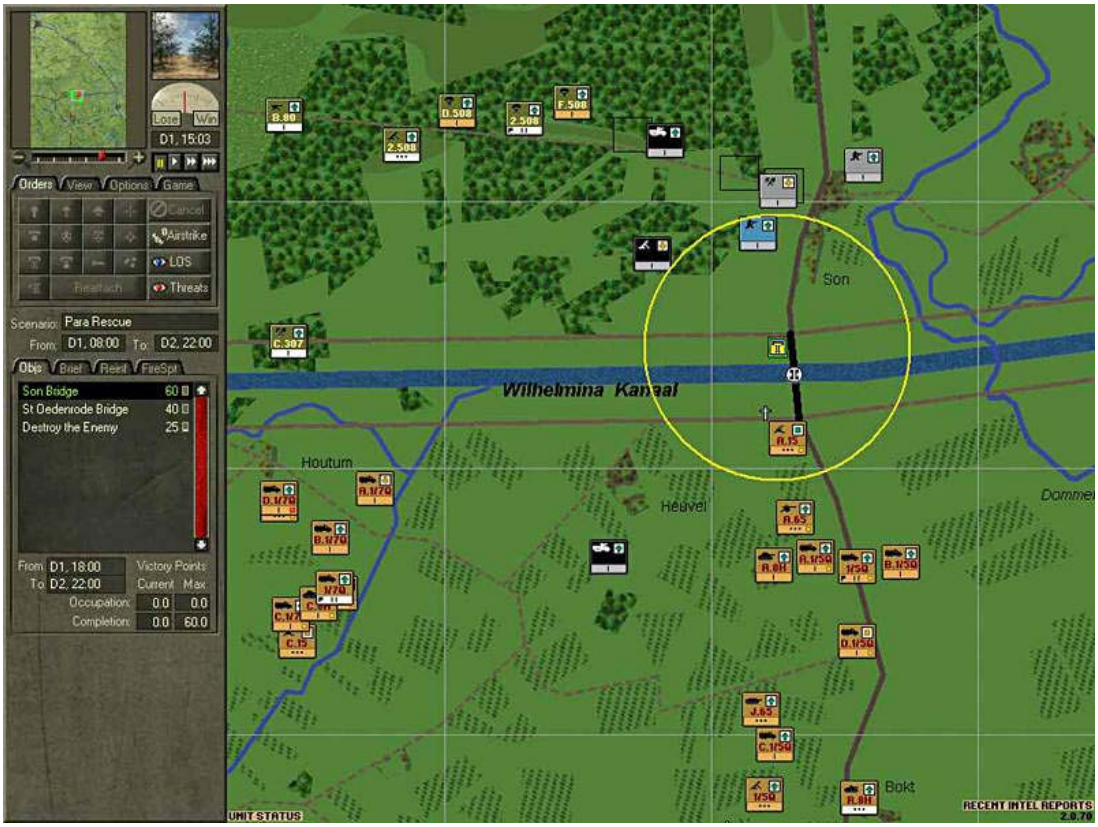
Day 1 @ 14:46
Day 1 @ 15:03

We'll review what has happened during:

Day 1 @ 14:46
Day 1 @ 15:03

Although we have yet to cross the canal, we see that a successful attack is at hand. Note the green border around the icon and the green objective highlight on the left panel. Also, note that our Win Meter (top left) just jumped to around the 50% mark.

Son Bridge Taken:



It's Day 1 @ 15:03 and we have arrived at another juncture in this battle. How did I determine that?

(1) I can see that the Germans are unable to hold Son or counter attack in force. It is time to start thinking of Phase III: Prepare Push on St. Oedenrode. I have become intimately familiar with the German capabilities at Son, but I know nothing of their disposition further up the highway to the North and at St. Oedenrode. I will need that information in the next few hours. So, it must be time for recon.

It's important to note that you need to think ahead while playing HTTR. You cannot simply react to what has failed or succeeded. You must be able to extrapolate trends and predict how things will be in 2-6 hours. You need to do this, since actions which will be appropriate for the situation six hours from now must have orders issued now. Now, is this a true strategy/war game or what? It's all about grasping the big picture and managing it. You got to love this game! (Dave gives me extra 80mm HE rounds during resupply for these little plugs here and there)

My new orders:

(1) Our original recon unit is once again on the move to the very heart of the German stronghold at St. Oedenrode. Before you say anything, I want you to know that when I asked, these guys volunteered for this mission.

(2) Everything else is pretty much going according to plan we just need to give it time.

See my new orders in the screenshot:

In our next installment, we'll look at the time period of:

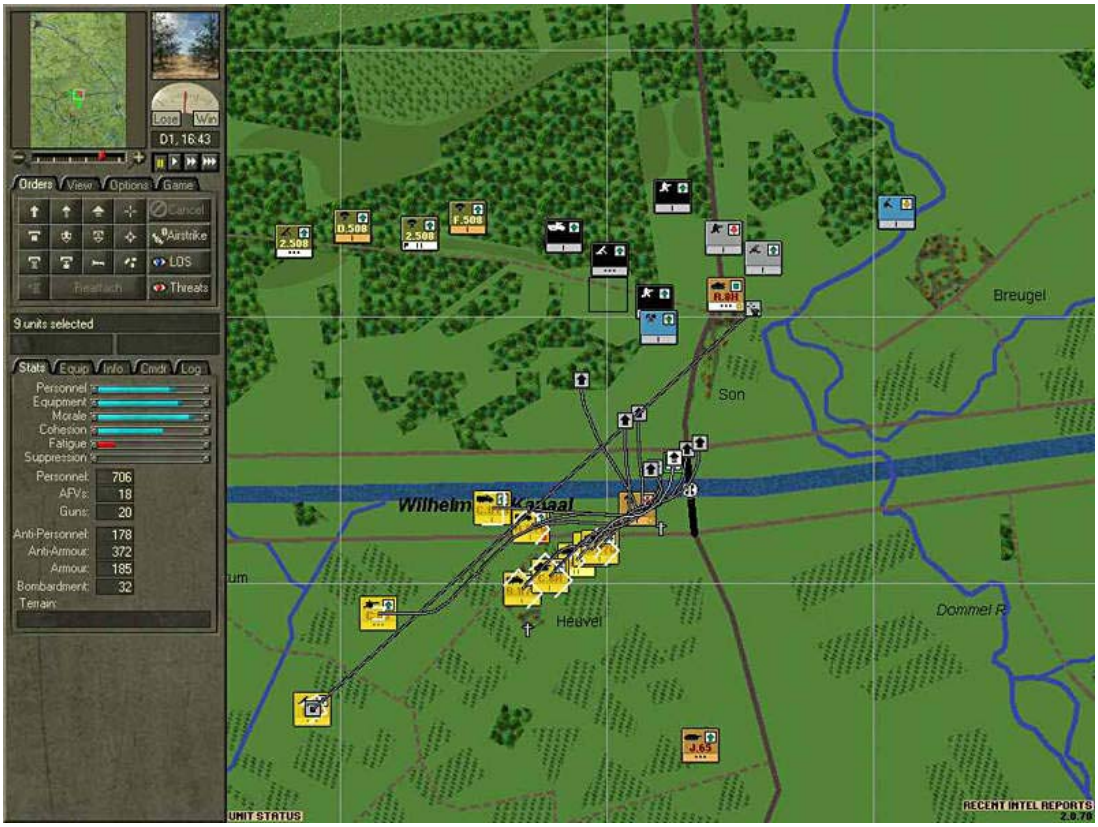
Day 1 @ 15:03
Day 1 @ 16:43

We'll review what has happened during:

Day 1 @ 15:03
Day 1 @ 16:43

Our attacking forces are preparing to cross the canal. Our recon unit has run cross the Son Bridge and encountered German units which had fallen back. At the moment, our recon unit is stalled in a shoot out.

See screenshot below:



The battle is pretty much done at Son. However, we have yet to complete the task of moving our fire base North.

See screenshot below:

It's Day 1 @ 16:43 and we have arrived at another juncture in this battle. How did I determine that?

(1) We have good control of the situation at Son and we will still have a lot of arty fire power on-call even if one battery is on the move.

My new orders:

(1) Have the arty battery at Eindhoven more North to the new fire base before its services are needed in the attack on St. Oedenrode.

See my new orders in the screenshot:

In our next installment, we'll look at the time period of:

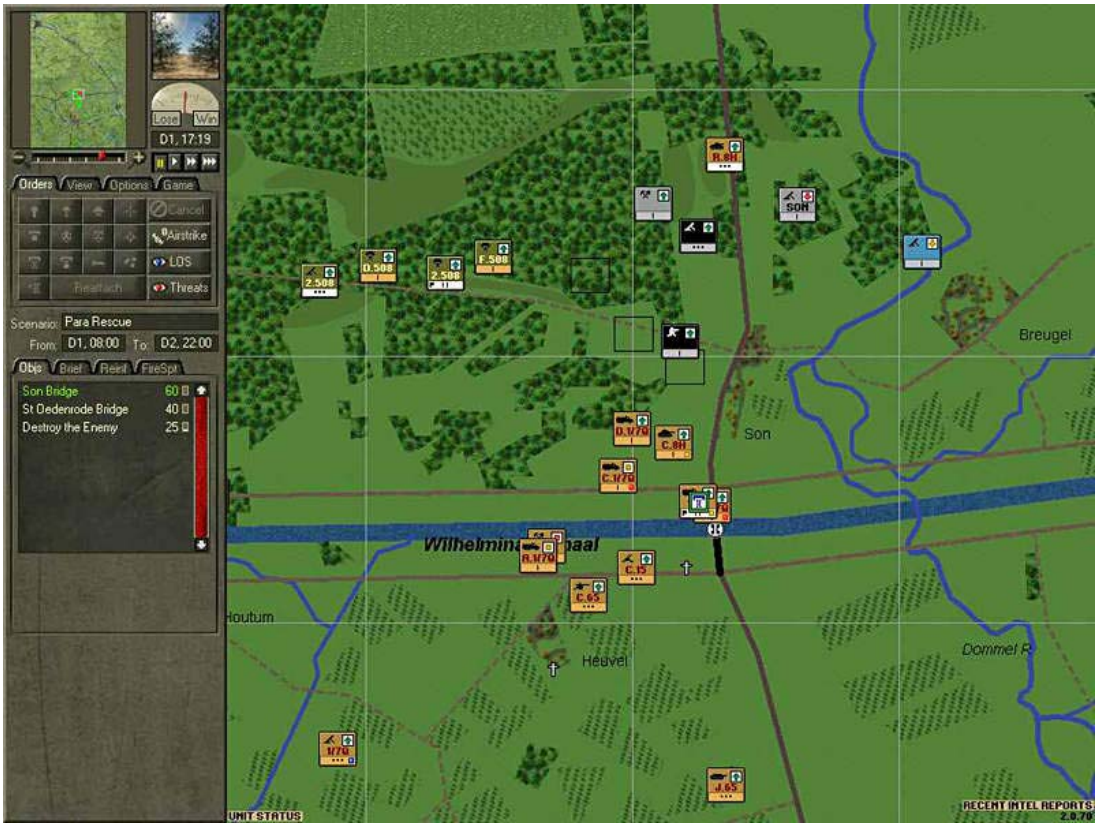
Day 1 @ 16:43
Day 1 @ 17:19

We'll review what has happened during:

Day 1 @ 16:43
Day 1 @ 17:19

Our attacking forces are taking up positions on the Northern back of the canal. Our recon unit fought its way through the shattered German defenders and is now on its way up St. Oedenrode.

See screenshot below:



To the far South, the brigade base just arrived.

It's Day 1 @ 17:19 and we have arrived at another juncture in this battle. How did I determine that?

(1) Reinforcements ...

My new orders:

(1) The brigade base is to take up a defensive position at our new fire base.

See my new orders in the screenshot:

In our next installment, we'll look at the time period of:

Day 1 @ 17:19
Day 1 @ 19:58

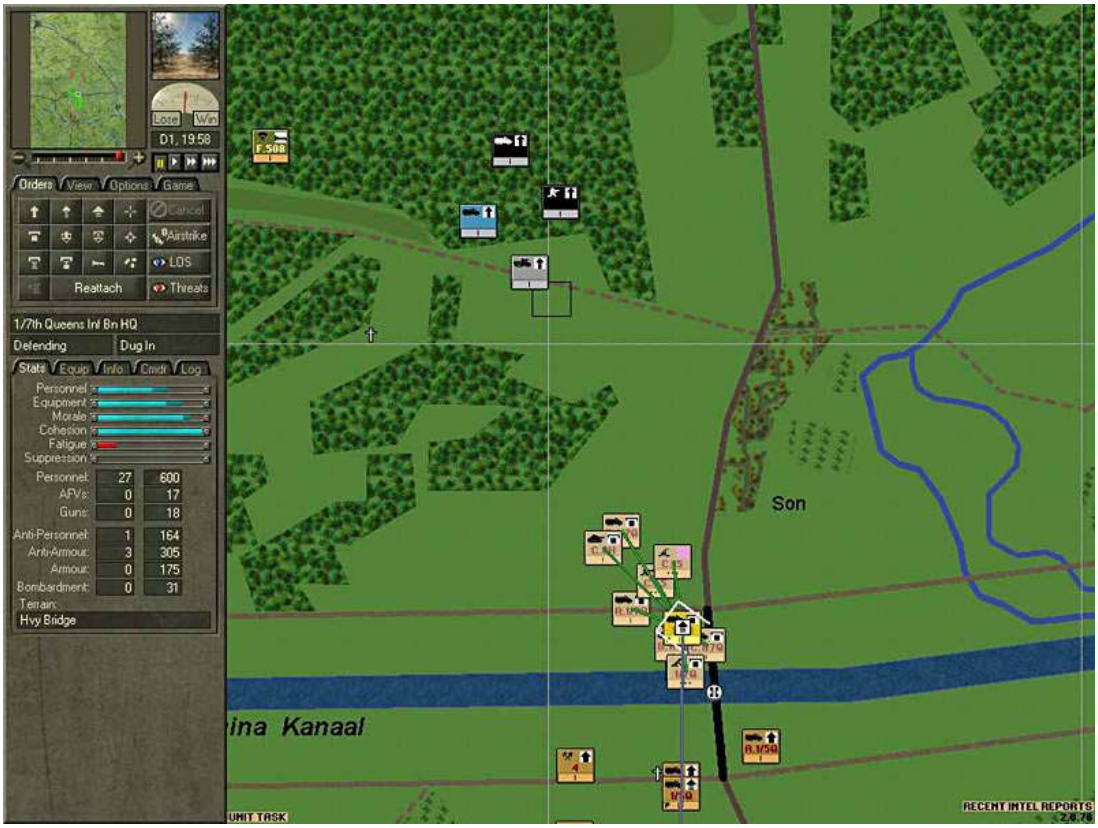
We'll review what has happened during:

Day 1 @ 17:19
Day 1 @ 19:58

Our recon unit found the highway heading North to be free of German defense, but encountered a strong German presence at St. Oedenrode. As can be seen in the left Stats Tab, they have taken a pretty bad beating from the defenders at St. Oedenrode. Of course, our arty is returning the favor.

See screenshot below:

At the Son Bridge, the 1/7th. Inf Bn is busy securing the objective:



To the extreme South, the 1/6th Queens Inf Bn has just arrived:

Also, the 131st. Queens Inf Bde (the first force to attack Son) is preparing to cross the Canal.

It's Day 1 @ 19:58 and we have arrived at another juncture in this battle. How did I determine that?

(1) Reinforcements ...

(2) Recon has given us some good intel. We have clear route up to St. Oedenrode which is heavily defended.

(3) The 131st. Queens Inf Bde order's are out dated. We already hold the Son Bridge and the 1/7th. Inf Bn is busy securing it.

Remember?

Phase III: Prepare Push on St. Oedenrode (2 06:00 - 2 12:00)
Phase IV: Take St. Oedenrode (2 12:00 - 2 22:00)

As I see that the Germans have concentrated their defense at St. Oedenrode, I will skip Phase III and go directly to Phase IV.

The battle has been proceeding at a good tempo. I want to maintain it. I am not going to stand down due to night fall and rest. It is a short battle and my troops can manage it.

My new orders (my forces will be moving under the cover of darkness):

(1) The 131st. Queens Inf Bde will take the highway North and attack up the middle from the South.

(2) The 1/6th Queens Inf Bn will take a wide flanking route and attack from the opposite flank and not where the Germans would expect it from the North. There is a slight bit of

risk to doing this, but I don't believe the Germans will be present any where else in great strength. Although I could be wrong and run into reinforcements on the road. It is a chance which I am willing to take, since I am well ahead of schedule.

(3) The 1/7th. Inf Bn will be left to hold Son in case of a counter attack by the Germans. (no new orders for this)

See my new orders in the screenshots. You can see the orders first zoomed out and then zoomed in on St. Oedenrode.

Zoomed Out:

Zoomed In:

In our next installment, we'll look at the time period of:

Day 1 @ 19:58
Day 1 @ 20:47

We'll review what has happened during:

Day 1 @ 19:58
Day 1 @ 20:47

Not much has happened, since my last update. My forces are busy digesting their new attack orders for St. Oedenrode and they are just beginning to be sent down the line to lower commands.

Our recon unit up by St. Oedenrode is recovering from being routed by the Germans. They have taken 75% casualities.

It's Day 1 @ 20:47 and we have arrived at another juncture in this battle. How did I determine that?

(1) Any further push by my recon unit would be suicidal on their part. They have already made a major contribution.

My new orders:

(1) I revise the recon unit's orders and have them take up a position in the tree line and keep the Germans under observations.

(2) All other orders still stand.

See my new orders in the screen shot. RDOA players will notice a gama shift in the game map. (No, that's not my video card failing.) The game now scales the gama based on time of day. It is a very clear reminder of changes in the visibility situation.

Night Falling On:

In our next installment, we'll look at the time period of:

Day 1 @ 20:47
Day 1 @ 21:31

Another new feature highlight which I forgot to mention. Notice the light blue and dark blue status bars on the left of the screen shot. This allows you to compare the initial state of the unit versus its current state. This is handy, since the extreme right position actually represents full strength for the unit. However, many scenarios have units starting at reduced strength. Thus, this new feature allows you to see what has been the impact of combat in this scenario.

We'll review what has happened during:

Day 1 @ 20:47
Day 1 @ 21:31

Not much has happened, since my last update. My forces are busy digesting their new attack orders for St. Oedenrode and they are just beginning to be sent down the line to lower commands. <-- No, I didn't haphazardly cut and paste that from my last post. That's pretty much the situation. This is the impact of order delays. Things don't happen instantly.

A bridge building unit did show up as a reinforcement to the extreme South. There's no bridges for them to build and I don't mind.

It's Day 1 @ 21:31 and we have arrived at another juncture in this battle. How did I determine that?

(1) Reinforcements ...

My new orders:

(1) Send the bridge building unit to defend up around Son. After all, they have about 60 rifles and spot for my arty.

(2) All other orders still stand.

See my new orders in the screenshot:

In our next installment, we'll look at the time period of:

Day 1 @ 21:31
Day 2 @ 01:09

We'll review what has happened during:

Day 1 @ 21:31
Day 2 @ 01:09

To the North:

Things are heating up again. The 131st. Inf Bde's attack from the South is now underway. The 1/6th Queens Inf Bn did not encounter any German opposition during their flanking maneuver. They are now about 8-9km from reaching the FUP leading to their attack from the North.

See screenshot below:

To the South:

The 5th. Inniskillen Dragoon Guards (henceforth the 5IDG just arrived.)

See screenshot below:

It's Day 2 @ 01:09 and we have arrived at another juncture in this battle. How did I determine that?

(1) Reinforcements ...

(2) We hold the Son Bridge and the highway from there to St. Oedenrode is clear. We can bring the 5IDG right into the battle.

(3) The 5IDG brings one arty unit with it which should join our fire base.

My new orders:

(1) The 5IDG's arty to deploy with at the fire base South of the canal.

(2) The 5IDG to proceed directly up towards St. Oedenrode and attack from the East.

I think the Germans at St. Oedenrode are in for one nasty wake up call when the sun comes up.

See my new orders in the screen shot. First, the 5IDG's orders. Second, the zoomed in attacks on St. Oedenrode.

5IDG's Orders:

Attacks on St.Oedenrode:

In our next installment, we'll look at the time period of:

Day 2 @ 01:09
Day 2 @ 09:52

We'll review what has happened during:

Day 2 @ 01:09
Day 2 @ 09:52

This post is somewhat different than the others. I am providing you an update here at Day 2 @ 09:52, since it is pretty clear that it's all over for the Germans. They have fallen back towards the West of St. Oedenrode after being hit on two flanks. The 5IDG will soon hit them from the East. You will notice that the Win Meter (top left) is pegged all the way around 95%.

There was no reason for me to stop and there are no new orders to be given. However, I wanted to share with you the glory of a plan which is all coming together.

See screenshot below:

In our next installment, we'll look at the time period of:

Day 2 @ 09:52
Day 2 @ 13:26

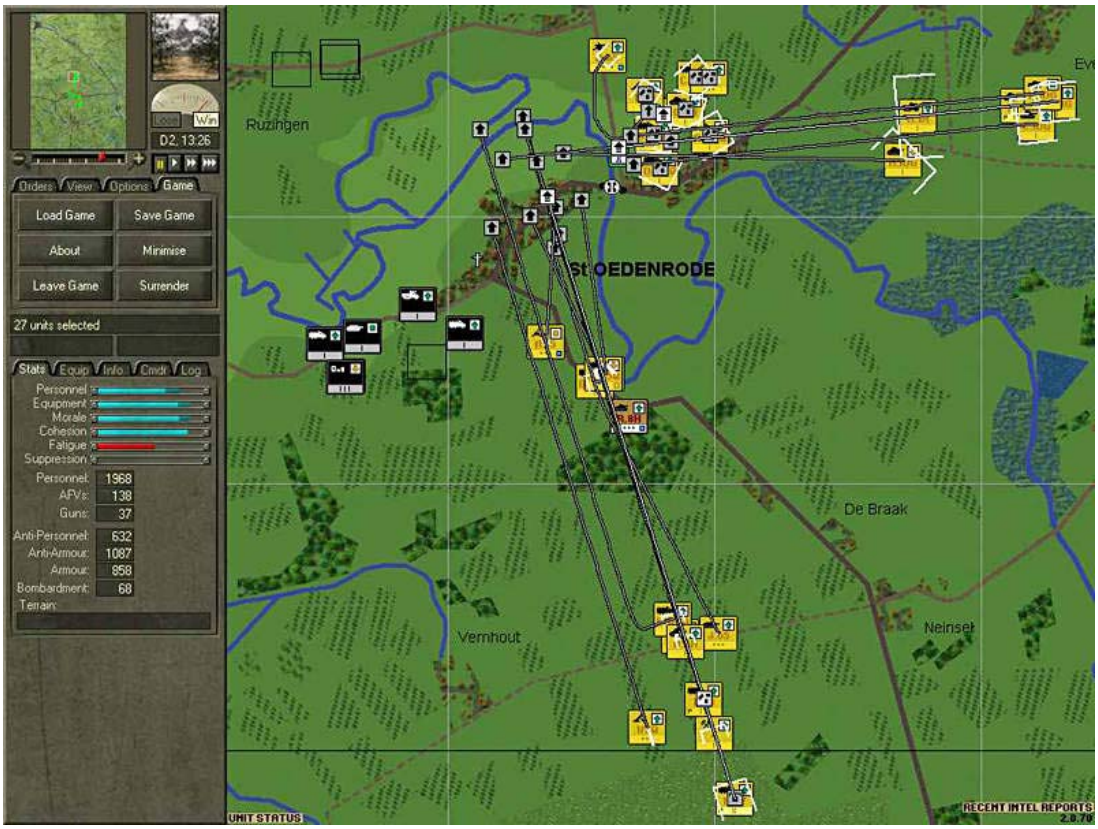
We'll review what has happened during:

Day 2 @ 09:52
Day 2 @ 13:26

131st. Queens Inf Bde has fallen back to regroup and reattack. They have seen a lot of the fighting as they were the first assault the German positions at St. Oedenrode. The 1/6th

Queens Inf Bn is busy securing the objective. The 5IDG has just initiated their attack.

See screenshot below:



It's Day 2 @ 13:26 and we have arrived at another juncture in this battle. How did I determine that?

(1) The Germans at St. Oedenrode are on the run.

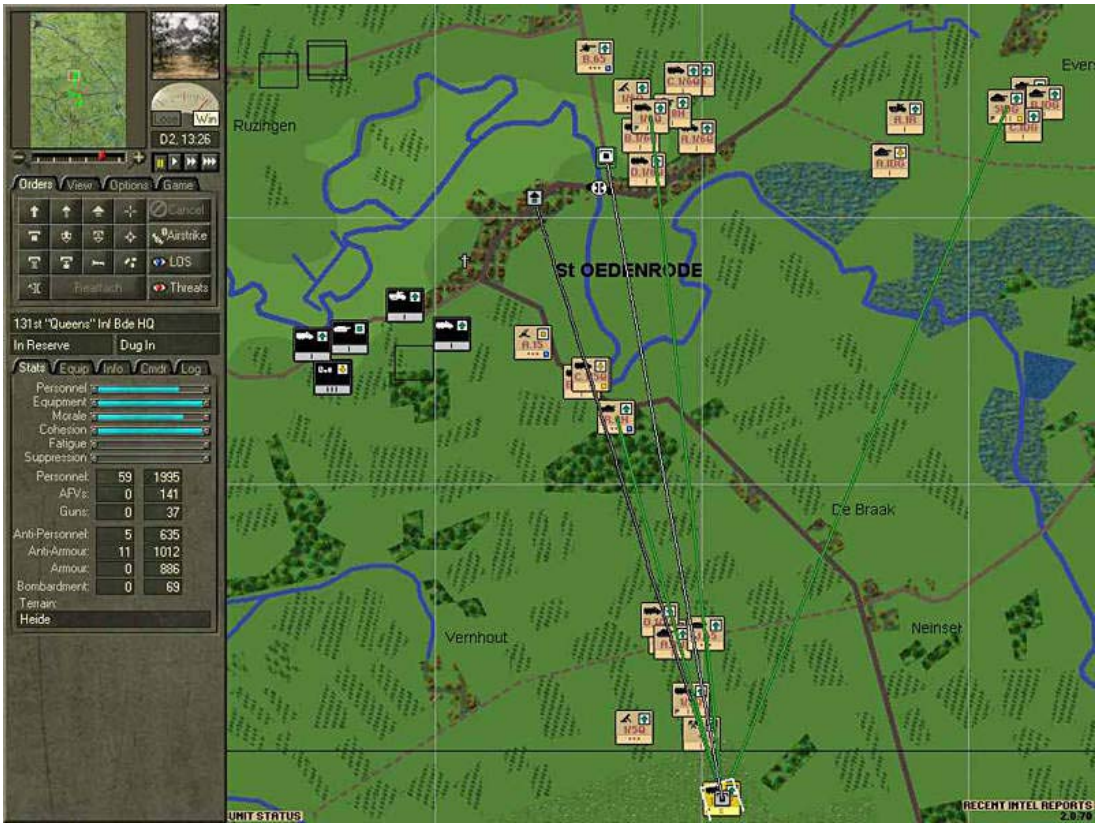
(2) Our troops are tired and we have what we came for.

My new orders:

(1) Put all my forces at St. Oedenrode under a single command of the 131st. Queens Inf Bde HQ.

(2) Have the 131st. Queens Inf Bde HQ organize a defense of the St. Oedenrode area.

See my new orders in the screenshot:



In our next installment, we'll look at the time period of:

Day 2 @ 13:26
Day 2 @ 22:00

We'll review what has happened during:

Day 2 @ 13:26
Day 2 @ 22:00

It's the end of the battle. As you can see my forces are well spread out and the Germans don't stand a chance of mounting a successful counter-attack.

In fact, the German commander offered to surrender a few hours ago, but since I came to fight, I refused it. (see yellow arrow)

Here is how things looked right before the end:

Here is the final map with no fog of war:

Here are the final numbers:

RDOA players should note that it is now possible to flip back and forth between the final map and the AAR screen. Also, it is now possible to save the AAR so that you can compare results from one game to the next.

Any comments on my AAR/tutorial/preview?

Perhaps if you ask me nice, I might even tell you about (very briefly) the approach I took as the German commander in this scenario. It almost worked despite Dave hinting that I could have well gotten myself shot by Herr Hitler, himself. Well, I always say if you got to be shot, make sure you go right to the top. 🙂

Good night folks.

PS: If I don't respond to anyone later this week, it could be that (a) I have no electricity, (b) I have no Internet access, (c) I have no home, or (d) all of the above. A major tropical storm is due to strike my part of the world quite soon. Ah, but, at least, I finished my AAR and I did get my hands on HTTR months before most. 🙂

From JeF:

Mark,

A quick question : why did you set so many waypoints at the end of your flanking attacks ?

The attacks following the highway are straight ones, most of the time a single way point to define the FUP.

The flanking ones offer way points to define the route, this is fine and understandable. Then there are half a dozen way points just before the FUP. Why ?

I found the hard way that setting waypoints close to the ennemy might not be a good tactic, as if, by any chance, an ennemy unit sits on it, then the TacAI is stuck and it will not turn around it by iself.

JeF,

There were quite a few screenshots in this thread and you did not specify which. I'll assume that you might have been refering to this one:

My reasons:

(1) As good as the AI is for path finding in RDOA/HTTR, I still prefer not to leave too much to chance.

(2) I'll specify very few waypoints when:

(a) The transit is likely to be fairly obvious and threats are low.

(b) I want the AI to find the fastest route and use it.

(c) Threats are high, but I personally don't have a good idea where they might be. So, I want the AI to respond to them as they are found.

(3) I'll specify some to many waypoints when:

(a) It's a long distance and I don't want the AI to get creative like taking a route that takes it through or near an objective. Even if Intel reports show no enemy contacts at or around an objective, prudence would dictate that an objective and nearby roads are a magnet for the bad guys. However, how is the AI to know? Because it might be a meeting engagement and thus, the enemy may not have had time to reach the objective. Or you

might be conducting recon and your goal is to run across the enemy. Or you may suspect that the enemy is there but don't think they are present in sufficient strength to present a problem, but maybe time or positioning is of the essence.

In short, it's hard for the AI to know what is your intel picture (not the one it reports, but what you believe) of the battle and to know what your actual intent is when moving forces in the grand scheme of things.

(b) The engine does not permit changing route directives at different waypoints. So, I might want to do something like say while traveling from A to B avoid the enemy (since engaging them will only remove you from the battle) and while traveling from B to C force your way through (since you are needed where I told you to go and if you encounter resistance, then you still accomplishing something of value). Of course, you can perform multiple order cycles, but this also adds delays.

(c) I am intent on performing recon of a specific route and I don't want the commanded unit to find a better path. It's mission is to reveal the enemy on the ordered path even if that means that it will take horrendous casualties or find that it has no hope of reaching the specified end point.

(d) There are specific cases for which I tend to specify an extreme number of waypoints as in the screenshot above. Two which come to mind are:

Case I: I wanted the attackers to make their way to the area of St. Oedenrode as fast as possible. However, regardless of any intel reports, I strongly suspect a German presence at Ruzingen. Now, I want to FUP North of St. Oedenrode and hopefully unobserved by the Germans. So, I want to get off the road before I hit Runzingen. Using fewer waypoints, I run the risk of the AI plotting a fast route to my FUP that might take me across enemy positions (as I did want speed for 95% of the route, but not here). By using so many waypoints, I am overriding the route finding AI and leaving it no choice but to simply take a direct path between each and therefore implement my desired route.

Case II: Often I may want to set up particular units along a tree line or along the edge of a BUA to cover a road/clearing. I find that generally the AI will loop around the front of the woods or BUA to setup to cover the road/clearing. This fine and good when you are setting up a prepared defense. However, in a hasty defense when the lead is already flying this is somewhat suicidal and results in unnecessary casualities. So, I will specify a detailed route to the position which keeps cover between the unit and likely avenue of enemy approach. Granted I could try setting the route type to SAFEST or COVERED (which I have rarely experimented with), but once again my orders were to the ATG unit something like "get to the woods as fast as possible and then deploy to the tree line while avoiding unnecessary casualties".

JeF, I hope that I have answered your question satisfactorily. On the whole, I find the AI path finding in HTTR very good. It saves a lot of time and adds to the high-level feel of the game. For those who have not played RDOA yet, setting waypoints is nothing like what is required in flight sims and tactical combat games like Combat Mission. Often just a faint suggestion of the route you desire is sufficient to have your AI underlings work out the details. Also, you will commonly depend on your AI subordinates to respond to unexpected situations as they develop both in terms of path finding and providing security for the task force while it is in transit.

So, bottom line the AI path finding in HTTR is impressive, but it still doesn't read my mind. 🙂

JeF,

One other thing I forgot to mention is that this thread very much reflects personal style of play more than most AARs which have thus been written. It would be kind of hard to avoid that in a tutorial. I had hoped to accomplish two things by exposing my own manner of play:

(a) Help new players who were lost and needed a little guidance to get going.

(b) Raise various discussions (as you have done) as to how to play the game and the richness of interface and options available to the player. (Perhaps, we'll get more of that going when everyone else gets their copy of HTTR.)

From Arjuna:

Mark,

Point taken about wanting to steer the final leg north of the treeline. However, I think JeF is correct in that you probably didn't need all six waypoints - I reckon three would have sufficed.

It's intereseting that you raised the issue of setting paramaters for each waypoint. This is doable but would add complexity. We could default to the standard task paramaters but then provide an overide facility for the selected waypoint. In the bulk of time it's not necessary, but I can see that in cases like your example it would be nice.

Dave,

Well, I am pretty sure that I probably use more waypoints than necessary on quite a few occassions.

For me, this comes with playing with ORDER DELAYS. If for some reason, I per chance specified too few, then:

(1) On a short move, it might be too late to redirect the task force, before they go where they should not.

(2) In any case, some measure of replan will be likely which will introduce new delays.

So, I look at it, if it takes an extra waypoint or two to save lives or keep a force from getting delayed three hours, then that is what it takes. The last thing I want to do is being going frantic at my CP trying to reach Colonel Smith on the radio trying to stop him from taking the road through Deelen when its probably infested with Germans despite whatever the intel weenies say.

From Rooster:

...wonderful. I've played and enjoyed the RDOA demo, but largely in a vacuum due to the skimpy documentation. Your tutorial/AAR is just the thing to illuminate the game more fully and I am eager to buy and play HTTR.

Even though you have demonstrated very sound strategic and tactical principles, I would venture that you have a style of play that differs from that of others. It would be great to hear from them about how their approach to this scenario would have differed from yours, even though you were quite succusful. Not strategy necessarily (I'd be suprised if there were any other) but tactical and managerial differences.

Also, how do you think things might have developed if Phase 1 or 2 were disrupted by stronger forces south of Son bridge?

Thanks again for a great read!

- - - - -

Rooster,

Phase I: Prepare Push on Son (1 08:00 - 1 14:00)
Phase II: Take Son (1 14:00 - 1 22:00)
Phase III: Prepare Push on St. Oedenrode (2 06:00 - 2 12:00)
Phase IV: Take St. Oedenrode (2 12:00 - 2 22:00)

Well, the assumption behind the Phase I/Phase II plan was that there would be a larger delaying force South of the canal. Recon was intended to confirm that assumption and if it had, then the first attack would have FUPed North of Eindhoven and attacked up the highway to about 2km from the canal. That would have represented Phase I. The second attack (reinforcements) would have FUPed behind the final position for the first attack and attacked through their lines to take the bridge. That would have represented Phase II.

When I played this from the German side, it was clear to me that the entire scenario hinges on Son and the bridge there. It is the best place to stop/hold the Allied advance. Once they cross the canal and break out from the North bank, it is pretty much over for the Germans. The Germans don't have enough strength to defend St. Oedenrode by blocking approaches at a distance and there are too many possible approach routes. Thus, they can only concentrate at St. Oedenrode, but the Allies will be able to mass even more strength for their attack.

So, the canal/bridge is the only terrain feature which the Germans can really use to their advantage. Holding the Allies at Son while making sure that every available arty/heavy flak/nebelwerfer/mortar was in range of Son is the way to go. Turn Son into a kill sac.

So, as the German commander, I immediately pulled back any units South of the canal to Son to set up a defense there. I did that by giving single unit DEFEND commands to each unit South of the canal. Remember that single units travel much faster than larger forces. Thus, they would stay ahead of the Allies and have a chance to deploy on the North bank. It would have been a waste of my limited resources to try to delay them from heading North out of Eindhoven.

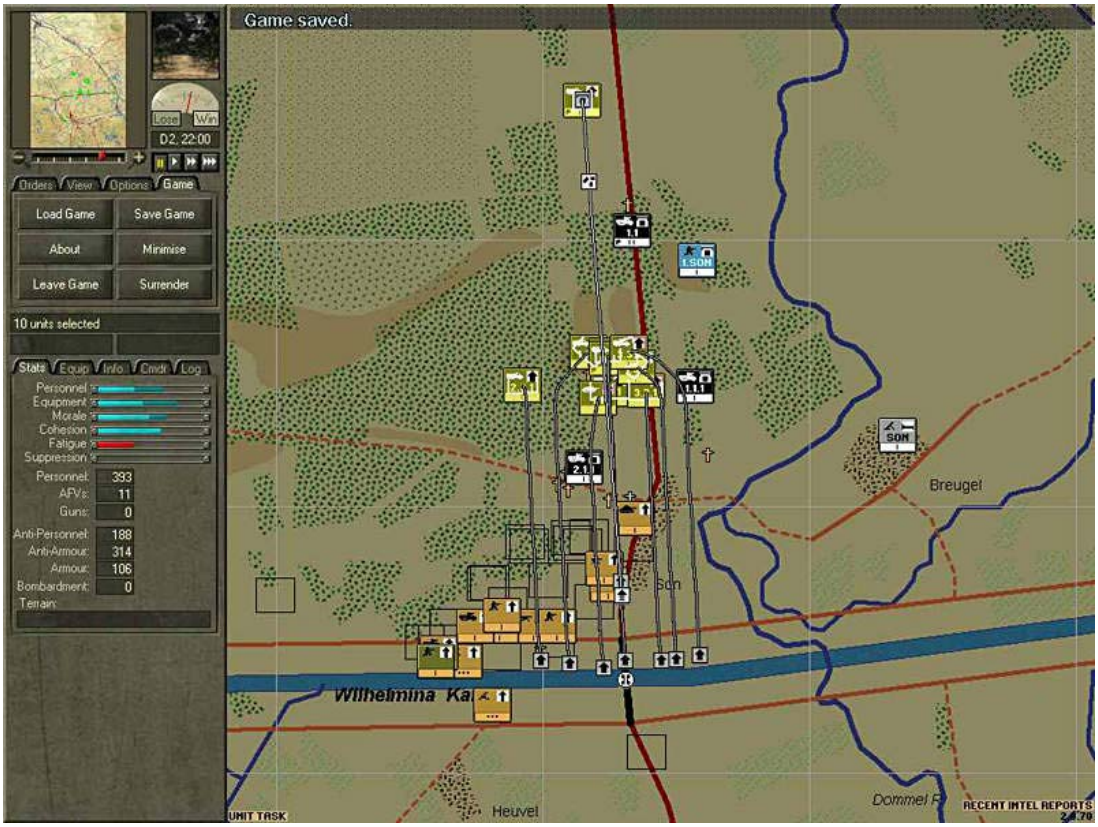
Now as the German commander, I did something uncoventional at Son. I disregarded my orders (to deny the bridge) and only issued DEFEND orders. I did not want the bridge to get blown. The bridge was the whole reason for the Allies to stay focused on Son and allow themselves to be become fixed in my kill sac. So, it had to be left standing even if I lost control of it. Sometimes, the best path to victory can be to give up ground and retake it later via a counter attack. Thus, the general approach is to first destroy the enemy and second to take the objectives.

So, I had planned to hold Son if I could and, in any case, decimate the Allies in a kill sac. Two additional forces would set up blocking positions along the highway to St. Oedenrode in case the Allies made it out of Son. I guessed that they would first try the highway. By the time they would have made it out of Son under heavy barrage and passed the blocking positions or decided to take an alternate route, they would be out of time. Of course, the real plan was for the two blocking forces to counter-attack and retake Son after the Allies had been devastated there by bombardment.

This plan almost worked. I secured a marginal victory. However, you will note that I acheived a very effective 5:1 kill ratio and also that my counter-attack fell short maybe by two hours from retaking Son. Which would have been a decisive victory and one for Wehrmacht's text books. Oh, well ...

However, Dave said he would have had me shot for disobeying orders.

See screenshots (These screenshots were done with the RDOA terrain tiles as opposed to the new HTTR terrain tiles):



From Rooster:

Thanks for indulging me, your response was helpful.

> *quote:*
>
> The bridge was the whole reason for the Allies to stay focused on Son and allow themselves to be become fixed in my kill sac.

Would the AI or another player have tried to repair the bridge using an engineer unit, or would they have moved east or west to alternate crossings?

- - - -

The Allies did have a bridge building unit, but, in my opinion, they didn't have the time necessary to rebuild the bridge and accomplish their mission.

The problems with the alternate routes across the canal are they are all very round about. They are going to cost time. The loss of time has a triple impact. First, you could run out of it. Second, many scenarios have reinforcements arriving for both sides. If you can maintain a fast tempo, you can greatly reduce the impact that enemy reinforcements may have. Third, every minute that the enemy has that you are not engaging him, he is preparing his positions for your arrival. You want to avoid that if possible. And when you are dealing with a primed bridges, the more prepared the enemy is, the less likely you are going to take the bridge intact. The other routes might have been worth consideration if the goal had been simply to cross the canal and attack further North. However, seizing the Son Bridge was critical to the scenario's success. It's hard to imagine what would have been gained by taking the long route to attack St. Oedenrode and then having to double back to seize Son.

From elmo3:

Mark,

Thanks for a very interesting AAR. This one might get added to my Christmas list now that I've seen it in action.

Question - How did your units that were over 1km from the bridge know that the attempt to blow it failed. That seems pretty far away to know that.

Thanks,
elmo3

- - - -

I believe the game gives the player omniscient status when it comes to the diposition of bridges and crossings. So, if it goes from pink to clear on the map then either you unprimed it or the enemy failed to blow it. (If you had actually been clicked on the bridge and watched the primed status thermometer style control, then you would know if you did it or the enemy failed to blow it. Depending on whether it changed gradually or abruptly.) In this case, I am sure that they failed to blow it.

In my games, most of my successful taking of a bridge has been due to the enemy failing to blow it. It's not that hard to do as long as you apply enough arty prep coverage over the area followed up with a strong assault.

From Beery:

quote:

I believe the game gives the player omniscient status when it comes to the diposition of bridges and crossings.

It's certainly not good to hear that. As the Allied player, I don't think you should know whether any bridges are primed, or whether an attempt to blow a bridge has failed. Heck, you shouldn't know a bridge isn't there until your forces see it, and even if it's still there then they should be unaware about attempts to blow it. Part of the tension is crossing a bridge that might go up at any minute, like in the Nijmegen Crossing scene in A Bridge Too Far. With foreknowledge there's no tension, and if there's no tension, you lose a lot of the fun factor. Not only that, but it gives the human player an advantage that ends up making the job even harder for the AI. In every game system, AI needs all the help it can get. To give the AI what amounts to a disadvantage by including such an unrealistic feature is, in my opinion, ridiculously short-sighted. I mean this is supposed to be a realistic portrayal of a military operation. To remove such considerations from the player/commander's responsibility will create a situation whereby the player need not act realistically in regard to securing bridges. Unlike the real commanders, you'll already know that the bridge is safe, so you don't have to bother searching out nearby enemy engineer units or doing any serious mopping up - you can simply send even your most rare and important troops/vehicles across it right away.

I hate the omniscient player thing, and I really hoped that this game was going to be as realistic as possible in that regard. Hate to see it's crept into even this game (which, in many other aspects, is such a leap forward over other contemporary wargame systems). It's not hard to keep this information from the player. Why, oh why should the player know more than his historical counterparts???

Well, you raise some interesting points about bridges. However, I'll let the designers respond as to what influenced their decisions in regards to this aspect of the game.

In regards to the omniscient thing, well that seems to always be a problem in games which simulate what in reality is many different experiences (each soldier is going to have a different experience even if they happen to be sharing the same foxhole) condensed down into a single experience to be conveyed to the player. The only way to get around that is to simulate the battlefield virtually, but with real people playing each role of every actor. I guess the military attempts to do that in their virtual training exercises, but it doesn't work for the video game market as a whole. So, you have to make some compromises between fog of war and abstraction and capturing the sense of the battle while not holding true to the most minute detail.

I can tell you that when multiple humans take roles (I've played online air combat) things go from the neat ordered world of player focused omniscience to total chaos in about 30 seconds after someone calls "3 O'clock low, tally ho!" 😉

From Arjuna:

Beery,

Point taken about trying to keep the information on bridges realistic. However, it's complicated by the victory conditions. Invariably crossings are associated with a victory condition. If we hide the true status of the crossing then the victory meter will not reflect the actual victory status but only your perceived status. Is this what you, as a player, want? We have taken the view that the player wants to know exactly what the actual victory state is at any time.

However, we're open to persuasion. What do others think?

From Beery:

quote:

If we hide the true status of the crossing then the victory meter will not reflect the actual victory status but only your perceived status. Is this what you, as a player, want? We have taken the view that the player wants to know exactly what the actual victory state is at any time.

Why tie the victory condition to the actual state of the bridge? Why not tie it to the crossing of the bridge? If the bridge is blown, the Allied player won't get the points, but if the bridge isn't blown, the Allied player should really only get the points if he gets across. In real life, the 'victory' came with the actual crossing of the bridge. A bridge's state - either intact or destroyed, is irrelevant in and of itself. The important thing is crossing the bridge.

Actually, I'm of the opinion that this particular victory condition should be secret until the scenario is over. Letting us know a bridge's actual status in terms of its potential for being blown will tend to make us act ahistorically. Once we know the bridge can't be blown, we may be tempted to ease up, which a real commander on the scene could not afford to do (since there's no way a commander could know about the status of explosives until both sides of a bridge were well and truly secured), and which could lead to very different results than would be generated if the tension was there throughout the scenario.

Of course, the best solution would be to offer the player an optional setting in this regard. Some players may like to know the victory condition status throughout a scenario. Others, like me, would prefer not to know. Optional settings are always the optimal solution for this kind of problem where opinion is likely to be divided.

Alternatively, instead of giving the player a definite set figure for VPs, you could give the player a VP 'range' between the worst case and the best case, given the player's intel. Then the player gets a sense of what he's possibly accomplished without showing the whole story. That would force players to keep up the pressure throughout the scenaro. The actual VP total would appear at the scenario's end. It's a nice compromise, giving information without compromising the integrity of the fog of war elements.

From Beery:

quote:

...In regards to the omniscient thing, well that seems to always be a problem in games which simulate what in reality is many different experiences (each soldier is going to have a different experience even if they happen to be sharing the same foxhole) condensed down into a single experience to be conveyed to the player.

But in this case we're talking about a very objective thing. A bridge is either blown or it's not. If a bridge is there, any two soldiers, whatever their psychological state, are going to see it as being there (unless they are experiencing a severe break with reality), and if they are ordered to cross it both are going to worry about the possibility of it being wired to blow. However, in terms of the game, no one is going to be worried about that because unlike real life, everyone is going to know for sure if it's likely to be blown or not, and as soon as it's failed to blow, everyone will know that too. This is a totally unrealistic circumstance which actively detracts from the simulation, and which need not exist in terms of the game. While there are aspects of reality that are open to interpretation, this is not one of them. It is a simple problem which computers are well suited to solving. Fog of war is what computers do best, but in this case we have a situation where an unrealistic

foreknowledge of a situation is being imposed on the player to the detriment of the simulation. There is literally no argument that can be made for this feature. It is unrealistic, it would be just as hard to program it as to program the lack of information (although given that it's already done, there is the added work to create a patch to undo it), and it actually serves to make the game less exciting. This seems to me to be a no-brainer. Leaving this feature in the game actually makes the game less exciting and less realistic. In this case, realism and playability go hand-in-hand.

From elmo3:

quote:

Beery,

Point taken about trying to keep the information on bridges realistic. However, it's complicated by the victory conditions. Invariably crossings are associated with a victory condition. If we hide the true status of the crossing then the victory meter will not reflect the actual victory status but only your perceived status. Is this what you, as a player, want? We have taken the view that the player wants to know exactly what the actual victory state is at any time.

However, we're open to persuasion. What do others think?

I originally raised the question about knowing the status of a bridge from afar. After reading a good part of A Bridge Too Far I'm left with the impression that neither side had a good picture of what was going on during most of the battle. So the more fog of war you can reasonably include in the game, the better. If a bridge is intact I don't think the Allies should know whether it is still capable of being blown or not until they have cleared the objective area of German units. Only at that point would they know the true status. Until then that info should be hidden and should not be included in the VP total since you don't know for sure that you have secured that objective. Once secured there would be no further chance for the bridge to be blown even if it were recaptured by the Germans.

As an aside I'd also like to see the victory meter made optional. It gives the player way more information than his counterpart had at the time IMO.

Beery,

Interesting discussion.

There are compromises which need to be made for any game. Realism needs to be balanced with game play issues. Since despite any degree of accuracy achieved, the product must also embody the "fun to play" factor.

As a player, I think it is of value to have a sense of how well you are doing prior to the end of the game as opposed to not knowing until it's over. To be totally accurate, in the real world, is the objective outcome of a battle known at the time it concludes or only years later after analysis and research is performed?

Along the omniscient discussion line, there are other HTTR details which one can ponder as well:

(1) The fog of war only applies to the commander's perception of the enemy. In reality, would you know the location, status, and activity of your own units with total clarity and in real time? I don't think so.

(2) The objectives flip state from "achieved" <-> "to lost" and back again without the

player always knowing where is the enemy unit within in the control perimeter of the objective. At times, this may key you in to enemy location and movements that you would otherwise have been unaware of.

Those are two that have occurred to me in the past. And I am sure that there are others which could be contemplated as well.

However, I can say my interactions with others who have served in the military and/or studied history leads me to conclude that the game does a good job of conveying the challenges faced by a commander in this scope of combat during that time period. Myself, I would not know.

Regarding the other key element of balance, "the fun factor", that makes it worth owning/playing; I can certainly say that there is no shortage of that in HTTR.

More rambling thoughts:

(1) As a computer systems designer, I have always thought one of the most interesting aspects of design is handling tradeoffs and selecting from the huge universe of "what could be" in order to arrive at "what will be". This is no easy job.

(2) As interesting as the above was, it got even more challenging (for my career/business) with the appearance of commercial (consumer and business) Web sites and shift to their development. For the first time in my personal experience, systems designs were no longer being performed for a captive audience of "users". All of a sudden, the users were people who could appear or dissappear forever with a single click.

(3) It is clear to me that game design is a whole new challenge above and beyond my experiences with #2. In some ways I think it may be more akin to movie making. You can have all the right ingredients present and still not have produced a classic. It is very much an act of art and inspiration that is then painted using a canvas of Windows and C++.

I think Panther has produced a note worthy addition to the field of computer games introducing some elements henceforth not previously seen or integrated. I expect that it is destined to become a cult classic (I say "cult" since this category of game only represents a small niche in the total market). Unfortunately, Panther is privately held. So, I cannot buy stock in the company. However, I suppose if I did, then the SEC would slap me (as a beta tester) with an insider trading suit. But, at least, then I could share a cell with Martha Stewart and get served very good cookies.

From Beery:

> *quote:*
>
> There are compromises which need to be made for any game. Realism needs to be balanced with game play issues. Since despite any degree of accuracy achieved, the product must also embody the "fun to play" factor.

I agree. But in this case, as I said before, gameplay and realism go hand-in-hand. Knowing about the status of the bridge before it's realistically possible to know detracts from the fun factor. If you know you've secured the bridge, the game becomes LESS exciting, not more so.

> *quote:*
>
> As a player, I think it is of value to have a sense of how well you are doing prior to the end of the game as opposed to not knowing until it's over. To be totally accurate, in the real world, is the objective outcome of a battle known at the time it concludes or only years later after analysis and research is performed?

This is a bridge. Like I said before, it doesn't require years of research to determine that there's a possibility of it being blown. It either has explosives wired to it, or it doesn't. The 'value' in knowing how well you're doing is at a high cost in realism, and is completely unwarranted. It adds to the boredom factor and makes you behave unrealistically. If this game is to hold any fun value, it must create tension. If you are omniscient on any level it takes away from the tension, and thus detracts from the fun. I'm tired of games where I'm able to know everything about the battlefield. Winning is not a challenge in those games - it's just a grind to achieve a foregone conclusion. Where is the fun in micromanaging units to such an extent that was impossible in real life. Such games may be games, but they do not simulate war in any real way, and once you've played them once they have no replay value because they are like a math equation - if you place force A against the opponent's force B, force A will win every time because there is no variance - it comes down to a simple subtraction sum. War simply isn't like that..

quote:

(1) The fog of war only applies to the commander's perception of the enemy. In reality, would you know the location, status, and activity of your own units with total clarity and in real time? I don't think so.

I agree, but that is not an argument against fog of war. In fact it's an argument for enhanced fog of war that affects your troops too. A unit's position should have a variance too - it should not always be precisely where the commander thinks it is. This can be programmed fairly simply by use of a simple randomizer for a unit's actual placement, or it can be more complex.

quote:

(2) The objectives flip state from "achieved" <-> "to lost" and back again without the player always knowing where is the enemy unit within in the control perimeter of the objective. At times, this may key you in to enemy location and movements that you would otherwise have been unaware of.

Again, I agree. That's why I think VPs should only be known after the action is completed. You should know what your objectives are, and you can have a reasonable assessment of your progress, but no commander should be fully aware of how he's doing until after the battle. That's realitry, and there's no reason not to simulate it - like I say, it adds to the fun.

quote:

However, I can say my interactions with others who have served in the military and/or studied history leads me to conclude that the game does a good job of conveying the challenges faced by a commander in this scope of combat during that time period.

Certainly that's true comparatively speaking. But what have we to compare it to? Mostly all we have are hex games where fog of war is very limited, and which do not give a good representation of combat because they allow a ridiculous amount of micromanagement. The game does a good job, but if it can be improved we should work to improve it so that it does an excellent job.

quote:

Regarding the other key element of balance, "the fun factor", that makes it worth owning/playing; I can certainly say that there is no shortage of that in HTTR.

Again, I agree. But again that's no reason not to improve the level of tension, fun, and challenge of the game system. If you want full knowledge, you should certainly be able to

have it. But there should be an option not to have it for those of us who want the extra challenge of enhanced fog of war.

From Beery:

One thing I can guarantee. Given the option between knowing the VP score at every moment, and not knowing until the battle is over, the vast majority of players who play the game enough to get good at it will opt not to know. It adds to the challenge. No player I know of plays always on an 'easy' realism setting. Gamers play to be challenged, and anything that can give the player a more realistic challenge will give them a feeling of accomplishment, and a better insight into the problems of command on a real battlefield. As I understand it, that is what the developers are hoping to achieve with this game.

From elmo3:

> *quote:*
>
> Beery,
>
> Interesting discussion.
>
> ...snip...
>
> Along the omniscient discussion line, there are other HTTR details which one can ponder as well:
>
> (1) The fog of war only applies to the commander's perception of the enemy. In reality, would you know the location, status, and activity of your own units with total clarity and in real time? I don't think so.

That would be true if you could only be one commander in the game, say the Division commander. Then it would be a stretch for you to know the real time status of every company. Since you can give orders to individual companies you are also considered a coy commander in the game and you would then have a good idea of the status of your unit at any given time.

> *quote:*
>
> (2) The objectives flip state from "achieved" <-> "to lost" and back again without the player always knowing where is the enemy unit within in the control perimeter of the objective. At times, this may key you in to enemy location and movements that you would otherwise have been unaware of.

A very good point. Personally I don't think you should know the status of an objective "with certainty" until the end. If my opponent slips a unit inside the perimeter and I don't see it then I should not be tipped off by any status change.

I believe this is exacly what Beery is objecting to with regard to bridge status. A failed attempt to blow a bridge should not be revealed as it provides information that the enemy commander could not know with certainty until the objective is secured.

From Beery:

Thanks. That is indeed my point. These things give the player more knowledge than is warranted. If I screw up, I should have to find out the hard way. I should not have some flashing light on the screen telling me that there's a threat I missed due to faulty planning

or lazyness in carrying out a manoeuvre. If I make a mistake on a real battlefield I will surely suffer for it. Why should I get away with such errors in a computer simulation of battle? In order for the simulation to work as a representation of battlefield command, it needs to reproduce, as faithfully as possible given the limits of the system, the challenges a real commander faces. In this case we're talking about a feature (the VP gauge) that actively (and needlessly) prevents such a level of simulation and which actually lowers the immersion, challenge and fun factor given by the game.

Now I'm not saying that we should get rid of it altogether. At least one person believes it's a positive feature (although I'm pretty sure that given the alternative, everyone will eventually move to not using it). But it should certainly be a feature that we can switch off if we don't require it.

When games first started to move away from micromanagement of units, there was an outcry from players worried about the loss of control. But in the end, most players have come to realise that the added realism of such a step forward actually enhances playability (contrary to popular belief, realism and playability almost always go hand-in-hand, and every step forward in gaming has been through added realism). It's actually more fun to be presented with a problem that includes knowledge gaps, and (as Microsoft's Close Combat system proves) it's more fun to be faced with problems of morale. These are features that were ridiculed by the gaming community just a few years ago. Nowadays, every wargame worth the name includes fog of war, morale, fatigue, and limits on the effectiveness of command. HTTR is at the forefront of this revolution in wargaming.

- - - - -

Making optional the level of information provided to the player like WinMeter, objective status, ... would not seem to be a big deal.

However, providing lots of realism options which accomodate different play styles, I am not sure if this is a good thing or a bad thing.

* Pro *

(1) More customizable by players.

(2) Broader market for developer/publisher.

(3) Simplifies learning curve of new players.

* Con *

(1) Causes difficulty in multi-player environments, since it makes it harder for players to make matches.

(2) Makes it harder to develop balanced/challenging scenarios since play balance is altered by realism options.

(3) Lowers the general quality of a software product. As the size of the source code base increases, the number of hours/line of code debugged decreases.

(4) Various options may be inadequately tested. It dawned on me while testing that beta testers tend to be your hardcore players and most likely play at the highest level of difficulty. So, if there are just 3 difficulty sliders with four positions, you can see how many possibilities there are to test and would the reduced options be adequately tested. It kind of made me wonder how any flight sim or racing sim with 20 different realism options ever manages to get adequately tested before being released.

Yes, the Airborne Assault engine is evolving and discussions such as these are a good way to get input as to what way the community wants to see that evolution proceed. Of course,

I guess it will help when everyone has a copy of HTTR and have gotten hands on experience with the game. Four more days! 🙂

From Beery:

We're only talking about one option. The program is done, gone gold, so there's no issues regarding quality. The quality is already there, and removing one dial is not exactly difficult. Presumably it can be done with a simple blank bitmap which covers the VP score.

As for compatability for online play, this is not a real issue. It's one little feature - players can agree on how they will play the game just as they do for any other option (many games have multiple realism options for online play) and it can be set on the server side so no one can cheat. It's not rocket science.

If we can't have the option, I'd have to argue vociferously for the more realistic feature. This is, after all, a serious simulation. Any non-optional feature that prevents the player from getting the most realistic simulation would seem to me to be a watering-down of the product. Let's face it, arcade fans aren't in the market for this product. It is a serious simulation of battle command.

From Beery:

Like I said before, this would be a simple change (perhaps optional) that will make the game more fun and more realistic at the same time. It would seem to me to be a win-win for both players and in terms of making the game system more immersive and realistic. MarkShot's responses do not seem to be based in any realistic argument that this proposal will be detrimental to the game. Instead they seem to be based in a fundamental fear of change. I'm just not hearing any real sense of fair consideration for the proposals that we're talking about. Each of MarkShot's criticisms seem to have a sense of desperation about them. Perhaps I'm mistaken.

Beery,

I am not desperate. I am not firing off any emails to Dave, "Don't take my WinMeter away!". 🙂

I am simply trying to raise the various considerations that go into adding or removing features. I like to explore topics in a methodical fashion. Gee, if you got to the end of reading this thread (my AAR) or my other thread (my tips), then you would know that's just way I am. It doesn't imply that I am going to fight to the death against your proposal or that I am trying to give you a hard time. The points which I raise or much more in regards to general game design and evolution issues than the WinMeter thing.

In fact, I believe I had stated that removal of the WinMeter would not really have any impact on the mechanics of the game as far as I know. I really don't want people to go around saying, "that MarkShot ... look he is a beta tester and see how abuses that by trying to impose a WinMeter on us!" I couldn't live with that. 🙂

Anyway, I think I'll drop out of this discussion on features as I don't want to antagonize anyone. I am apologize if I have caused you any stress in this discussion.

Take care.

From elmo3:

FWIW I don't get any sense of desperation in Mark's comments.

Panzer Campaigns by HPS has a number of optional rules that can be implemented or not as players see fit. They were not all there when the series started. Many were added, usually one at a time, as each new game came out. That made it easy for us to test each one thoroughly. Since this sounds like a series in the making, the designers could take a similar approach and add options as they see fit.

I'm not presuming to suggest that HTTR has to be rewritten with a slew of new options. Just that an option to limit victory related info that the commanders in the field would not have had would make the game more fun to play. My desire for that option is based on very limited play of the RDOA demo only. It may turn out to be more trouble than it's worth to add, but if not it would enhance play for people wanting more realism

From Bil H:

I just skimmed over most of this discussion.. and I must say that I agree with Beery about the bridge information and the victory level. I would prefer a more fuzzy indication of what the current victory percentage is myself. I also agree about the bridge status... I much preferred it when NEITHER side knew whether a bridge was going to be blown or not... it was always a surprise. Much more realistic. Even the owning player shouldn't know this information for sure, that is pretty low-level information for a Division or Corps CO to have.

From Mr.Frag:

Not to take the "win" meter discussion on, but quite often it is feeding you bad information and you relax just as the enemy slides that huge counter attack into the highest VP location on the map and the meter flips into the "loose" position.

In a real time game, you need to be able to pick information up in seconds. Going into the individual VP totals apart from pre-start detracts from that real time appeal. The VP at a glance provides a useful feature instead of you having to pause the real time game and scroll around looking for the VP markers on the map itself and making sure they are held.

If you wanted to mask something, it would be in the specific breakdown report where you can see percentage of enemy destroyed. This is far more telling then the VP meter which is keyed more to On-Screen anyway VP markers.

Count my vote on the Keep side. It saves a lot of map scrolling because when you see a dip or a raise, you know that an offscreen unit just accomplished or failed it's mission without having to scroll around all the time and micromanage.

- - - - -

MarkShot reappears

Just so there are no misunderstandings of what I was saying (maybe this will clarify) ...

I guess everyone has simply misunderstood me. There are two classes of user configurable options:

(1) Display

(2) Game mechanics

My point was that display changes are straight forward and implementing them will not really impact the product in a significant way.

Game mechanic options are totally different. There are some serious consequence to consider in terms of software quality and achieving good play balance across all possible

enumeration of options.

I don't think it would be a good thing for the AA engine to someday resemble flight sims or racing games with 2-3 screens of user configurable game mechanics. If such were to happen, I believe that the quality of the product will suffer and also the quality of the player's experience. Gee, I hope that makes my point clear. I don't have an axe to grind against anyone's suggestion. I wouldn't have spent so many hours posting here if I wasn't trying to encourage and support the growth of a community around this game.

Mr. Frag,

The percentage of enemy destroyed for scenarios can be very misleading especially when you are unfamiliar with what it is really saying.

It represents the percentage of enemy that you have destroyed which the designer has set as a goal. Meaning it could in reality be a small subset of the enemies total force. It may not necessarily be a good indication have how seriously you have degraded the enemies capability to fight.

So, you may look at that and say "well, I am kicking their butts". And then, they attack and you find out the truth!

From elmo3:

Mr. Frag - Neither Beery nor I are saying kill the meter for the objective status info for everyone. We're asking for those displays to be **optional** for those who want more fog of war. The default should be "On", just allow those who don't want to see it to turn it off. Same thing for displaying the status of whether a bridge is still capable of being blown by the Germans.

Mark - In my mind we're asking for a "display" change rather than a "game mechanics" change. I wouldn't want to wade through 3 screens of options either. PzC does it all on one screen and I think AA could easily do the same. I've been around wargame forums for years, as have you I'm sure. The nature of them all is for customers to always want "more" and for betas and designers to say "not so fast there guys". No reason to think this forum will be any different.

From Mr.Frag:

I understand Elmo you are only asking for a option toggle, I just don't see how it benefits FoW.

I can see in RDOA whether or not I hold a VP location by it being highlighted without even looking at the VP meter. The VP meter just lets me see "effectively" the little boxes that happen to be off screen too. It's a playability aid.

Now, if you wanted to remove all screen indicators and map indicators that represent VP, I'd kinda understand where you were going, just not sure I see the logic of only killing off the VP meter in isolation. If this was your request and I misread it (remove all indicators), forgive me.

I still am not quite sure how this fits in with FoW as opposed to being a playability aid. I know if my troops control a bridge generally, because they happen to be on both sides of it dug in, repelling the bad guys. I'm not sure how a little indicator on the map or a vp meter affects this.

Can you explain your thoughts on how this actually affects FoW? I've probably been spending too much time in WitP and missed half the discussion

Mark, thanks for the heads up on the VP enemy destroyed ... didn't know that, that explains a lot

- - - -

Yes, the WinMeter is solely a display issue.

Actually, I believe "bridge omniscience" would affect game mechanics.

It is not just whether you know, there is also the AI.

(1) Upon your behalf and its own, it must generate routes for forces on the move.

(2) Upon its own behalf, it must generate strategic plans to achieve the objectives.

Both of these would be impact the mechanics in the way the AI manages the game. This might be a fine thing to do. My only feelings on the matter is that I think it be preferable to not support both options only the one which best reflects the evolution of the product.

I think BTS did this very well going from CMBO -> CMBB. There was a lot of discussion about the game's evolution. They listened, made their decisions, and delivered a new game with quite a number of different mechanics. They made no effort to produce an options configuration page allowing players to choose between various details of newer or older mechanics. Their success continues to grow as a result of having a quality product with a good design. One of the most important things for software designers is to manage scope. They have done that quite well.

From elmo3:

Yes, removing any on-screen indicators of objective status is what I had in mind, not just the meter. Beery explained the idea best when he said that your opponent might slip a unit inside the objective circle, I forget the exact term as I've only played the RDOA demo, and you might miss that fact if the objective didn't turn color or the meter suddenly shift lower. For bridges it might not be possible to slip in a unit, but for airfields/landing areas with large circles or objectives in the woods it could easily happen I think. Some could argue that with more than a couple of objectives to watch they'd rather get the notice. No problem, if there is an option then leave it on. Those of us who want the extra confusion can turn it off.

From Mr.Frag:

Elmo, I would personally consider that to be very gamey play if you went through the effort to move units a 1/16" of an inch on the screen for the express purpose of stepping over a mythical line to block VP's from someone who quite obviously control the objective.

When you think about it from that perpective, the VP meter actually provides a good service in blocking out that type of play because it becomes instantly obvious that you are indeed attempting to do that very thing when the meter takes a nose dive on the other guys screen because you shifted your unit to the other side of the circle.

Thats actually one of the things that drove me nuts in RDOA, some of those VP rings were huge and one had to agressively push the enemy completely out of the area to prevent that little two-step for robbing you of a large chunk of points.

With the removal of the circle, that could get rather frustrating because you would be in complete control of the VP area but not get the points because you missed kicking some piddly little unit quite far enough...

Mr. Frag,

As I recently said in tips thread that is best addressed by putting multiple defend tasks within the big perimeter. That seems to work better than one big force with one task and big foot print specified. The only case where I think the one task and big footprint works is where the terrain is relatively clear with high LOS. But you still have the issue of night time infiltration.

From Mr.Frag:

Understood Mark, but I view sneaking a unit in just far enough to disrupt the VP counter with no plan to actually fight for the VP as being rather cheezie.

There is a large difference between sneaking units behind lines during the dark hours for the purposes of fighting from both sides and playing the two-step over a line for the purposes of sneaking VP's

- - -

From Beery:

> *quote:*
>
> I understand Elmo you are only asking for a option toggle, I just don't see how it benefits FoW.

Personally, I'm for anything that reduces unrealistic levels of knowledge that no real commander would have. If that means getting rid of all screen representations of VP levels, I'm 100% for that. No real commander had such cheats, so if this game is to present as realistic a simulation as possible given the medium, why should we? These things only make it easier for the player to beat the AI, and they give online players advantages that real commanders simply didn't have, and that aren't necessary for play. These features only serve to encourage unrealistic play styles and turn what is supposed to be a simulation of realities of battle into a mere tactical game with a war theme.

Having never seen the game system I really can't comment on specifics, but if this game is to present a realistic simulation, it simply should have options that enable the player to play with only the level of detail that the actual participants had. The computer should be a tool for restricting knowledge and giving the player the same decisions that real commanders faced. Thus when a VP location is lost, players should not know that unless their soldiers can see the enemy take that location. Similarly, if a bridge is set to blow, the player trying to take the bridge should not know that there are explosives on it unless his troops can see them, and the player should have no idea of whether it has failed to blow until his troops are in a position to confirm that. Anything else is a cheat.

As for gauges of enemy strength loss - no commander should ever EVER know that. These kinds of things are simply cheats to allow players to more easily mould their strategy. Such flexibility was simply not available to real commanders, and thus such 'features' should NEVER be in what is marketed a realistic battle simulation.

From Beery:

Another thing that seems to be being forgotten here is that the vast majority of players do not play online (online players are generally only about 5% of the total player community). The players of the single player game need every disadvantage they can get since AI just isn't capable of posing as much of a threat as a real human opponent. Enhancements to fog of war are only a formality in online play (and that tends to be why online players don't require them) since, generally speaking, online players are in it more for the challenge of beating a human opponent than for the history lesson such simulations can give. But for

the player whose opponent must be the AI, such features are essential both for playability and for historical accuracy.

Let me put it this way - the more unrealistic advantages players have, the less the game is a simulation. Personally when I play a wargame my main consideration is how realistic a portrayal of the historical battle the game will give. If I'm presented with a VP area that turns red (or shows up in some other way) when the opponent enters it, even when my soldiers are in no position to see it, then that's as unrealistic to me as having machineguns that never run out of bullets and that can shoot through 6 feet of concrete. Both things allow me to do things that no real combatant could do. There are lots of sci-fi games I can play that don't claim to be realistic, and if I just want the challenge of playing a combat game online I can play any of those. But a historically-based wargame is supposed to give me more than that.

From Keke:

> *quote:*
>
> Having never seen the game system I really can't comment on specifics, but if this game is to present a realistic simulation, it simply should have options that enable the player to play with only the level of detail that the actual participants had.

I'd say with that kind of design philosophy one would not be happy until players are sent back to the '40s with a time-machine to command the actual troops...

Maybe then one would appreciate those tea-breaks more...

From Beery:

What I'm talking about is realISM, not realITY. A simulation demands realism. Realism isn't a dirty word, and you don't need to go back in time to achieve it. You just need to determine what a simulation needs to cut out (in terms of the omniscient nonsense that wargames have given us for the last 20 years) in order to give the player the best appreciation of the decisions that a commander would face. If you prefer games like Command and Conquer that give players a hyped-up ultra-violent version of what war would be if humans had no sense of self-preservation, those games exist for you. To me they're tedious because they are too far-fetched for my taste.

This is a wargame based on a WW2 historical battle. As such it should not present us with a command perspective that represents a 21st century commander's knowledge of the battlefield. There were no drone aircraft flying over Arnhem, giving pin-point positions of enemy troops, and there were no electronic aids giving the commander news from the front the second it happened. I'm fed up with being told by game developers that I'm getting an ultra-realistic simulation of WW2 combat only to find out that the 'simulation' gives me WW2 troops but a command and control system that most armies in the year 2003 don't have access to. How am I supposed to be faced with the problems of a WW2 commander when I am forced to use tools that only the most modern computerized military has? It's ludicrous to call such a game a 'simulation'.

Computer wargames are still using ludicrously outdated board wargame technology which gives the player far too much information. It was originally done this way because you simply can't hide that stuff on a board. But here we are, well into the computer age, and most 'serious' computer wargames are still using hexes, even when board wargames have generally evolved to area movement. I mean it's ridiculous that our computer technology is so much more advanced than board wargames, but board wargames are still far more advanced than their computer contemporaries because they are evolving while computer games are still so obsessed with graphics that they're struggling to catch up to 20 year-old boardgame innovations.

From Beery:

Having said all that, I recognise that HTTR represents an evolutionary step in terms of its movement rules (i.e. no hexes), its way of removing the micromanagement flaws inherent in turn-based games, and its order delay system, but if it's still giving the player real time VP and enemy strength data, it is failing to give players what it's supposedly created for - a realistic WW2 commander's perspective leading to a realistic simulation of WW2 battle. If you're playing a game where there is no information lag from the front, second-by second knowledge of enemy movements and force strengths, and instant communication between elements of your command structure, I'm sorry, but you're not playing a WW2 wargame. You are playing a simulation of war in the 21st century fought by WW2 infantry. I'm not involved in this hobby to play fantasy wargames, and I'm sick to death of being expected to cheer every time a new wargame system comes along that's filled with the same old flaws. It's about time that game developers developed some vision and created something that deserves the title 'historical battle simulation'. Computers are easily able to do all the things necessary to get us there. Hiding information from players is what computers do best. Cardboard, counters, and rulebooks can't hide that information from the players, but computers can. So why on Earth is it that when it comes to computer wargames, developers are still giving us information that no real commander had access to, simply because that's the information that board wargames are forced, by virtue of their physical limitations, to give?

From Arjuna:

Hey Beery. We've got your point. I believe we share a similar view on realism. Can I suggest that before we take this any further you play HTTR. I think you will be pleasantly surprised. Sure there will be aspects that don't meet your ideal. But I think you will find HTTR delivers more realism than any other operational level wargame to date.

Please keep in mind that we are evolving and refining the system with each game released. We'll be starting up some discussion threads after release in which you are warmly invited to contribute your ideas on how we can develop the game system.

Once again thanks for your discussion.

From Beery:

Okay, sorry. But sometimes I get so disappointed when I see my fellow gamers clinging to outmoded ways of doing things simply because that's what they're used to, and arguing vociferously against innovation. This hobby (by which I mean that of the computer wargame) desperately needs to evolve beyond the limits of the cardboard and counters technology that preceded it. I've been playing computer wargames for 23 years (I'll never forget my Intellivision - classic), and it never fails to frustrate me when I see computer wargames evolving so darned slowly when the possibilities for getting beyond the 2D 'you see everything, no fog of war' boardgame format are almost infinite.

That's all I'll say for now on this topic. I'm sure you'll be hearing from me after Monday when the first thing I'm gonna do is go out and buy this game. I'm sure I won't be disappointed, but that doesn't mean I won't be critical. No one ever helped a game system improve by endlessly praising it.

From Arjuna:

> *quote:*
>
> No one ever helped a game system improve by endlessly praising it.

That must be a "Beeryism", heh!

From Beery:

> *quote:*
>
> That must be a "Beeryism", heh!

Hehe, I guess it is. I sincerely wish you folks well with this game. I think Panther have chosen a great distributor in Matrix games - they seem able to get their games onto the shelves wherever I go in search of computer games. The last wargame I saw with this visionary level of innovation was a computer simulation of Waterloo which was published about 10 or 15 years ago (it had no hexes, order delay, and your information as commander depended on your distance from any unit - as a command simulator it was way ahead of its time), but that game seemed to be poorly marketed here in the US and it just didn't get the exposure that it deserved. I played it endlessly though, until I figured out the AI and, sadly, had to give it up. I don't suppose anyone here remembers it?

From Golf33:

> *quote:*
>
> ...the player should have no idea of whether it has failed to blow until his troops are in a position to confirm that.

There is no attempt to blow bridges until the force assigned to deny the crossing is under attack, so by the time the enemy is trying to drop a bridge you have troops close enough to see what is going on anyway.

Oddly enough the information on crossing point status was added because a lot of players of RDOA asked for it

> *quote:*
>
> As for gauges of enemy strength loss - no commander should ever EVER know that. These kinds of things are simply cheats to allow players to more easily mould their strategy. Such flexibility was simply not available to real commanders, and thus such 'features' should NEVER be in what is marketed a realistic battle simulation.

As far as casualties inflicted on the enemy, AA doesn't give you anything a real commander wouldn't have access to. Your impression of enemy strength comes from intel reports that are based solely on observations from your units and are usually realistically inaccurate

The 'enemy destroyed' objective is a lot less informative than you'd think - it is very indirect and does not tell you how many men/vehicles/guns the enemy has lost, and absolutely doesn't tell you how many he has left or how many he had to start with. The player also has no way of knowing if it reflects the total amount of the enemy force destroyed or just some smaller (or even larger) proportion - the scenario designer sets the number of points for attrition, and the percentage of the enemy force to be destroyed to achieve that. All the player sees is the number of points he has and the number he could gain; he doesn't see the percentage of casualties he has to inflict to do so. I could set it so the player saw full attrition points for destroying as little as 1% of the enemy force; it's not even limited to a maximum of 100% casualties, I could set it so the player could only get half the attrition points apparently on offer, even by destroying every enemy unit. If you play using the attrition objective to gauge enemy losses, you are setting yourself up for some nasty surprises!

It's also not present in every scenario, in many cases the geographic objectives are the only thing going.

Adjudicating victory and defeat in wargames (in real battles too for that matter) is a whole philosophical area in itself, with all sorts of different considerations and approaches. There are lots of different ways to do it and most of them are probably equally valid. HTTR represents one way of doing things; it's not really something that can be discussed in great detail until you've played the game a bit and seen how this approach works in practice.

Cheers
33

From Golf33:

> *quote:*
>
> if it's still giving the player real time VP and enemy strength data

You get real-time VP data for yourself and an approximation of the difference between yours and the enemy's.

You **never** get precise data on enemy strength until the game ends and you get to see the final dispositions. During the game you get intel reports based on your units' sightings that are frequently inaccurate and degrade heavily with age.

> *quote:*
>
> second-by second knowledge of enemy movements and force strengths, and instant communication between elements of your command structure

Not in this one mate! You do get sighting reports as soon as your units make contact, but they are very inaccurate in terms of type, strength and even location, and they only get updated as and when your units are in position to maintain contact and find out more information. This is no different from the enemy situation maps I've seen in artillery command posts, where you mark down contacts and the time last observed on a talc sheet using a red marker. If you make your plans based on the older contacts, you can expect to be a few hours behind the battle very quickly.

As Dave says, I think when you've had the chance to play HTTR a bit you'll find most of your desires are already well implemented in the game. I've had the embarrassing experience of the AI opponent, who I thought I'd battered into submission and driven off to the south, move around my flank and drive a brigade into the gap in my defences on the eastern flank. I issued orders to smash the penetration but the scenario ended before my troops got moving; instead of the decisive victory I was expecting, I got a marginal and nearly had to settle for a draw. This despite an overwhelming superiority at this point of something like 4:1 overall; the AI simply concentrated where I was not, and made me pay the price of not watching my flanks.

The main reason it was embarrassing, was because it was my scenario that I'd just finished writing and was playtesting for the first time! I knew exactly what the enemy had, and where and when it would arrive on the battlefield; I knew exactly what the enemy objectives were and how they would be prioritized; and I still got totally caught off-balance by an opponent who showed me what I expected to see, while actually doing something quite different. Anyone else playing that game would not know the enemy's starting strength, what reinforcements he had coming, or where and when they would arrive. He would not even know what objectives the enemy had.

Regards
33

From Beery:

Okay, I know I promised to be quiet from here on, but this is some good info:

> *quote:*
>
> There is no attempt to blow bridges until the force assigned to deny the crossing is under attack, so by the time the enemy is trying to drop a bridge you have troops close enough to see what is going on anyway.

Good to know. This is not the impression I got from previous posts. It's still 'iffy' to know that an attempt to blow a bridge failed, and it definitely takes away from the tension of a crossing, but I guess I might be able to live with it given the above considerations. But I'll have to see it in action to get a real idea of whether it's within reasonable limits of realism or not.

> *quote:*
>
> Oddly enough the information on crossing point status was added because a lot of players of RDOA asked for it

It will never surprise me that many players want more information than they technically should have - it's human nature given today's culture of instant gratification, but it's important for the integrity of the simulation that such things are only offered as an option, and let those of us who want a realistic simulation have that option too.

> *quote:*
>
> Your impression of enemy strength comes from intel reports that are based solely on observations from your units and are usually realistically inaccurate...
>
> The 'enemy destroyed' objective is a lot less informative than you'd think - it is very indirect and does not tell you how many men/vehicles/guns the enemy has lost, and absolutely doesn't tell you how many he has left or how many he had to start with...

All good things to know. Earlier posts most definitely gave me a different (and frightening) impression.

From Keke:

> *quote:*
>
> I've been playing computer wargames for 23 years (I'll never forget my Intellivision - classic), and it never fails to frustrate me when I see computer wargames evolving so darned slowly when the possibilities for getting beyond the 2D 'you see everything, no fog of war' boardgame format are almost infinite.

Now could you tell me which recent operational level wargames have no fog of war?

From Beery:

I don't think I ever said that any recent computer wargames have no fog of war (the quote you use is a generalization and refers to a boardgame format, not an actual computer

game). My point was that many (if not all) recent computer wargames have unrealistically few concessions to fog of war. If you read my posts it's hard to get the wrong impression.

Please don't put words in my mouth. It makes you look like a flamer or a troll (and the fact that you're resurrecting this subject after we've all agreed to drop it makes you look even more like a troll). If you want to discuss the issue fairly, respond fairly to stuff I've said rather than twisting my words and making up straw men in an attempt to burn them down more easily.

I realise that my style of argument can be seen as very combative, and that it can strike some people as arrogant, but I'm trying to get at the truth and I'm trying to put forward strong arguments. This is just the style I've developed and it's not something I can just turn off. It's not meant to be disrespectful.

From Keke:

I apologize if I appeared trollish, but your posts seemed a little bit weird to me, when you actually had never seen the game system in question

From Beery:

No need to apologise. For some reason my writing style tends to get on peoples' nerves. I don't know how to prevent it without watering down the force of my arguments (which is something that I just can't do in good conscience). I've tried various methods - one time I tried putting in lots of smiley faces, but people REALLY hated that.

I had seen descriptions of the game, and those descriptions were leading me to an understanding of what the product was in terms of certain features. While it's true that the proof of the pudding is in the eating, it's still possible to get a hint of the flavour by the aromas that emanate from the kitchen.

As it happens, it seems that the earlier descriptions I read largely gave me the wrong impression. But there are some areas that I still have qualms about. But I'm willing to reserve judgment until after I've given the game a good workout on my computer.

- - - -

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I originally started writing this for Phil, but I thought this would be a good community project for the veterans here to help RDOA/HTTR new players. So, please add some stuff.

==========

Phil,

You should be aware that ORDER DELAYS were introduced in a patch after the original game was released. As such, some of the shorter scenarios (demo and full game release) became more challenging given their 12 hour time constraints. You can always turn order delays off, but be advised that most players play with it set to PAINFUL. Therefore, advice and AARs will reflect this as well as finding online opponents.

Also, remember that you can always go into the scenario editor and give yourself a later end time for the scenario in question if you feel that you need it.

Don't try to think of strategies for each particular scenario. RDOA/HTTR is not that kind of game where each scenario is a one-time riddle. Instead there are general principles which are applicable across all scenarios. Read through the posts here and you will see. Some examples:

(1) Get arty in range, protect it, and create fire bases.

(2) Use recon to develop a picture of enemy disposition so you can finalize a plan and pick good FUPs and axis of attack.

(3) Attack in terrain appropriate to the units involved ... open terrain for armor ... urban and wooded for infantry.

(4) Move at night when the OPFOR has massive arty resources that mauls you.

(5) Choose what combination of objectives you need to secure, contest, or ignore at game start in order to achieve victory based on points.

(6) For meeting engagements, choose objectives and timings based on your role. Meaning take easy to defend objectives initially and dig-in and leave hard to defend objectives towards the end.

(7) Sometimes the key to the battle isn't so much the objectives as weakening the enemy. Use the objectives to entice and weaken the enemy for 80% of the scenario. When the enemy is staggering and cannot fight, then focus on the objectives. (See my German strategy at the end of the my tutorial.)

(8) Use layered defenses when on the defense. Realize that there are two dimensions to achieving victory when defending. First, you can stop the enemy outright. Second, you can simply cause the enemy to run out of time.

(9) Small forces correctly positioned along a road in the woods with substantial arty support on-call can delay/stop much larger enemy forces on the move.

(10) Attack from multiple axis to disrupt the enemy.

(11) On a map with spread out objectives, you can fight in one area over a period of time and draw enemy resources and attention while flanking unseen with another force and hit someplace else. Thus, you catch the enemy with prepared for defense from the wrong axis and thin forces.

(12) Prepared defenses are much more effective against attackers. Use advance forces to slow down the enemy so that defenders can have time to deploy, dig-in, and entrench.

Well, there are a few general principles. Hopefully, the rest of the community will jump in add to this.

PS: Phil, don't feel bad. I was probably as clueless when I started as you feel now. You'll figure it out after a while! Don't give up!

From Kevinugly:

I'm just going to add a bit of detail to Mark's comprehensive 'basic guide'.

1) If you do create an artillery 'fire base' ensure that you do protect it as there's nothing worse than having your artillery decimated by counter-battery fire when you've got no idea where it's coming from. However, fire base security is a job for 'second-line' troops and HQ units, if you're having to use your primary units then the base is too close to the front line and/or you're losing badly.

2) Assess the value of the objectives you're holding as regards the units you have in place and the potential enemy threat there. When playing the full campaign as the Germans I normally control the Rhine crossings to the west of Arnhem with some of my weakest units. I have yet to see the AI attempt to take one of those crossings (although I cannot speak for HTTR on this). Incidentally this matches historically what the Germans did with some of their weaker units.

From Golf33:

> *quote:*
>
> 1) If you do create an artillery 'fire base' ensure that you do protect it as there's nothing worse than having your artillery decimated by counter-battery fire when you've got no idea where it's coming from.

"Protect" in this instance includes protection from observation. You need to deploy your arty in a location where it is screened from view and consider using your security forces to ensure the enemy cannot move to a position from which he can observe. For example, if a nearby hill has observation onto your firebase, consider positioning a security unit to prevent the enemy getting on top of that hill.

> *quote:*
>
> I normally control the Rhine crossings to the west of Arnhem with some of my weakest units. I have yet to see the AI attempt to take one of those crossings (although I cannot speak for HTTR on this). Incidentally this matches historically what the Germans did with some of their weaker units.

Historically the Allies also made no attempt to seize the smaller crossings, with the exception of a few ineffective attempts at reinforcing the Oosterbeek cauldron using the destroyed Heveadorp ferry. The only result of this was to add to the casualty and captured lists since the reinforcements shared the fate of the airborne division men they joined. MAJ GEN Sosabowski pushed for a much greater effort at crossing the Neder Rijn, both to relieve the airborne forces and to salvage something of the operation's objectives, but was ignored and subsequently (unfairly) made the scapegoat for much of the Allied failure.

Regards
33

From Dutchguy:

When I started playing I sometimes saved my game, then surrendered too see were the enemy is hanging out, and then going back to my saved game
I know it's not really honourable, but it worked for me!

- - - - -

Okay, I think the best way to grow this thread is to add insights from time to time drawn from some of my actual battles.

In just a few weeks, there will be a new crop of green players surging into the forum hoping to avoid AI-Model or AI-Monty mopping the floor with them. Of course, help is on the way in the form of a strategy guide. Panther's top historian, Steve Barnes, is doing the historical portion, and Panther's top strategist and scenario designer, Steve Long, is doing the game technique portion. However, until the master piece is completed, I hope these tips from the field will keep you alive.

One other thing, since I will be drawing these from my actual games and illustrating them with screenshots where appropriate, there is some potential for a small degree of spoiler information to creep in. I will try to avoid naming scenarios or painting too broad of a picture, but be warned.

And away we go ...

I had previously stated in my tutorial:

http://www.matrixgames.com/forums/tm.asp?m=554123

that I generally leave my arty on call except for doing preparatory bombardments to seize primed bridges.

Well, the other night I played through a small scenario (an offensive operation) a few times. What I learned that taking command (using the [B]ombard command in lieu of [D]efend command) of your arty can make the difference between a decisive defeat and a decisive victory. The scenario was short and pretty much most of the orders were drawn up before starting. Thus, I played through quite a few times and with arty management being the only variable.

So, what was going on? In both cases, I had commanded the location of my firebases by dettaching the arty from its organic superior. In both cases, whether the AI did the targetting for me or I issued orders the enemy units targetted where those on periphery of my assaulting force. Now, here is the one difference.

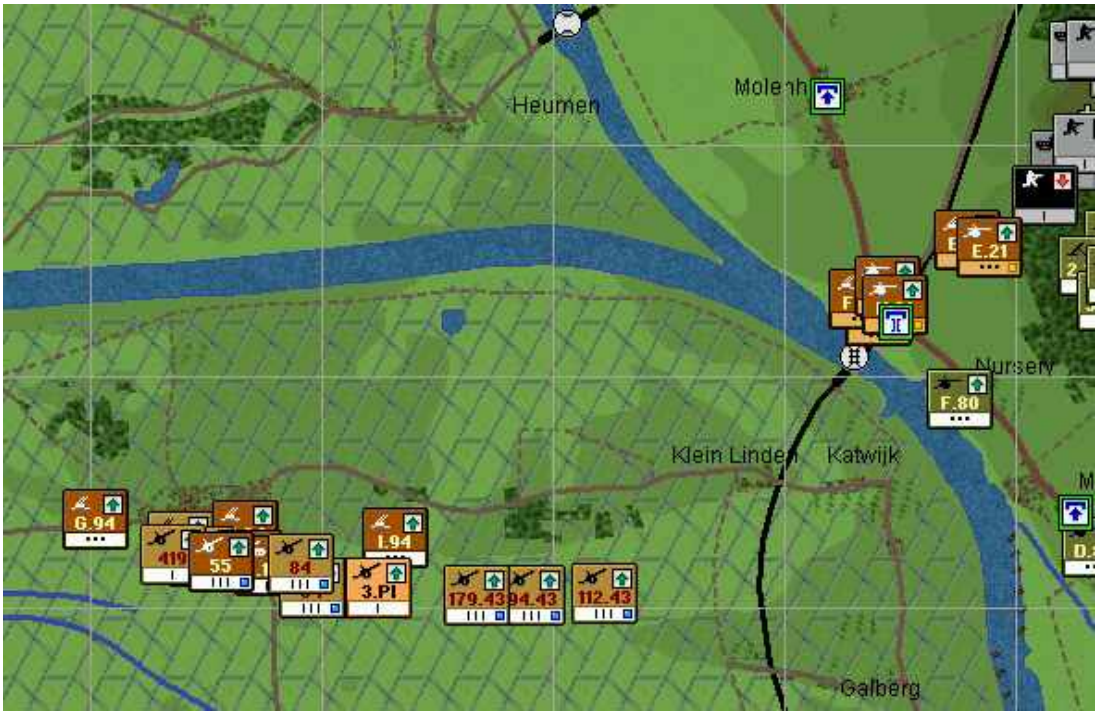
Whenever arty goes "on call" which happens either due to orders from an AI superior or you, the human, giving it defend orders, ROF is set to SLOW. This is done, since arty is a precious resource and get used up very fast on the battle field. It's hard wired into the game engine no matter what you set for it or its superior's task. However, when you personally order [B]ombard, you can choose any ROF you want.

Thus, when I took the same plan for this scenario and called in fire myself with ROF=RAPID, the enemy positions easily broke and my assault overran their positions. It was reasonable for me to do in this case as the scenario only ran about 1/2 day and there was only one real goal.

Steve Long aka Golf33 mentioned setting up fire bases outside of enemy observation. Let's look at an example of that. Here is one where my fire base is set up in the polder. German, enemy, forces are operating on the North side of the Canal.

You will notice that my arty batteries have been set up right behind a small rise. How did I determine that? First, the darker shade of the terrain indicates a higher elevation. Second, you can use the LOS tool to show you the contour of the terrain across a given vector.

Additionally, you should notice that it is no accident that this fire base is located on the South side of the Canal. I have used a natural terrain feature to greatly reduce the chance of disruption by German units.



Here is another look at that same fire base. The security force is pretty minimal, since I primarily depending on the Canal keeping the Germans away. However, you will notice that I have positioned light flak units on the slight rise (in a reverse slope) position for the following reasons. Light flak will provide longer range fire power and the elevation will increase their purvey of the surrounding terrain. Just in case an enemy unit happens to wonder into the area.

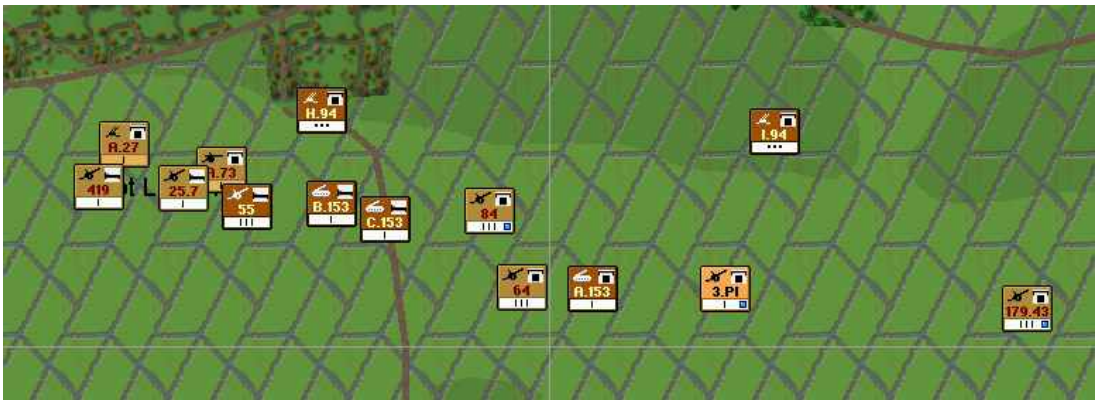
This fire base is what I would call a rear area fire base meaning it is not hot and in midst of active fighting. A little latter we'll look at a forward area fire base.

As I stated I like to leave my arty on call and let the AI manage it. It does a fair job. But there is one problem, how do you avoid running out of arty by 13:00 or 14:00 each day in

larger scenarios. I can tell you that there is nothing more depressing than it being 15:00 and facing 5,000 angry Germans assaulting your position of 500 riflemen with no arty support on-call. About the only thing worse I can imagine are the Germans bringing along a few squadrons of Tigers for good measure.

Here is how you can have your cake and eat it too (meaning have the AI manage your arty and not run out). Have some units of your fire base "on call" and others stand down (rest). Then, at appropriate times, you activate specific batteries. For example, when are in the process of a major attack.

In the screen shot, you will notice the unit information icon showing the West half of the fire base resting and the East half of the fire base on call. In the next post, I will show an easy trick for doing this.



Here is how you active and deactivate your arty units quickly with no order delay impact. (I learned this trick from Steve Long.)

In the OPTIONS Tab, there is a check box for REST AFTER BOMBARD. If you want to activate, then uncheck it. If you want to deactivate, then check it.

Now, issue a [B]ombard order like this. That's right directly on top of the unit. They won't actually fire; so, don't worry. Set the duration for one minute. The state of the unit will flip. That's all there is to it. And you can make your arty last all day long. 🙂

Okay, be sure to check back later for more "War Stories". Also, the rest of you RDOA veterans should feel free to add your own insights to this thread. Let's make sure our fellow HTTR newbies survive their first 24 hours of simulated combat!

From VALENT PHILIPPE:

thinks to MarkShot for all your work for the beginner like me . it was very interesting and i have to imprime all the pictures and text to understand the subtilities of the game.
thinks very much.
A question very simple to you of course (a napoleon gamer!) the scenario jugernaut , side germans, is there a plan to struggle the allies ? it was a great scenario with many troops and many objectives very differents . no? a too big for me,? all you say to me applies in this scenario? that'true?
thinks to me for the answers. phil.
it is a good forum "grace" at MarkShot sympathic one .

From Mr.Frag:

Mark,

Can you go into proper use of Armor now as Dave was saying he has changed it to not walk into point blank range with HTTR. This will make for some dramatic differences over RDOA...

Phil,

Bonjour, ca va bien?

Well, a number of points:

(1) If you have specific scenario questions, why don't you open up a thread for it like, "RDOA Scenario Help: Juggernaut". I would like to keep this thread spoiler free so as to not discourage people from reading it.

(2) I no longer have RDOA installed only HTTR. I don't believe The Juggernaut made it into HTTR. However, I am not sure, since some scenarios were migrated, but estabs and names were modified.

(3) If I recall, the scenario is a meeting engagement. So, see point #8 on my very first post on this thread.

(4) On the old forum, Golf33 gave a good reference to a primer on maneuver warfare (as compared to attrition warfare). One of the basic principles which I recall was "Don't meet strength with strength. Meet weakness with strength." So, some corallaries are: avoid the fair fight (withdraw), mass your forces and hit the enemy, his weak force, by a large force ... This may give you some ideas for the scenario.

(5) Also, see my first post points #3, #5, and #6.

(6) One other thought ... if a scenario (meeting engagement) has spread out objectives. If you spend 2/3s of your time concentrating on 2 or 3 of them, you should find at the end if you hit the last objective hard that it may well be lightly defended. Forces tend to be pulled to where they are needed and thinned where they are not. So, surprise the enemy when he is not looking ... toujours l'audace!

Perhaps, if you open a new thread, someone with RDOA installed can give you more specifics.

Bonne chance, Mon General!

Mr. Frag,

I'll bring up armor in a later post. At the moment, I have yet to finish my discussion of fire bases. 🙂

Phil,

I just realized that I may have confused "Juggernaut" with "Clash of the Titans".

Well, at least, you get some tips for "Clash of the Titans". 🙂

Now, let's take a look at setting up forward fire bases that are in the very midst of fighting.

For the next few posts, we will be looking at my desparate attempt (Allies) to set up a hasty defense of a crossing while large German forces move into the area to deprive me of same crossing.

Golf33 said avoid observation. Sometimes, you can do that by hiding behind a rise like I had previously demonstrated and sometimes you just got to find some woods and set up shop there.

(The screenshot shows another new HTTR feature using the mini-icon view for uncluttering the map. Use the '~' key.)

{Dave, did that make it into the documentation? I am looking at my keyboard reference and I don't see that there. Hmm...}

Below you will see two fire bases set up in the woods. For the most part, they are shielded from casual view. To achieve this mortar platoons were stripped from 12 separate battalions (meaning I gave them direct [D]efend orders). You will notice that the configuration of mortars gives me an oval of coverage about 9km by 6km. Each fire base, also has some light arty in the center.

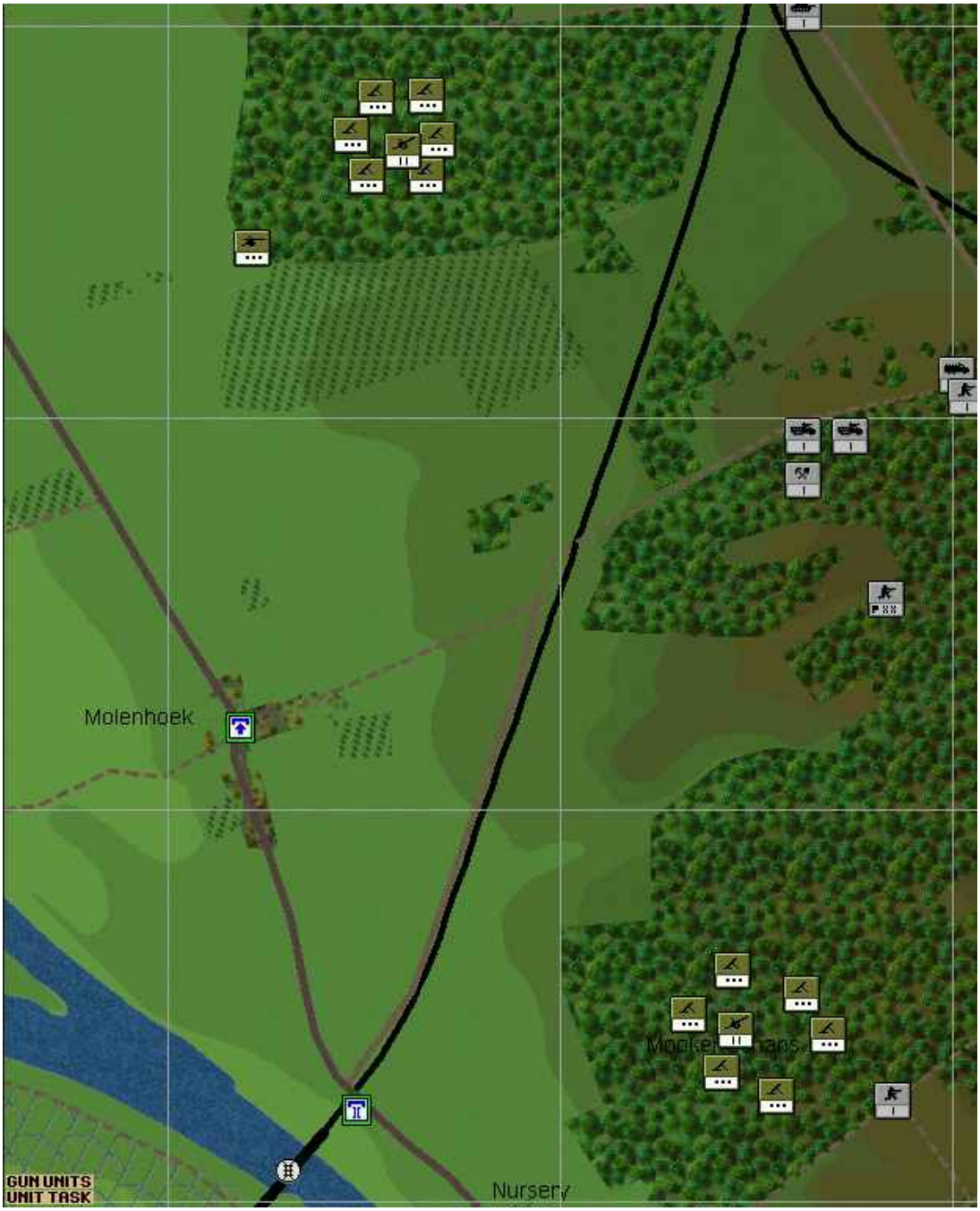
Some additional points:

(1) As stated this is an active combat area, thus besides increasing my mortar coverage I have somewhat reduced my total risk of loosing arty/mortar support by splitting them.

(2) Also, by splitting them, the 75mm howitzers of each fire base can provide mutual support for the other fire base. The 81mm mortars don't really need this as they can practically fire point blank.

(3) The mortars also substantially add to the strength of the security perimeter around the arty units. Remember, that arty units will have a minimum range and therefore will not be able to lay down fire when they are at risk of being overrun. Mortars don't have that problem.

(4) You will note that the mortars are spreadout. This serves to help reduce the effect of counter battery fire if it happens. Additionally, the enemy if the casually stumble upon the position are less likely to know that they have found a major fire base.



Also, you will note that the fire bases security has not been left to lady luck. A couple of battalions have also taken up positions in and around the woods where they reside. However, these battalions are pulling double duty and that's why they are somewhat removed.

We'll discuss setting up a defense next time. We had better. I am hearing a lot of whispered commands coming out of the neighbooring woods and it doesn't sound like they're speaking English.

From Kevinugly:

I assume that the arty in HTTR WILL now follow orders unlike the truculent swines who manned the guns in RDOA. 🙂

From Golf33:

> *quote:*
>
> I assume that the arty in HTTR WILL now follow orders unlike the truculent swines who manned the guns in RDOA. 🙂

Yes they certainly do 🙂In HTTR, Bombard orders no longer incur orders delay. Also, when a unit has finished Bombarding and goes to Rest, this does not incur an orders delay either. Folks with real-life artillery experience will appreciate that this realistically models the ability of artillery to rapidly switch targets, and the instantaneous response of the gun crews to the command "Rest" from the GPO 🙂.

Note that the trick MarkShot describes for rapidly resting artillery will not work in RDOA since it's artillery modelling is not as accurate as HTTR's.

There is also a brand-new "Fire Support" tab next to the unit info and status tabs, that shows the current status of every indirect-fire unit under the player's direct command. When you issue a bombard order you will see the status of that order in the tab. For example, if the unit cannot fire because friendly forces are in the target area, you will see "Friendlies in Way" on the Fire Spt tab under that unit. Similarly, if a rocket unit is reloading (takes quite a while for Nebelwerfer batteries as you can imagine) you will see "Reloading" on the tab. The Fire Spt tab also simplifies ammo tracking for artillery, since you can select units off the tab and see their ammo state right there; and you can even issue orders by selecting a unit off the Fire Spt tab and placing an order point on the map.

Regards
33

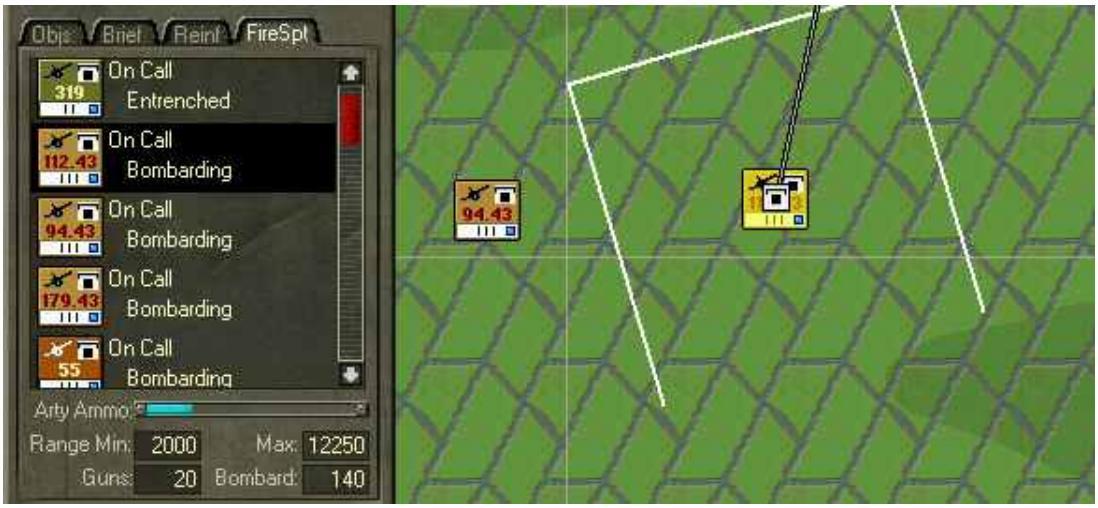
Steve,

As long as I have sucked you into this thread, I was wondering the other night ... does taking direct command of arty units add to the command load of HQ like other units or are arty units special?

Thanks.

Folks,

By the way, here is a look at that new Fire Support Tab which Steve mentioned. Ooh aah ...



From Arjuna:

Markshot,

Thanks for pointing out the omission in the Ref manual regarding the display of small icons. I've emailed Marc to see if it possible to get this in, but I'm not sure at this late stage. If not, we'll have to post an amendment on the forum. Heh, another reason to check the forum 🙂.

From Arjuna:

Hi all,

I must say I am enjoying Markshot's tips. Many thanks Mark.

I would like to offer some alternate advice on the issue of centralising control of indirect fire assets. In smaller scenarios there is usually only a few arty/mor units, and so it's fine to take direct control of all of them. In larger scenarios where there are significant numbers of arty and mortar units I tend to take direct control of the arty units and leave the mortar units under command of their Bn HQs. I find this the best use for the mortar units for a number of reasons.

First and most importantly, their battalions need them and they will need them at short notice and usually when your attention is focussed elsewhere.

Second, the more arty units you have under direct command, the more work you have to

do in managing them. In larger scenarios this can detract or divert your focus away from where it should be. In the Breakout from Joe's Bridge scenario, for instance 30th Corps has a plethora of arty units, not to mention mortar units. So I tend to only command directly the medium and a few of the field arty units - around six to ten units. I find that's a good number to handle. I will usually allocate three or four field how units to support the Irish Gds group's drive up the highway and one field how bn to each of the flanking infantry Bns. I then check the box on the tasks for the Irish Gds and the infantry Bns to ensure that these arty units only support them. In effect this ensures that their arty firepower is dedicated.

Everyone is different and one of HTTR's great strength is that it does provide alternate approaches to managing your forces. So I would recommend you experiment a little before settling on the best approach for you.

- - - -

Yes, time for a disclaimer. 🙂

(1) The tips presented here (by me anyway) do not necessarily reflect the views of Panther or Matrix.

(2) The tips I offer seem to work for me as I win more than I loose. However, your actual mileage may vary.

(3) Past performance is no indication of future results.

Well, I think that covers every TV commercial cliche I can think of. 🙂

As with many games, there really is very little public discussion of how to best use the tools the game provides. I have to admit I am very excited about the Strategy Guide project and the prospect of the Australian War College opening their annals to the general public. 🙂

Now, if I can just get Matrix to ban the sale of the Strat Guide in Pennsylvania, I might actually have a glimmer of hope against Yakstock in an MP game. 🙂

Folks,

Stay tuned. I'll be back later to talk about when to detach mortars and when to leave them with their organic commands. My views may differ a bit from Dave's.

Debating game play techniques with the developer is a little like debating theology with your maker. I hope I am not going to get myself cast down into the fiery pit for this. 🙂

All clowning aside, I'll be back later with some more tips. In the meantime, RDOA veterans please jump in here and give us some fresh meat to chew on. Thanks.

From Golf33:

> *quote:*
>
> ... does taking direct command of arty units add to the command load of HQ like other units or are arty units special?

Yes, it does. In the British system (and most armies use something similar) command of

artillery assets is separated into various levels. For example, the Division artillery staff commands three field artillery regiments (which it might even hand down to the brigades to command), while the Corps artillery staff commands two or three medium artillery regiments and often a couple of heavy artillery batteries. When you take direct command of all your artillery assets, you effectively place them all under command of Corps HQ - which then has to do extra work to coordinate them all, which would normally be handled at Division level.

On the plus side, in most cases the added load is only quite small.

There is also a way around it, especially in scenarios featuring the massed artillery of XXX Corps. By selecting a group of artillery units and issuing a Bombard order, the most senior unit of the group becomes the 'commander' and the others will then fire on Bombard orders issued to that unit. You will also only see the 'commander' unit in the Fire Spt tab. This reduces your HQ command load, simplifies the management of Bombard tasks for you, and brings the advantage of easy massing of artillery! Remember, a single round from 72 guns is far more effective than 72 rounds from a single gun.

quote:

By the way, here is a look at that new Fire Support Tab which Steve mentioned. Ooh aah ...

Ooh aah indeed

Regards
33

From Golf33:

quote:

Second, the more arty units you have under direct command, the more work you have to do in managing them. In larger scenarios this can detract or divert your focus away from where it should be. In the Breakout from Joe's Bridge scenario, for instance 30th Corps has a plethora of arty units, not to mention mortar units. So I tend to only command directly the medium and a few of the field arty units - around six to ten units. I find that's a good number to handle. I will usually allocate three or four field how units to support the Irish Gds group's drive up the highway and one field how bn to each of the flanking infantry Bns. I then check the box on the tasks for the Irish Gds and the infantry Bns to ensure that these arty units only support them. In effect this ensures that their arty firepower is dedicated.

In this scenario, you start with four medium and five field regiments under command of XXX Corps HQ, plus another two field regiments (one split into three batteries) under command of Guards Armoured Div HQ. Each infantry battalion also has at least one mortar platoon. If you want to control the artillery directly, a good way to do it is to create two groups of two medium regiments each, another group of three field regiments, one of two field regiments, keep the entire Guards field regiment as a single unit, and group the three Guards field batteries together. This gives you six fire units with a variety of ranges and strengths.

Alternatively, you could group the mediums either all together or in two groups of two, group the XXX Corps field regiments in a single group of three and allocate the remaining two to the infantry brigade or even its battalions, while either keeping the Guards arty under your direct command or allocating it to the various subordinate formations of that division. As Arjuna points out, checking the "Arty Direct Support Only" box when giving an order to a unit that has artillery under command, will prevent that artillery unit firing at targets that are not of interest to the commanding formation. Just remember that when placing artillery under command of a formation you will incur the full orders delay, both for the formation HQ and for the arty unit. During this time you can still give Bombard orders directly to the arty unit, and it will respond quickly, but it then stops being under command

of the manoeuvre unit.

Regards
33

- - -

Ah, we are having a great discourse about arty and mortars.

Since the purpose of this thread is to teach the basics to new players and those less familiar with ground warfare concepts, I think I will back track briefly. (I didn't know any of this stuff a few years ago ...).

Okay, so, why have Dave, Steve, and myself put so much focus on talking about artillery as opposed to say your recon platoon of Stuarts (light tanks)? Simply put, arty plays a very critical role in the game and on the battlefield for the following three reasons:

(1) It represents a very significant portion of your total fire power which you can bring to bare.

(2) Arty is an indirect fire (meaning that you need not have visual contact with the enemy) weapon system. (Of course, there will be spotters and communications to the batteries.) As such, when it is used correctly, it can apply fire power to the enemy without receiving return fire itself. The same is no true of other units.

(3) Arty can move the focus of its fire power 15km or more in a matter of minutes. If you try to move the fire power you can apply with your armor, it can take anywhere from a few hours to more than a day depending on the situation.

So, learning how to effectively use your arty is going to be one of the most important steps you are going to take towards becoming an effective player.

So, if you take direct control, you will need to:

(1) Position it.

(2) Secure it.

(3) Manage the rate of ammo consumption.

(4) Be in contact with the enemy so that the guns have something shoot at.

Let's look at #4 immediately above for a second. It is saying that arty is a resource like petroleum. Meaning it needs to be integrated into a plan. On it's own, it is not going to give you a victory. Now, you can be in contact with the enemy by having two brigades making an assault. But also keep in mind the smallest and weakest and most understrength unit in the game is sufficient to be in contact with the enemy.

Thus, a single company can halt or delay major enemy movements along a road if rather than stopping the enemy with brute force direct fire, it has your on-call arty apply massive indirect fire to the enemy.

Corollary to this is the importance of not being observed. That's why Steve made the point in thread of not having the enemy spot your guns. That's why when you identify a location to FUP, if even 12 guys who have bailed out of their Panthers see you there, they can ruin your whole day.

I will tell you that I almost always dettach my arty (I don't mean mortars here) and I never group it like Dave and Steve have discussed here.

But let me give you some tips on how arty behaves when grouped with other units which is quite different.

If you group three infantry companies together and tell them to move from Point A to Point B, then after a certain period of time, you will find your three companies in the vicinity of Point B.

But that is not the way arty moves when given a [M]ove or [D]efend order and grouped with other units.

If I take three arty units (call them U1, U2, and U3) and order them to move from Point A to Point B, here is what happens. U1 will move to the vicinity of Point B. U2 and U3 will make sure that they are in bombard range of Point B, then stop and deploy. This is good for providing fire support for U1 during the move, but doesn't really help you position U2 and U3 when Point B is your fire base.

So, even if you plan to group your arty as suggested, you are going to have to give them individual [M]ove or [D]efend orders to get them to the fire base.

Since you are going to have to move arty units individually when you decide to relocate a fire base, they are not going to benefit from bounding overwatch and security forces like other groups of moving units. Thus, you will have to be extra careful that you are moving them along a secure route that is not under enemy observation.

Lest you think that with so many units on the map and a handful of arty units on the map that it's no big deal if they are spotted, be advised that your arty units are an arty magnet for the enemy's AI gunners.

Alright, tomorrow, I will get back on to the mortar thing.

Remember if you got arty questions ask them here to Steve. In his former life before being a game developer he was a gunner.

From Mr.Frag:

Mark, does drag selecting with a move order accomplish what you suggest or does it turn them into a command structure and cause them to sub deploy as you have pointed out ... just wondering if there is some alternative to individual orders as some scenarios had rather insane numbers of units in the Arty catagory

- - - -

Mr. Frag,

Any manner of multiple selection of units followed by issuance of an order makes them one force.

I guess you must be of those half empty people and me one of those half full people. You can never have too much arty.

In terms of moving arty, I don't find that even when you take direct command you do too much moving. The reasons being:

(1) You tend to try to establish a fire base which will serve your needs throughout the entire battle. In some cases, you may need to make a single move after establishing the first fire base. I cannot recall a scenario where I needed to position arty units more than twice. The map just isn't that big and these guys have some reach.

(2) When they are moving and deploying, they ain't doing what they were made for which is laying down fire on targets.

(3) If they move, then they restart the whole process of deploying -> diggin in -> entrenching. As said before, it's best that the enemy doesn't have them under observation or run across them. However, if the enemy should find them, they are much better off being entrenched than dug-in. The less you move them, the more likely they are to reach that state.

From Valent Philippe:

thinks for all your answers . if you have some information supplementaire you can give me, please about the game and the tactics for a beginner like me. thinks phil

Phil,

You will get better:

(1) Keep going to battle. No one learns without getting some first hand experience.

(2) Continue to follow the forum. By the end of the year, the forum should be full of people like yourself with questions. Just think, at that time, you will already be a veteran.

I was sitting around waiting for a meeting to start today. And, of course, my mind couldn't help but to drift to more relevant concerns like HTTR.

Here is a list of some the other areas I want to hit in this thread:

* Mortars - Their use, their behavior in attacks, ...

* Recon - It's importance, ways to integrate it, ...

* Order Conversion

* HQ Replans

* Setting up a Defense (Part I) - support weapons, woods versus treelines, coverage, ...

* Common Command Parameter Settings

* The fine points of "In-Situ"

* Setting up Defense (Part II) - layers

* Terrain and Units

* Successive Attacks

* How to Encircle and Anhilate

Of course, if I have some time to play some HTTR and something occurs to me, I will add it to the list. In mean time, the above should keep us busy for a little while.

Okay, I said I wanted to talk about mortars. I previously stated that I almost always dettach my arty, but will dettach mortars based on the situation at hand. So, what are my considerations?

But first a little aside ... just keep in mind that not all mortar units are equal. For example, the German 120mm mortars appear to have more than double the range of the American 81mm mortars. So, when dealing with any bombard capable units whether you are deciding whether to dettach mortars or create arty fire bases keep their range capability in mind. This is easy to check in the game by using the [B]ombard key ... the blue circle is the max range and the black circle the minimum range. Also, turn on the 1km map grid and it should be very easy to locate candidate locations for fire bases. Remember minimum range too. For example, if you locate your guns at an objective, those guns will not be able to provide support in defending that objective from a close assault.

I had previously shown a screen shot of two forward area fire bases with one arty unit each surrounded by 6 mortar platoons. Those 12 mortar units had been stripped from 12 battalions. So, why did I do that?

Take a look at the screen shot below. Each purple line/circle represents a battalion. The circles represent an unspecified formation; I left it to the AI. The lines represent a line formation which I specified. The red X represents my fire base with one arty unit and six mortars. The yellow arrows represent the directions from which I expecting a German advance/assault. (There are also some heavy weapon positions ... anti-tank gun platoons and machine gun companies which are not depicted.) Pretty grim situation, huh?

So, what would have been the consequence of not stripping those mortars from the battalions?

(1) Certainly one third of them would have been located very close to the defended objectives on clear and open terrain. Needless to say, if the Germans made progress along the highway from the North or South those mortar positions would have been priority targets for his artillery. That would have greatly diminished their effectiveness.

(2) The other two thirds of my mortars would have been located very close to the front lines of contact with the Germans. Again, if those lines were even slightly breached, those mortar positions would have come under heavy German bombardment.

By doing what I did, I got my mortars out of view from the enemy and somewhat removed from the hottest areas of engagement with the enemy. Thus, I increased their survivability and efficiency.

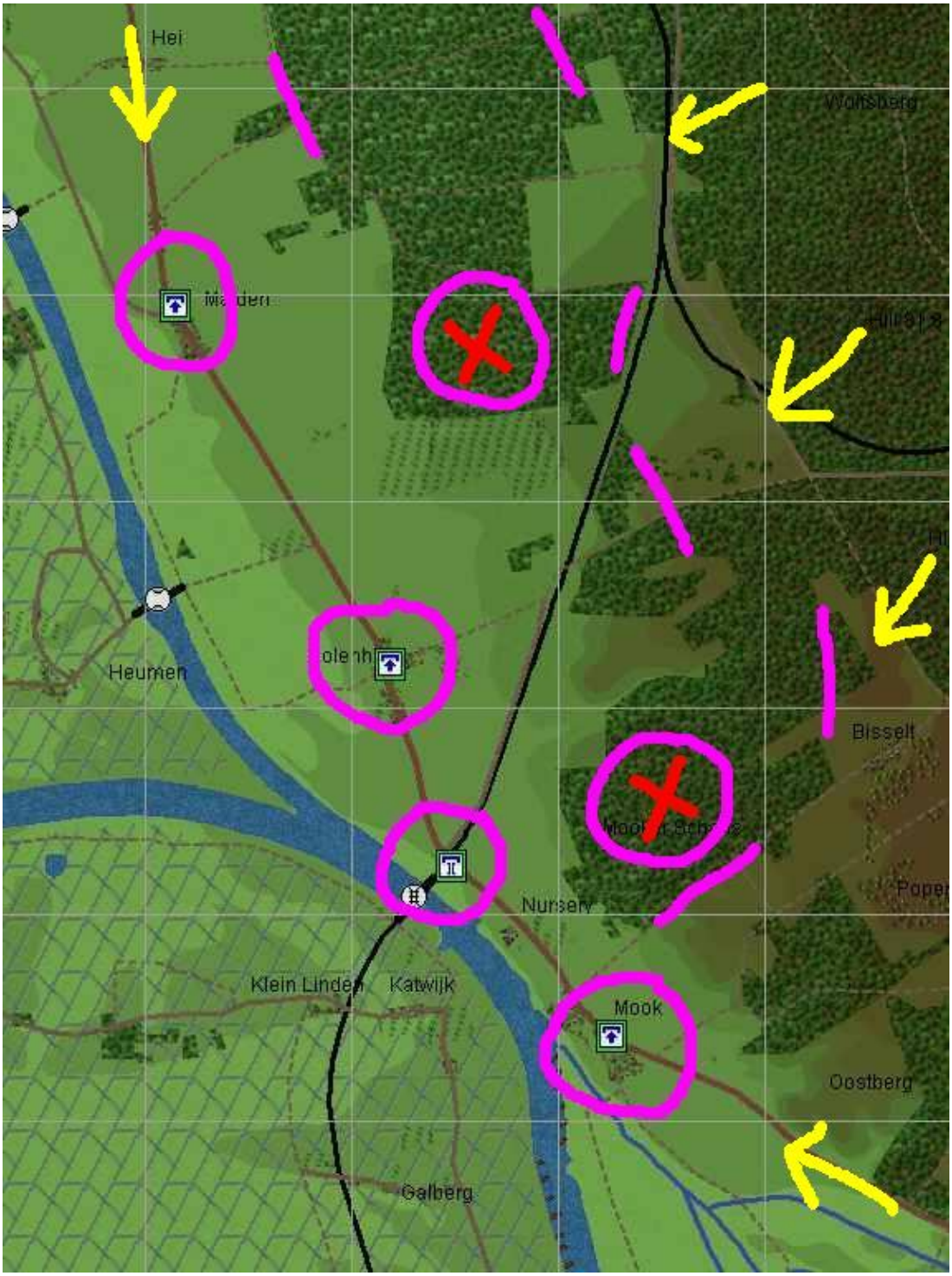
Here is one point which Dave made to me a while ago in the Beta forum which I think is worth repeating here. Remember if you can force an artillery unit to displace, then you have taken it out of the fight for some period of time. It's not armor. It cannot fire on the move. Arty needs to deploy and setup in order to be of any use. So, arty can be incapacitated through disruption if not by outright destruction.

So, when on the defensive, I think you should detach mortars under the following conditions:

(1) You are planning a static defense. Meaning that you will identify a number of key defensive positions and place defend tasks. You will not be depending on one large force totally under AI control to handle the defensive plan. I tend to go with static defenses you have some idea how the enemy will approach and there specific terrain features which the defender can exploit. Thus, as part of the static defense plan, you can locate your mortars out of site and out of harms way.

(2) The terrain represents a mix of high and low visibility areas. So you may have clear&woods or heide&towns ... As best I can tell, you gain nothing by having your mortars set up in a high visibility area.

The next time, we'll look at mortars on the attack.



Okay, let's finish this off with discussing mortars on the attack.

First, when I like to dettach them:

(1) The attacking force is already in position to initiate the attack. This means that their current location will effectively become the FUP point.

and

(2) Mortar placement would put them in range of the attack task marker. Of course, the coverage should be somewhat beyond, since the attack force may be engaged by units

which are beyond the task marker. Also, remember that the AI commander of attacking units will always generate assault paths beyond the attack task marker.

and

(3) By dettaching the mortars, you can keep them from being observed and in a safe location.

Second, when I like leave them attached:

(1) The attacking force due the particular terrain and disposition of the enemy will be forced to FUP such that the mortars if dettached at that location would not have the range to cover the entire engagement area.

(2) The attacking force (including their mortars) have been given a lengthy set of marching orders to get to the FUP. Thus, dettaching the mortars would require having them to travel to the area individually which would expose them to considerable risk if the enemy should catch them in the process. At least, if they are traveling as part of a force, they will have the advantage of bounding overwatch, some mortar units (if more than one) deployed and ready to provide support, and an AI commander who may reassess the situation and work out a new route to bypass the enemy. {Of course, you could handle it by first issuing [M]ove orders for entire force, followed by dettaching the mortars and then issuing [A]ttack orders and [D]efend orders for the mortars. However, that will incur some extra delays which most of the time you are trying to avoid anyway.}

Let's take a slightly different perspective on the above discussion.

What's the advantage of attached mortars on the attack?

(1) Greater traveling security.

(2) The ability to attack (assuming 81mm mortars with a 3km range) over longer distances. So, if you had to, you could assault over a 3-5km range. How does it work? Well, the mortars will be advance to contact along with the entire force. Once the force is engaged by the enemy, the mortars will then deploy and provide fire support.

(3) When the attacking force has successfully attacked and is securing the objective, the mortars and any reserve forces will be brought forward automatically and integrated into the new defensive posture.

(4) In a complex scenario, it's less details to worry about as it may not really have a significant impact on the big picture.

What's the advantage of deattached mortars on the attack?

(1) If you do it right, the mortars should be more secure and receive no incomming fire. Thus, they are going to do a better job of providing outgoing fire.

(2) Since they are not advancing to contact, they will be immediately available to provide fire support. This can be significant when you are not attacking with overwhelming force.

There you have it ... my thoughts on mortars. Feel free to poke holes in my reasoning. I get this from playing the game and looking at my monitor. But then looking at my monitor, the Earth looks flat ...

Okay, I think my next planned topic is recon.

It is another key skill like managing arty. Master recon and you will be well on your way to being a better player. This is particularly true for the attacker in longer scenarios (2 days

and beyond). A defender is more likely to have set up screens (thinly spread units meant to give advanced notice of enemy movements) and single units at key crossroads. So, the defender gathers intel in more of passive manner using a trip wire approach. The attacker will take a more active approach to build a picture through recon missions.

What types of things can the attacker accomplish with recon?

(1) Identify a safe route. Your force is currently located at Point A and you want to attack an objective at Point B. Ideally, you want to make your way to the FUP point without running into the enemy. Your goal is the attack and not skirmesh with the enemy on highways, roads, and tracks.

(2) Gauge the level of opposition on a route. It may turn out that the enemy presence is minimal and the attacking force can fight their way through. (Of course, remember that you must always consider the impact of enemy arty.)

(3) Determine where you should FUP. Provided that the enemy doesn't know that you are there, the closer a FUP is to the attack task marker, the better. Unnecessary distance will: tire your forces; result in a less cohesive attack; risk totally relinquishing the objective if the AI commander of the attack decides to fallback and reorganize, etc... Good recon will tell you just how close, you can FUP to the location you want to attack. In fact, it may even tell you that a single attack is not feasible, because you would be pushing your men too far. So, perhaps you will have to plan two attacks ... one to push into range of the objective with one force ... and a second to pass through the lines of the first force.

(4) Decide that an attack is not needed. Sometimes it may turn out that an objective is not even occupied and no attack is needed. Of course, you could still attack and take the objective. However, you are better off just proceeding directly there and setting up a defense. Why? (a) An attack will tire your troops. (b) Attacks takes time to organize at the FUP depending on the size of the force. So, you might have been able to seize the objective anywhere from 2-6 hours sooner. (When playing for occupation points, this impacts your score.) (c) Beating the enemy there is better than a pitched battle at the objective. (d) The sooner you get there, the sooner your troops will have prepared their defense and dug in.

So, you get the idea. A commander who uses recon develops plans and adapts them to the situation. A commander who does not use recon is stuck trying to impose a template upon the battle and hopes for the best.

Some recon pointers:

(1) Use single units. A single unit always move faster, then two or more units (no bounding overwatch and security). I generally use armored car platoons or light tank platoons.

(2) It's best to perform recon in daylight. Certainly, don't send a recon mission at night to be followed by a force movement in daytime. That's pretty useless.

(3) Put enough waypoints so that your recon unit(s) follow the path you will want your force to follow. Have the recon unit move its fastest taking the quickest route. Set AGGRO=MIN, ROF=MAX, and CASSUALTIES=MIN. You are not performing search and destroy; your intent is to perform search and bypass.

(4) Avoid dettaching recon units from forces in the middle of an important mission like an attack. This could cause the AI commander to generate a replan and cause a major disruption. Keep recon forces separate from other forces or, at least, dettach when the larger force is not actively engaged with the enemy.

(5) Don't get bent out of shape if a recon unit gets eliminated. Recon is a dangerous, but

necessary job.

Recon timing pointers (I am assuming you are playing with order delays enabled):

(1) Often at the start of a scenario and for reinforcements, there is no order delay for the first 59 minutes. This means that for short distances, you can have a the larger force sit for 59 minutes while recon units race roads on their mission. Anytime before 60 minutes have elapsed, you can evaluate the recon results and give orders to the larger force and still avoid any order delays.

(2) Suppose you are beyond any order delays waived window ... Well, if you are looking at the main force moving a long distance, then you can give orders to recon units and the main force at the same time. (suppose the movement involves covering 15km and maybe with a bridge crossing involved) Why will this work? The single recon unit will travel so much faster than the larger force that it will develop a good lead in front of the main force. Perhaps, the recon unit will take 2 hours to reach the final destination and the main force will take 10 hours. Thus, you can issue recon and main force orders simultaneously. Now, what if the recon force turns up a problem? They should have enough of a distance/time lead on the main force that even with order delays, you will be able to modify orders for the main force and have them respond after a few hours. Bottom line - for long hauls, recon and main force orders can be issued concurrently.

(3) Pertaining to the above point, recon orders for short hauls (transits) will need to be issued a few hours before orders for the main force unless you are in the order delay waived window. So, like in chess, learn to think a few moves ahead.

I would like to cover two small topics: "in-situ" and order modifications/conversions.

*** "in-situ" ***

This is one of the formation options which you have at your disposal when issuing orders. It means execute the order in place; don't move regardless of where the order marker is placed.

How to use it?

(1) It is the default formation whenever you ask your troops to rest, "Z".

(2) Suppose you start a short scenario with a small map. It turns out that your arty units already have coverage of the likely engagement area and are in no risk from enemy forces. Also, suppose that they are already deployed or dug-in, and you want their fire support immediately available (you plan to dettach them). The way to do this is give them a [D]efend order with an "in-situ" formation. Thus, they will not move and redeploy; they will simply go immediately "on-call".

(3) Suppose you have a brigade defending a town. They have already dug-in or maybe they have been there a while and entrenched. (Being dug-in or entrenched is much better than simply being deployed or moving if the enemy comes along.) Now, suppose you want to dettach a battalion to assist in an attack some place else. Anytime you dettach a unit, you are going to force the AI commander to perform a replan and its likely that new orders will be issued. But maybe you would like to short circuit (prevent) that process. What can you do? Do this ... Issue a [D]efend in-situ command to the brigade. Then, dettach the battalion of interest. None of your units who are part the [D]efend command will change their positions.

(4) Suppose you moved 10 arty units to a fire base. As we have already learned, you will have to give them individual orders to make this happen. Now, suppose you want to treat them as one command (force) either to help concentrate their fire or reduce command load. What to do? Do this ... select them all and issue a [D]efend "in-situ" order. (Or better yet ... do the trick I showed before with bombard, but for the units grouped.)

What else do you need to know about "in-situ"?

"in-situ" means wherever the unit is located at the current time. Note: >>> THE CURRENT TIME <<< and not the time at which the order issued. What's the issue? Well, if give a MG company a [D]efend in-situ order and they are attacked and thrown back, they will then continue to remain in whatever location they retreated to. If they had been given a [D]efend order with any other formation, they would have attempted to return to the the location of the task marker when they recovered from their retreat.

This is an important point. "in-situ" defenders will not attempt to retake lost ground.

On the other hand, this can be convenient at times. Suppose you have some mortars located in a large woods. Suppose the enemy forces them to retreat. There usually isn't and reason to really have them recover their former positions. They probably only fell back 0.25-0.50km and will do just fine deploying in their new location. However, with a standard [D]efend order, they will recover and once again advance back towards the enemy. (I personally tend to just use standard [D]efend orders out of habit, but perhaps you will command with greater finess than me.)

In just a moment, we are going to talk about order modification/conversion but before we do ... Sometimes, I may cause my arty units to move a fire base by simply dragging their [D]efend task markers to new a location. Earlier in this thread I showed you a trick to make arty units quickly rest or go on-call. Be advised that if you use this trick when you flip them to on-call, their [D]efend formation will be in-situ even if that is not what you originally specified. Then, if you drag the [D]efend task marker, they are not going anyway unless you change the formation. (It took me a while to figure that one out.)

You can modify and convert orders that have already been given and communicated through the chain of command. Of course, you can also issue entirely new orders from scratch. I tend to try to modify/convert orders if the force is the same and alterations are small. Be advised that any changes can cause replans (will talk about that a little later). Here are some examples.

* Moving mortar units which already have [D]efend orders by 1-2km.

* Moving the FUP location for a force on the march due to new intel available from recon.

* Changing an [A]ttack to [D]efend task for a force on the march due to intel revealing the objective is unoccuppied.

* An [A]ttack is going very well and I want the force to push on even further.

I believe that modifying and converting orders results in less delays than deleting the orders and issuing brand new orders from scratch. I have not attempted any emperical testing of this, but I think this was included in the HTTR order delay code such that small alterations have diminished impact on replans/delays. {Dave, could you confirm or deny whether that is the case? Thanks.} For the moment, that is how I am doing things.

As you can see, long range operations with recon and order modification can come in pretty handy.

How do you convert an order? Okay, suppose you are making a 10km trek to an [A]ttack. Hilight the unit with the [A]ttack order, then click on the [A]ttack task marker. Delete the task marker and hit [D]efend key. Everything remains the same except for the new task marker and elimination of the FUP. There is one important thing to note. The parameters associated with the new task come from the former task as opposed for being the default parameters for that task type. So, the default formation for [D]efend is unspecified (left to the AI). However, if the [A]ttack formation has been specified as wedge, then your [D]efend formation will pick up a formation of wedge (unless you change it).

I have another little topic which I want to cover here which doesn't really fit any place else. So, here it is. The AI route planning has no awareness of the future. It lives in the instantaneous present of the intel picture/route connectivity at the time it does a plan. What's that mean? It's 08:00 and I have pontoon bridge almost completed. It will be done by about 09:30. But at 08:00, I have reinforcements and order these guys to advance to the river and cross it. Now, they probably won't even reach the river until 10:00. In any case, the AI will plan to take the Ferry (slower). One thing you can do is simply give orders to the force to move to the bridgehead and then wait until it is complete before ordering them across. Here is something which I haven't tried, but which might work ... try moving the final task marker or altering it in someway after the bridge is completed. This might force a replan and new route calculation ... but I am just guessing here. {Dave, would that work?}

Let's finish up today with replans. What is it? Well, when you give orders in HTTR, your AI subordinates generate plans to carry out your orders. This is where much of the power and scalability of HTTR comes in. You can organize forces and give orders at any level. Most games have a flat structure for communicating with your forces, but HTTR has a very scalable and user friendly structure.

(Assuming you are playing with order delays) Except (sometimes) for the first 59 minutes of a scenario and the first 59 minutes for arriving reinforcements, the creation and communication of a plan takes measurable time. It can take from 30 minutes to six hours (these numbers are just for illustrative purposes) depending on circumstances. A replan is the generation of a revised plan by your AI commander. This can happen either due to implicit or explicit reasons.

* Implicit *

* A force is order to move from A to B. A route is plotted. Along the route heavy enemy opposition is encountered for a couple of hours. The AI commander may decide to take an alternate route and bypass the enemy.

* A force is attacking. The attack is beginning to fall apart and lacks cohesion. The AI commander may have the units fall back, reorganize, and attack again. Or the AI commander may bring back tired units and put them in reserve while ordering frest reserve units forward.

* Explicit *

* You issue new orders to a force.

* You modify the location or parameters for a task.

* You dettach units from a force.

* You reattach units from the force.

Now, why are we talking about replans? Well, because two things happen during a replan that can have a very impact on how your campaign in a scenario proceeds.

First, any replan activity slows a force down. HQ must work out a new plan. Then that plan must be communicated down the chain of command and finally to the line units. That takes time.

Second, replans always result in some disorganization and confusion. Units will halt whatever their doing and wait for new orders and then digest them. Also, this doesn't happen for all units simultaneously. Depending on the chain of command and distance from HQ, different units will experience this at different times. Believe me there is nothing more pathetic than a force actively attacking and heavily engaged which receives new

orders. Some of the lead units will continue to push on while some supporting units will turn back leaving their mates (that Australian English is beginning to rub off) to be butchered by the enemy.

So, what are the implications of replans as far as you are concerned? First, implicit replans are generally for your benefit. It's the AI kicking in to help you do a better job. Second, it's the explicit replans that you need to watch out for.

(1) You need to be aware of what things can cause replans and the impact they have.

(2) Since reorganizing your commands (meaning immediate subordinates with direct orders from you) results in replans, you want to think carefully about your force structure. You want to be methodical about how you group and use forces. You want your commands issued to be executed with the minimum amount of disruption. Thus, try not to continuously be restructuring your forces or changing orders before they have been completed.

(3) It is better to sideline a unit than reattach it to a command and create chaos.

(4) Avoid explicit replans for forces which are in heavy contact with the enemy. You are going to be responsible for a lot deaths if you ignore this. Explicit replans are best experienced when your force is no longer in heavy contact with the enemy (either you are attacking or the defending against an atttack).

(5) It is better to pause (space bar) and take some time to think out your orders, then do it on the fly and keep making small adjustments. Issue the right orders, the first time.

(6) Keep recon elements separate after completing a recon mission even if they are now in the midst of the main force as you are likely to send them on another recon mission soon.

(7) Sometimes execution of imperfect orders are better left to proceed, then the delay and confusion which results when you try to improve them.

(8) Try to keep the units of a force in close geographic proximity. If you form forces from units scattered all across the map, you are going to introduce substantial delays and the response to your orders is not going to be nearly as coherent as it should be.

Well, if you ever managed people in your life (military, sports, workplace, ...), the above will all seem pretty common sense and realistic. That's what makes this a great game/simulation.

Well, that's it for today. Until next time ... dismissed.

By the way, I do attempt to proof read this stuff. But I am mainly doing this stream of conciousness. Thus, I ask your indulgence for the poor spelling, grammar, and organization.

I figure that the despite my poor style, the points are getting across.

Enjoy the remainder of the weekend, all.

Okay, we are coming up on the lunch hour in North America here and I want to give you folks in offices something better to do than checking your investment portfolios.

{I intend to jump ahead in my topic list today. But rest assured, we'll discuss it all eventually.}

The other day I was playing a scenario and I had one of those light bulb moments. This concerns the mechanics of encircling and anhilating the enemy. (Like most advances in war and technology it was due to serendipity.)

Below we have the lovely City of Nijmegen which as history would have it is strongly occuppied by the Germans at the moment. Yours truly, me, is the commander of an Allied force. In this particular battle which I fought, my intent was simply to capture the city. But we'll be talking today about the total elimination of the German defenders.

Quite a few months ago, I posted a query on the beta forum of how do you capture/eliminate enemy units? I asked, because it generally seems very hard to do by intention.

(1) Enemy units seem to squirm away pretty quickly when seriously threatened.

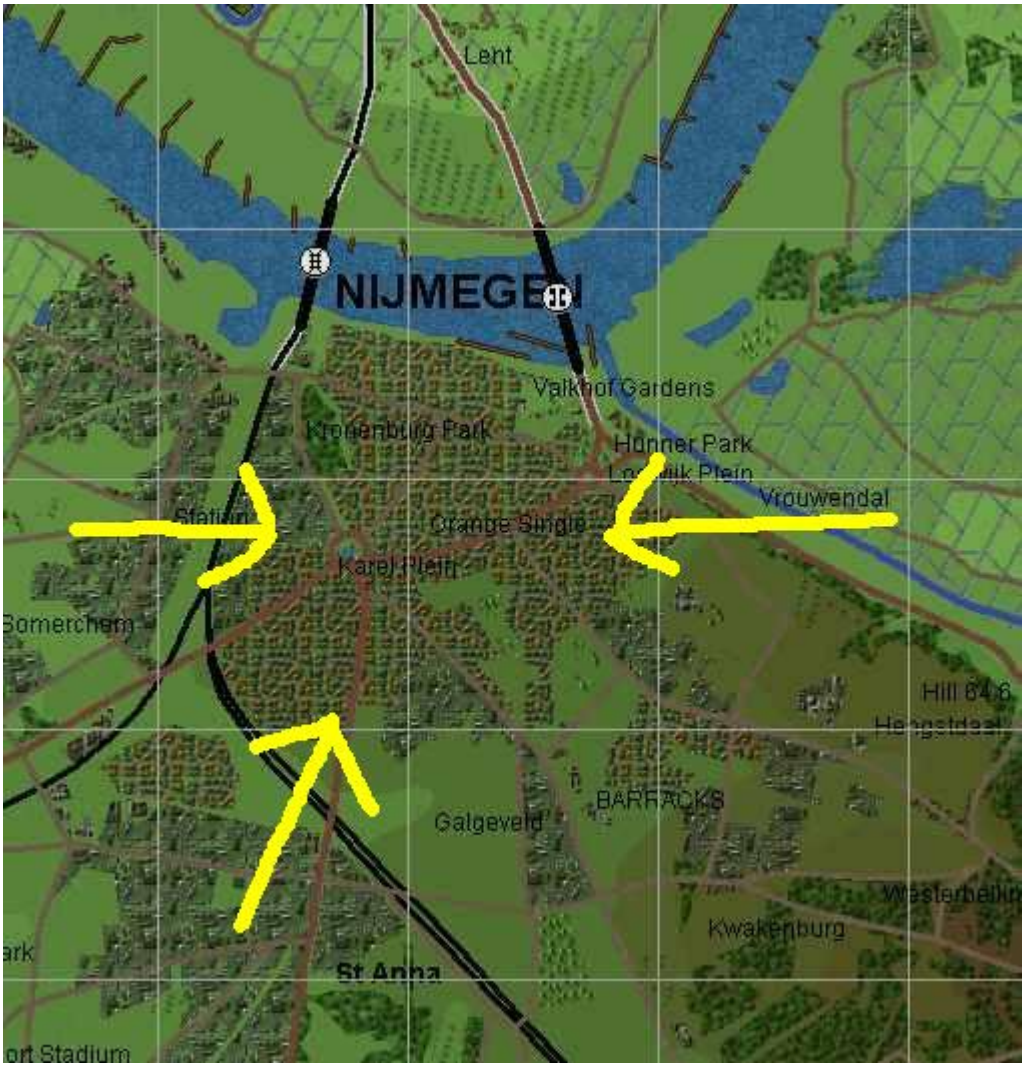
(2) Your orders pertain to location on the map and not enemy forces. You order "attack this location". You cannot order "attack this enemy formation".

(3) The AI self preservation mode for the enemy acts in a much faster time frame, then you can issue orders to pursue them.

(4) When you attack from multiple axis, it is very hard to ensure the attacks kicking off at the same time or proceeding at the same rate.

So, you may have an attack plan which looks like the one below. But almost always, one force will sweep through first (if successful) and the next force will follow up in their wake.

The enemy will have already displaced. And, of course, the enemy will probably regroup and either harass you or counter attack later.



I think for today's topic I'll talk a little bit about the commands and parameters which I commonly use.

I should state up front that I tend to make what I consider rather limited use of the full command/parameter functionality available in HTTR. In other words, I am perhaps using only 20-40% of what is available. Why?

(1) You get comfortable with certain stuff and it gets harder and harder to break old habits. (I am no longer a kid and it shows in my approach to things.)

(2) I play exclusively single player. I think if I played multi-player against such talents as Arjuna, Golf33, or Yakstock, I would be much more inclined to learn every nuance of every feature that would help me in my struggles. (When I have flown air combat online one versus one, you quickly realize that human competition makes you push the edge of the envelope. Although the AI may challenge you, you fall into comfortable patterns and don't really feel a need to constantly innovate.)

(3) I have realized to a large extent most scenarios can be played with mainly [A]ttack and [D]efend. Why? Well, as it turns out, a good plan properly executed without a lot of finesse

is worth a lot more than a bad plan with poor execution and plenty of finesse.

Now, I am hoping the strategy guide which comes out will go into the fine points of all the commands and the parameters. [Golf33, hint, hint! ☺]

One command which I am very excited about, but have failed to use is the [E] - delay command. I know that it has been largely reworked for HTTR. In fact, I almost used it the other day. I had to choose between holding the enemy in place at a choke point or making a protracted series of delays along a highway from one village to the next. I decided to stay with the choke point.

I have never once used the [F]ire command. I understand what it means to place suppressing fire or performing recon by fire in tactical games such as Combat Mission, but I really don't know what to do with it in HTTR. [Golf33, hint, hint! ☺]

Here goes:

(1) I tend to use [D]efend to get places much more often than [M]ove. The end result is fairly similar as your units go into a defensive mode when they arrive where they are going. In fact, the end result of almost any action when completed, pretty much has your units going into defensive mode. I tend to think [D]efend is a little more flexible than [M]ove, since the formation parameters you choose apply to the final waypoint as opposed to the trip.

(2) In terms of traveling, you can use MOVE=NORMAL|FASTEST to introduce some degree of timing into actions of forces, but not much. I try to avoid FASTEST unless I feel that quick action is necessary. It tires your troops out. This is especially true when your troops are on foot. And it is even more true when moving at night. {Another thing I have learned ... just because your troops are on foot doesn't mean that you can neglect using roads. Movements through woods are much more tiring than movements down roads.}

(3) For [A]ttack, I tend to go with default parameters for AGGRO, ROF, and LOSSES when I play a scenario which is somewhat longer and I am planning a protracted struggle. Thus, I am expecting that the ordered attack may make up to four attempts (pushing forward and falling back) before succeeding. Overall this tends to limit casualties and preserve your forces. (Remember that many scenarios award some degree of victory points to one or both sides for casualties.)

I tend to go with those parameters pushed up to or near max values during shorter scenarios or when time is critical. Most importantly AGGRO=MAX is basically telling your subordinates that they should throw every available unit into the attack as opposed to holding back 30-%50% as a reserve.

I tend to reduce frontage and depth from the default size if I am attempting to concentrate my strength to breakthrough the enemy positions. I may as reduce frontage and depth to keep and infantry force attacking in a woods or an armored force attacking in the clear.

(4) For [D]efend, I will use this command for conducting recon missions. For those, you want the fastest/quickest travel on roads usually. You will set AGGRO, ROF, and LOSSES to MIN, RAPID, and MIN respectively. You want to avoid shoot outs, but put out a lot of fire if you get stopped so that you can break contact.

I'll go with the default defend parameters if I want my units to defend, but not to be anhilated if the enemy makes a strong attack. I'll push those parameters up if I feel that they need to defend or die in place.

Adjusting the size of [D]efend footprint (frontage and depth) is a very handy feature. If you are guarding an objective, then, of course, you want to adjust it to fit the size of the objective. Otherwise you might find that for a large perimeter objective, your force allows the enemy to take up residence. Of course, you need to make sure that you have a big enough force; like don't try to defend a 2km radius objective with a battalion. Besides adjusting the foot print, you make want to increase AGGRO for larger perimeter objectives. This cause your AI subordinates to actively mount counter attacks to eject the enemy.

One other thought about defending large objectives like cities such as Arnhem or Nijmegen ... sometimes it makes more sense to divide up your forces and place separate [D]efend task markers. You can then adapt your defense to be more flexible and also take advantage of specific terrain features while still achieving the necessary footprint. Later on, I will present some examples of defensive configurations.

The facing option for [D]efend is very useful when you have an idea of how the enemy will be approaching.

I tend to let the [D]efend formation default or use the line formation. The line formation with varying degrees of frontage is very useful for creating a layered defense. It is also very useful in taking advantage of terrain features. For example, you want to defend a wooded area and the next wooded area is 2Km away with a road leading from it to you across clear terrain. You may want to set a line formation right at the tree line. This will provide your dug-in units good cover while catching the enemy with no cover and moving.

I realize this post left a lot to be desired. The game has a very rich interface. Hopefully, when the game hits the stores and the strategy guide is completed, we will see more impressive discussions of the optimum use of the interface.

Good morning, All.

We are comming up on another lunch hour in North America. Today, I would like to discuss some defense related topics.

We'll begin with the concept of creating a layered defense and what advantages it may confer upon your efforts.

Below, we have the lovely City of Arnhem (in fact, I believe one of my fellow beta testers lives in the local vicinity). We'll make the assumption that we primarily need to defend on the North Bank of the Neder Rijn River. So, we'll simply assume that a very basic defensive position was set up in the industrial area just South of the the Road Bridge, and hence forth ignore it.

We'll zoom in a little more and use this image as our white board for discussion.

I am not going to really discuss the size or the organization of the defensive force. We'll just simply assume that you have enough to get the job done right.

Now, of course, you could simply just place a [D]efend task at the center of Arnhem while setting the formation to "all around" dimension to 1.5Km X 1.5Km and leave it to the AI.

That's easy to do, but let's look at a layered defense.

{Don't worry too much about my drawing or the actual dimensions. My artistic talents leave something to be desired. But I didn't want to do this on a blank page. I prefered to use an actual map, but it's the concept that is important. However, I have a implemented this approach for Arnhem successfully a couple of occassions.}

Here each line represents a force with line formation orders with a corresponding frontage and narrow depth facing outward from Arnhem.

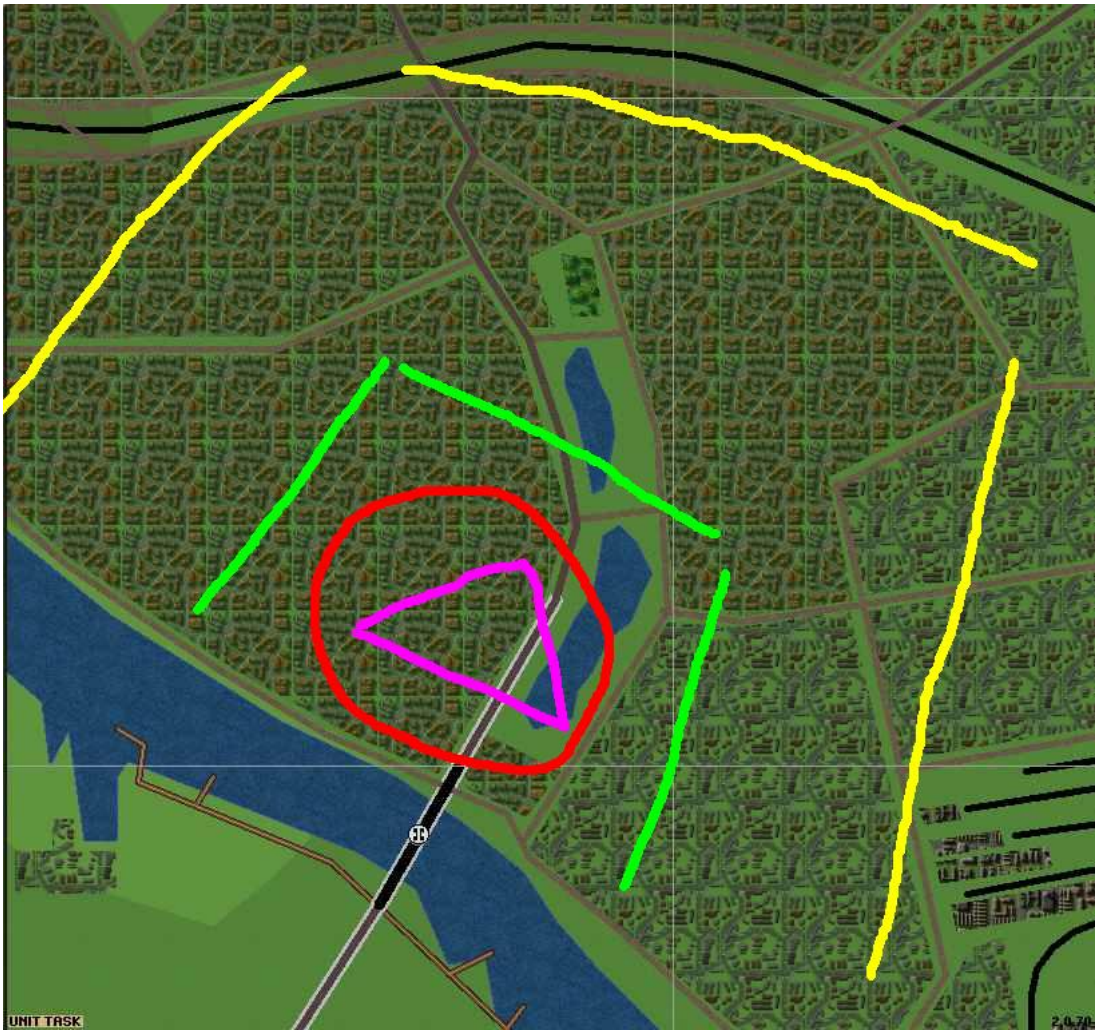
The yellow represents the outer layer or screen.

The green represents the inner layer or main line of resistance.

The red circle represents my core defense/reserve force with an unspecified formation.

The purple triangle represents my total complement of mortars stripped away moved to the very center.

Not seen is an arty fire base located at some other secure/out of the way location which can service fire missions in and around Arnhem.



Now, let's take a look at each element of this defense and how it works as a whole. The discussion will proceed from the outside to the inside.

* Arty Fire Base *

There is our arty fire base (not seen). If we have just done such a wonderful job of defending Arnhem, then why is it not located in the center of Arnhem. Answer: Because any serious enemy attack will put the attacking elements inside the minimum range of our heavy guns, and they will become useless.

The role of the fire base is to provide supporting fire which attrits, disrupts, and break the enemy's attack. Also, our arty will make it more difficult for the enemy to gather intel about our defense if they only probe it as opposed to come in strength. Our arty we'll easily turn back weak probes.

* Outer Layer/Screen *

When I have set this up, the lines of the Outer Layer contain the same force strength as the lines of the Inner Layer. However, due to the fact that the Outer Layer has a much lower force density per unit area, it has a lot less stopping power.

The Outer Layer will make first contact with the enemy. It will be our first indication of an enemy attack in progress. The mission of the Outer Layer is not to turn back a full scale enemy attack.

The Outer Layer buys us time. Time to issue new orders to defenders to located deeper in the defense if need be. Time for the defenders deeper the defense to continue the process of improving their positions (deployed -> dug-in -> entrenched). Time for our artillery to wear down and take a toll on the enemy. (Remember you cannot target the enemy if you are not in contact with him.)

The Outer Layer disrupts the enemy's attack. So, he may well break through, but the force that does break through will lack cohesion. Some of his advancing units will be stopped or turned back. Other advancing units will make it through on their own and find their flanks exposed.

The Outer Layer will force him to FUP further away from the objective and by so doing reduce the cohesion of his attack; cause greater fatigue among his troops; and result in lengthy, time consuming, and ground loosing fall backs to reorganize the attack.

The Outer Layer also can serve as a weak flank defense if other more central defending elements need to be canabilized to plug up holes else where.

The Outer Layer holds the enemy off when you want to redistribute forces behind their position. Remember it is very hard to give a force new orders when it is already in contact with the enemy.

* Inner Layer/Main Line of Resistance *

The Inner Layer's mission is to stop the enemy cold. They represent force concentration. Ideally, by the time the enemy reaches them his attack should have begun to falter and lack the initial momentum is started with.

The Inner Layer from not engaged flanks can also be treated as secondary reserve if the situation becomes that desparate.

* Core Defense/Reserve Force *

This force can utilized in one of two ways.

First, enemy efforts to seize Arnhem may span quite a number of days. As such, if they force is undisturbed for a period of days due to its location, it may have adequate time to entrench. A small entrenched force in an urban setting can be very hard to dislodge by even a much stronger attacker.

Second, this force can be used as a reserve. The Outer Defense will buy you time and you will see that the enemy is simply going to blow right through them. It looks like the Inner Defense will be unable to hold. You can have your reserves bolster the Inner Defenses line if done early enough or you can have them form a new line behind the Inner Defense Line before it crumbles. As stated before, you can also pull Inner Line defense forces which are unengaged flanks into the active fight.

* Mortars *

Hopefully, these units are never going to see the enemy face to face. Their mission is keep laying down indirect fire on the enemy as quick as the line units need it.

How does this compare to one large force under the AI?

(1) Clearly the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

(2) Having created separate forces, we have a much greater degree of flexibility in dealing

with enemy attacks. Remember once you turn over the entire defense to one large force, it will be too late to divide up that force and issue new orders. The last thing you want to do is disrupt a command/force which is actively engaged with the enemy.

(3) The AI may see/suspect a large attack building from the West and neglect another attack from the East. This defense construction allows flexibility without totally opening up the back door to the enemy. If done right, you still have time and options to respond to a secondary attack from another direction.

Well, I think I will have to leave further discussion of defense until tomorrow. I have timed out for today.

For today, I would like raise a few defensive odds and ends.

* Support/Heavy Weapons Position(1) *

When setting up a defense I often like to hand place these units (machine Gun companies and, particularly, anti-tank gun platoons). Good locations for these units will often be at the boundary of a BUA (built up area) or wooded tree line with some elevation. You want them to have decent cover while at the same time having a long and clear field of fire. These units have weapons with considerable reach and punch. So, they are ideal for halting or disrupting enemy movement across large spaces. I suppose the same could also be said for light flak, but I tend to just leave these to the AI.

* HTTR versus RDOA *

Now, if you played RDOA, you may have come not to bother placing ATG units as they didn't seem to accomplish very much. And the truth is, in RDOA, they don't.

I came to RDOA with a background of playing Combat Mission (CMBO). I was always very impressed how a handful of ATGs placed on the rear flanks of a map with good fire lanes could totally shut down enemy armor movement and effectiveness. However, in RDOA, you will note that these units tend to suppress very quickly, followed by bugging out.

This is no longer the case in HTTR. In RDOA, ATG units were grouped in the same class as arty and thus not considered as line units. So, programmatically and in game terms, they could not stand up to direct fire. In HTTR, they have now been altered to behave as line units. They are much more robust.

One other change that effect the behavior of ATG units and all other units is the "retreat recovery in place" behavior. In RDOA units would often retreat and leave their dug-in positions or their positions in the woods to go perform "retreat recovery" in an open field. In HTTR, units in prepared positions or good terrain will tend to "retreat recovery in place". They still loose some of their effectiveness, but they continue to remain in the good cover which they have.

* Support/Heavy Weapons Position(2) *

ATG units can still be dislodged by direct fire/close combat. So, sometimes you may find it advantageous when trying disrupt enemy movements to set them up in flanking positions on a road as opposed to directly on the road at an entrance into a town. This makes it less likely that the enemy will continue advancing upon them and overrun their position.

I just checked my notes on the Arnhem - Historical Campaign. The one and only time I played it was on 07/29/03. My notes are not very detailed. As best I can determine the fire bases were to the South of Arnhem along Hell's Highway.

Here is an excerpt from my review of the scenario while beta testing. No, I think I'll give the whole summary:

----- my summary -----

Arnhem - The Historical Campaign (Allies, Painful)

A decisive victory! (Sort of my first play through as the first effort I aborted in Day #5.) However, I made a few mistakes in the last 24 hours (which were compounded by order delays) and as hard as it is to believe, I seized the main objective only minutes before the end of the scenario.

Too much happened to try write an AAR.

However, I will try to briefly summarize some key points.

(1) Despite whatever I did, it didn't seem that it was possible to accomplish very much until Day #5. That's when my arty, armor, and motorized infantry began to arrive. Prior to that, it seemed the best thing to do was to try to dig-in and keep out of trouble. I did try to block off various road junctions in the early days. I think that was effective, but only for a day or so. It seems that a Bn blocking a road will slow down the AI, but it will find a way around. If the battle had only lasted two days, then maybe the road blocks would have had an impact.

(2) Around the middle of the scenario, I used most of my para and glider troops to take the Rail Bridge.

(3) For the 5th. to 9th. day, I pushed on Arnhem from three different axis of attack (South, East, and West). I would see progress from midnight to the mid-morning. At night, my movements were harder to spot and allowed me to close with the Germans despite their massive arty and ammo depots. In the morning, I had my own arty support until it would be exhaused by noon. After that, I would be battered and thrown back.

(4) On the 9th. day, the noose tightened around Arnhem and perhaps German artillery was somewhat disrupted in the city.

(5) On the final night, I got in contact with all my commanders. I told them that tomorrow would be the big push: do or die. Every available unit was to push into Arnhem. As soon as artillery support ran out, any security detail for the fire bases would be added to the attack. Arty batteries would relocate at various points along Hell's Highway to secure it with whatever small arms they had available.

(6) Despite some confused and overly zealous orders (like giving up the Rail Bridge) on the final day, the raw drive of the troops carried the day.

Okay, here is a hot tip that will keep your HQs safe and out of harms way when an attack has gone well. This tip is hot not only in the sense of being useful, but I just successfully worked this out and tried it not more than 15 minutes ago. Straight from the battlefield to you! :)

Well, let me give you a little background first. {Note, that I have editted that following screenshots a bit to remove some clutter and focus your attention on the relevant items.}

I am tasked with taking Deelen Airfield North of the City of Arnhem. At the moment, I am just looking at taking one of the objectives which is DEELEN WEST.

As I have covered previously in this thread ... I am first conducting recon missions to find a secure route and FUP for the attack force. You see that below with a recon tank platoon. {It's hard to see in the screenshot, but up to the North West there are some minor roads which can be transited.}

Concurrent with the recon mission I have given orders for the Guards Armored Div HQ to take two Guards Groups and conduct the attack. I can do that, since as we have previously discussed:

(1) The recon element will have long since arrived at the FUP location by the time attack force gets moving. (due to the different force order delays involved)

(2) The attack force will take about 8-9 hours with delay and transit to arrive at the FUP.

(3) The attack force has a force delay of about 3 hours.

I am playing with ORDER DELAYS=PAINFULLY REALISTIC.

So, you can see that I have plenty of time to revise the attack plans, if the recon'ed route or FUP turns out to be a mistake. In fact, I had originally planned to make a much more direct attack, but another recon mission highlighted some problems with that plan.

Below you see the plan for the attack.

Now, I want to show you the parameter settings for the attack. You will note that I have specified the force to take quickest route and travel as fast as possible. These parameters should be fine, since the recon mission is going to check the route ahead.

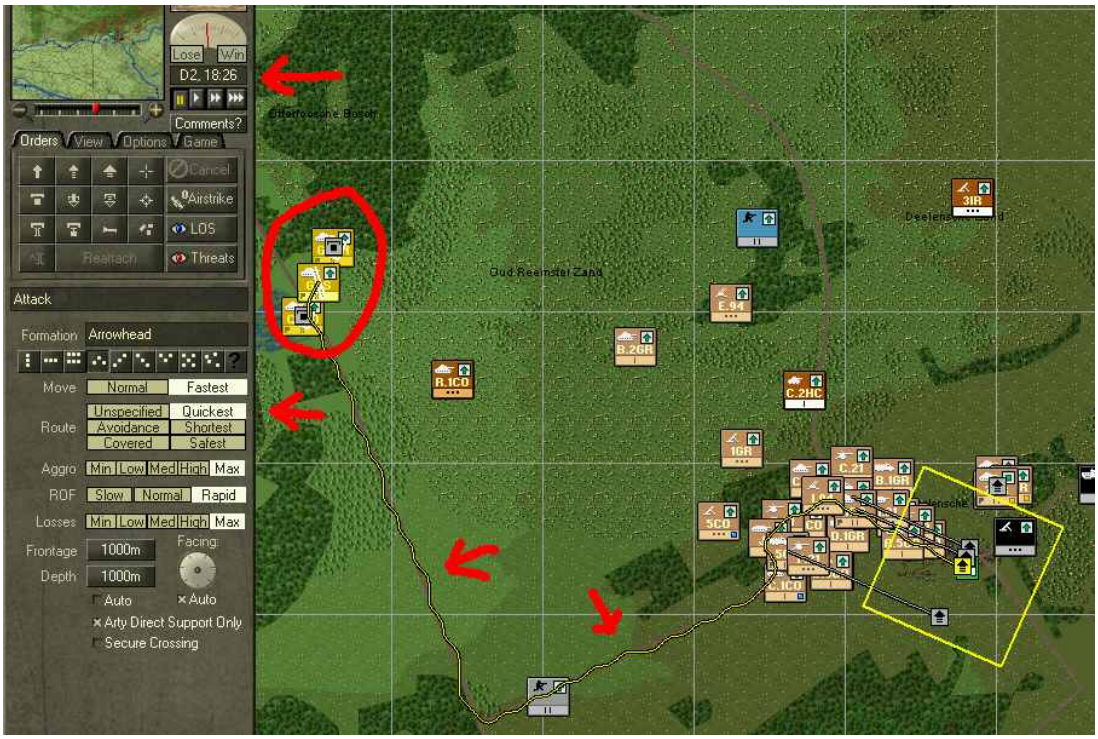
Alright, let's fast forward ahead 12 hours.

The attack has come off very nicely and achieved its game objective and my objectives for my larger plan.

I have just been informed that the Guards Div HQ is going to proceed to secure the objective. Now, we have a problem. The HQs which were happily directing the fight from 5 kilometers back at the reserve area will apply the same parameters used to reach the FUP in order to secure the attack location.

So, the three HQs are going to find the nearest roads and race to the attack area. And this is where the problem is, since it is quite likely that the route they choose are going to get lead them right to the enemy.

This is what you see below. Observe the clock, the three HQs, the parameters in effect, and the route which they intend to take. {I have to tell you that in this very scenario I have been burned by this careless behavior by my HQs two times already.}



So, what can we do protect our HQs who sometimes have more planning skills than they have an urge for self preservation?

It's not too hard to see that the HQs are using the parameters defined for the attack by simply clicking on any of the implicit [M]ove tasks created for the subordinates HQs.

However, we can change route type from QUICKEST to SHORTEST. I recently became aware through some comments Steve "Golf33" Long posted that there are certain parameters which you can change that have an immediate affect despite order delays.

So, that's what I am doing here.

Okay, now, let's take a look at the situation just one minute later.

You can see that the HQ's will now head directly to the attack location. Although this may not be the fastest, it should be the safest as the attack just swept the area in front of them.

And they all lived happily ever after. :)

I have to get back to my battle to take Deelen Airfield and testing the next patch. :)

Until next time ...

- Tree/BUA Lines versus Interior Defenses *

  In the screenshot below I present two defensive positions. Assume that the enemy will approach from the North. Assume that I have an infantry battalion at my disposal.

  To the North we have a line defense in the tree line, looking over open fields.

  To the South we have an interior defense within the wooded area.

  Which is better?

  I believe the answer depends on what type of enemy action are expecting.

  I think if you are expecting an enemy assault and you will have time to dig-in, then you are better off at the tree line. The tree line will give you good cover, good open field of fire, and deny the enemy cover. You would anticipate an enemy assault if you are closely defending a major objective.

  If on the other hand, you main goal is to disrupt enemy force movements to another area of the map, then I think you are better off with the interior defense. Being at the tree line looking across an open area will allow the enemy force a chance to bring a larger portion of their direct fire power on your positions than if you meet them in the interior of the woods. If you are not expecting an assault, then the enemy will most likely be moving in column formation. Thus, when you encounter them in the interior of the woods, due to limited LOS and their formation you should have a local fire power advantage. And this advantage can repeat itself a few times as one unit retreats back and the next moves up the road.

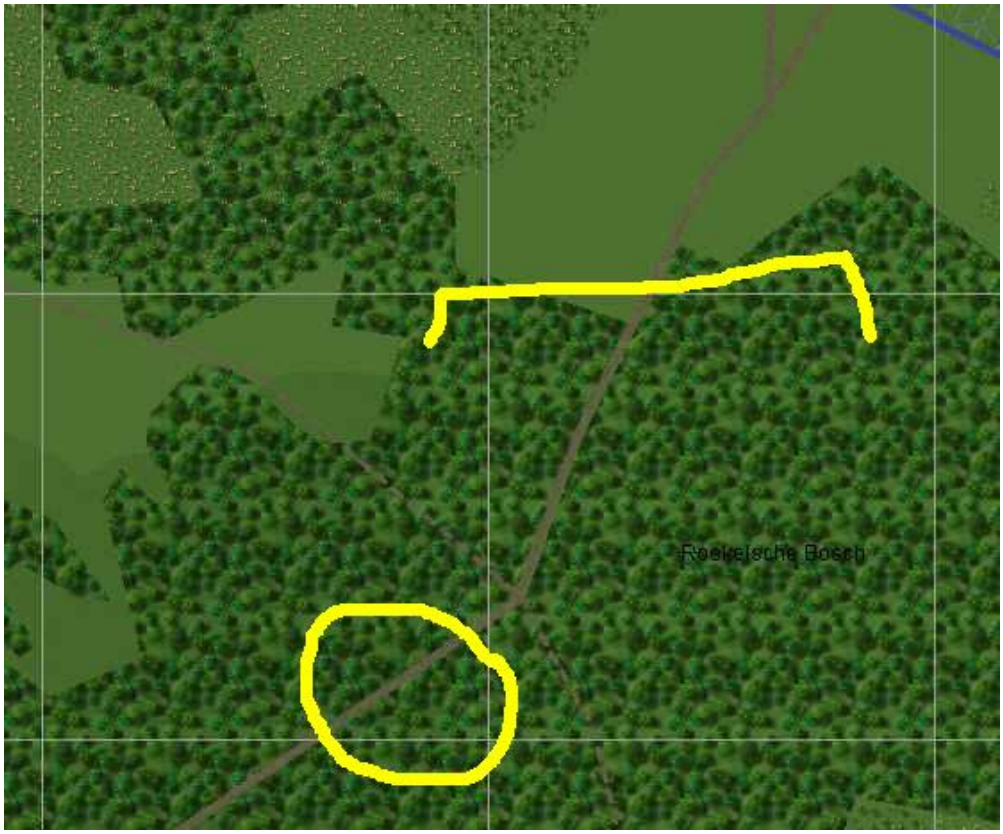
  Be advised that the AI can choose to assault a position of enemy strength if it deems it to be interfering with its strategic plan. However, it will still take it time to come to that decision, and then execute the orders.

  Also, be advised that the objectives for two sides in a conflict may not be symmetrical. So, you might be sitting on top of an enemy objective and not even know it.

  Additionally, be advised that the scenario designer can place pointless (as in no scoring awarded) objectives as hints to the AI. You might be sitting on top of one of those.

  Keep mind that entrenched units can successfully hold off a much stronger force. However, it does take days of calm to get entrenched.

  A small force with substantial arty on call can stop a much larger force.



- LOS Tool *

  Use the LOS tool to help you check visibility of various locations. This will assist in placing heavy weapons with good fields of fire, fire bases such that they are hidden, FUPs so that they hidden from observation, etc...

  * Interdict Roads *

  Whether the enemy is armor, motorized, or on foot, the first choice for movement is via highways, roads, and tracks. (Of course, attacks will take place over any terrain.) Thus, when you are trying to delay an enemy force from reinforcing an engagement area, then interdict roads. Even better, cross roads. Ultimately, the enemy will either assault or more likely bypass the position. But often your goal is not to stop the enemy cold, but to buy time. Examples: allow your troops time further down the line to get dug-in on their defense or allow you to maintain the force balance someplace where you are actively engaged to take an objective.

  * Impassable Terrain *

  In HTTR, the only terrain which is impassable is water. If you have played other games, you may assume that woods are impassable to AFVs; they are not. Thus, there are no absolute road blocks (other than bridges) which totally halt the enemy from advancing. Of course, you can totally block the enemy via force of arms with line formations, direct fire, and arty. But one company sitting on a road in the woods with arty support will not hold the enemy off forever even if they are not dislodged.

  In any case, you still want to interdict movements along highways, roads, and tracks. Movement rates and fatigue levels are much lower along these than having to travel through woods or polder (soft moist ground).

  * Hasty Defenses *

> I have stated previously that a single unit ordered to move some place will move their faster than two or more units with the same order. The single unit just moves. The group of units move as a force and perform overwatch and security procedures.
>
> There are times (besides recon) when the speed of single units can come in handy. Suppose you have a handful of units and want to set up a very hasty defense about 5Km away. Ordering the units individually to take up positions can get them in place and deployed/digging in faster than ordering the group.
>
> I had used this in one battle as the German commander who was ordered to deny a bridge. The Allies were moving up from the South with a large force. I had a very small force a few kilometers to the South of the bridge. I reasoned that they could make their best defense of the bridge from the North Bank and take advantage of a natural choke point. I gave my units individual orders to take up positions on the North Bank to hopefully extract them as quick as possible before they became engaged with the leading edge of the Allied advance.
>
> ---
>
> Okay, that wraps it up for today.

I just realized something looking at my scribbled sheet of topics from the other day, I have covered everything on the sheet.

Mr. Frag asked for a discussion of armor usage. I don't really have too much to say on that.

(1) Use armor to attack over open terrain where possible.

(2) Use armor to attack in day light where possible to achieve maximum benefit from its ranged fire power.

(3) Armor despite its protection from small arms fire is still vulnerable to mortar/arty bombardments. {something that I learned from playing HTTR and watching the History Channel}

(4) Take advantage of armor's ability (and mechanized/motorized forces) to reposition itself rapidly to strike where the enemy is unprepared.

(5) Armor modeling on the attack in HTTR unlike RDOA will stand off at the effective range of their main cannons and engage the enemy instead of simply attempting to close assault them and overrun their positions.

(6) In HTTR unlike RDOA, armor and mechanized attacks will proceed rapidly at first and then more slowly as they engage the enemy.

(7) In HTTR unlike RDOA, I have seen cases of moving FUPs for armor where a well organized force will FUP on the move and then begin the assault.

(8) I believe for HTTR combined arms attacks were changed such that when armor and infantry are available under a single command/HQ (known as basic attack) that the infantry will advance in front of the armor.

The game is very rich and I have only scratched the surface here. For those of you with better backgrounds in ground combat and war games (I had none myself), I am sure that you will find many innovative and sophisticated tactics. And when you think that there is nothing more to learn, then go play online and call Yakstock out to fight. 🙂

So, for the time being, this wraps it up. However, as I have time and play HTTR, I'll see if anything else occurs to me.

Take care.

From elmo3:

Mark

Thanks for some great advice. I have a question regarding armor . In general it's not a good idea for armor to attack alone. It may take an objective but it is very poor at holding it. Is the concept of combined arms accurately portrayed in HTTR, i.e. does unsupported armor generally have a hard time holding ground? Thanks.

elmo3

- - -

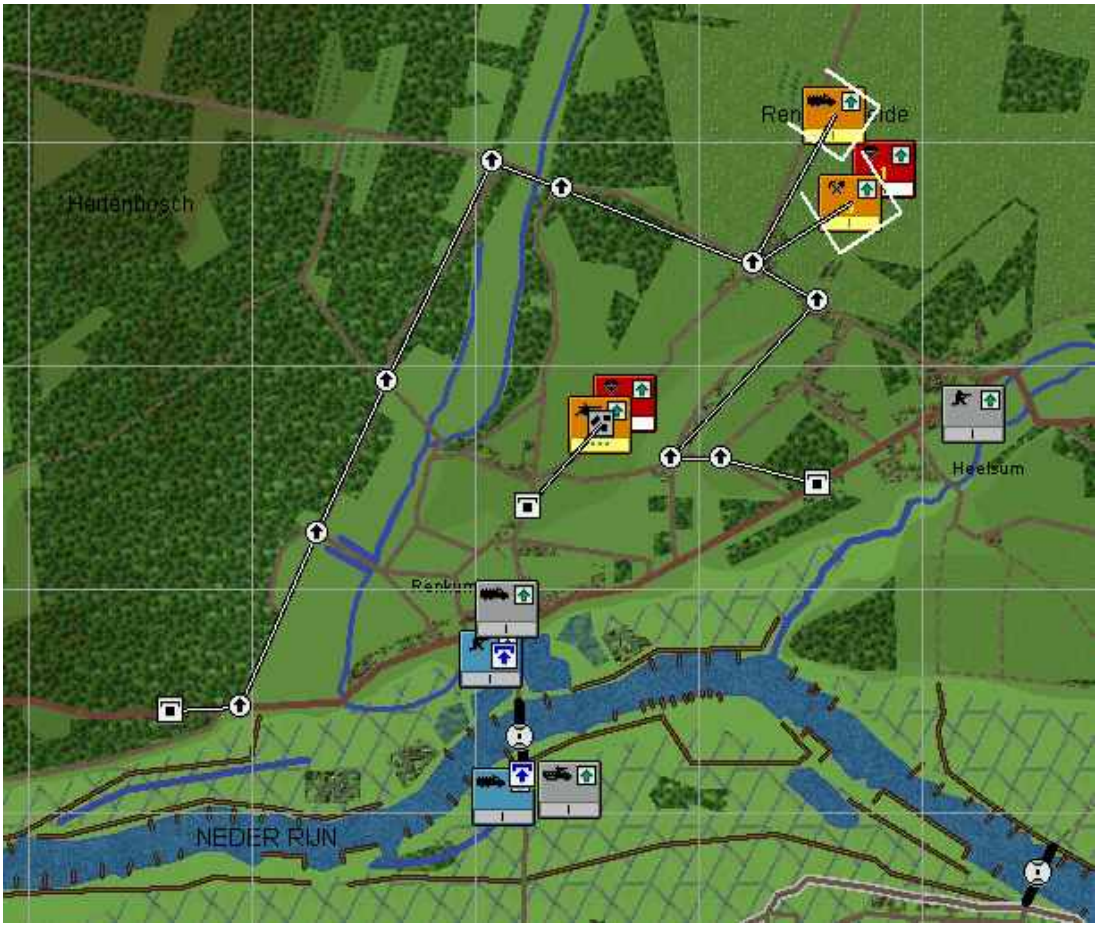
It seems in the estabs that most armor forces still have some degree of motorized/mechanized infantry included as part of the organic force.

I find armor capable of holding ground if it has had time to dig-in.

The best person to answer this would be Dave as he knows how armors works behind the scenes.

Regarding using road blocks ... here are some illustrations from a quick game which I just completed. A para brigade has landed to seize a crossing.

There are two important considerations. First, how to seize the crossing. Second, how to isolate the engagement area by stopping/delaying German reinforcements. I will not address the first matter. As to regards to the second, the answer is to use our handful of motorized units to set up road blocks along likely avenues for German reinforcements. That is what you see here. Road block orders West, North, and East.



Here you will see that we have already taken the objectives and that Germans reinforcements are just beginning to reach the area from the West and the East.

Here is another view of the situation about four hours later. My road blocks are still interdicting enemy reinforcements.

From elmo3:

Mark

Your example above raises a question that I haven't answered from the RDOA demo yet. How much micro managing is required when positioning units to take advantage of terrain? For example do I have to zoom down to the most detailed level to be sure a unit is completely in the woods but not so far in that they have no line of sight or does the program interpret your orders well enough to figure that out? Thanks.

elmo3

- - -

So, what was the final result of deploying these road blocks?

The road block to the West eventually collapsed, but not before delaying the German assualt until day break. Of course, at day break, the Germans attacked over open ground and were much more exposed as they advanced.

The road block to the East managed to stop the Germans from approaching any further from that direction.

Both bought time for the defenders at the crossing. Both called in and spotted mortar fire on the approaching Germans which disrupted their advance and attrited their forces.

Depending on the force size and what you are trying to accomplish, you may want to zoom in to the highest level. Certainly you should when targetting arty or airstrikes.

Also, note that improvements were made in HTTR in regards to AI's utilization of terrain features for multi-unit forces. (like knowing where the tree line is)

From Mr.Frag:

Mark, how big a difference do you find with armor now that it engages at range?

Can a small armor unit (such as the poor remains of the 9th recon) hold large amounts of troops at bay with a delaying withdrawl order now instead of getting walked over and creamed at point blank range?

Do they reposition when charged or stay still and let units close on them?

- - - -

I am sorry, but it is hard for me to answer your question. I think it's been well over a year that I played the RDOA version that you are familiar with. So, it's hard for me to recall exactly how the two compare. But I think you will clearly notice the difference.

I have not used the new and improved delay order, but I really do want to give it a try and see how it performs.

Perhaps, Dave can better answer at what point an armor unit will give ground.

From Arjuna:

> *quote:*
>
> Mark
>
> Thanks for some great advice. I have a question regarding armor . In general it's not a good idea for armor to attack alone. It may take an objective but it is very poor at holding it. Is the concept of combined arms accurately portrayed in HTTR, i.e. does unsupported armor generally have a hard time holding ground? Thanks.
>
> elmo3

elmo3,

If armour is in covered terrain (woods/orchards/urban) and finds itself next to enemy infantry while having no friendly infantry close at hand it suffers an adverse "shock" effect and will thus be more likely to retreat. Artillery and Base units also suffer this shock effect. On the other hand if armour is assaulting enemy infantry and guns in the open then they will suffer the shock effect.

Most of the armoured battalions in the game have a company of mech inf cross attached. When assaulting into covered terrain, this mech inf company will generally lead the charge with the armoured companies following behind, providing the heavy supporting firepower. On defence the mech inf company will usually be in front, but there is a limit to the area it can cover. So the battalion asa whole is still vulnerable when trying to defend covered areas - best to use a propper infantry battalion for that job.

From Mr.Frag:

Dave, that sounds fantastic!

The shock effect sounds like exactly what was needed for armor as used rightly it is deadly, caught offguard it is target practice.

Here is the list:

{link to thread removed since thread was lost after forum hacking incident}

Time frames (length of scenario simulation) range from ~12 hours to ~10 days.

Numbers of units (individually controllable or combinable as forces) range from ~15 to ~200+.

Number of objectives (points awarded for completion or duration of occupation) ranges

from ~2 to ~15.

Reinforcement time frame windows can be as tight as ~30 minutes or as long ~10 hours.

Some have randomized drop/landing zone locations so that you can not know where the enemy will be.

Many have selectable reinforcement levels for both sides along with adjustable weather and supply levels.

Forces vary between foot infantry, motorized infantry, mechanize infantry, and armor along with all the possible combinations.

Side roles vary from fully defensive to fully offensive and multi-roled where you may need to defend strongly at one location like a bridge so that the follow on force can cross it and carry on the offensive elsewhere.

Also, Panther has recently hired a dedicated scenario designer to focus on further evolution of scenario aspect of the AA series. (In the past, it was jointly handled by designers/programmers and beta testers.)

I personally hope to see a community of skilled map makers and scenario designers sprout from the community similar to what has happened with the Combat Mission series.

Others are also eagerly anticipating the development of a cadre of online head-to-head players.

There is much promise there and it all begins with the small step of swiping your credit card through the card reader at your local shopping mall. 🙂

From Mr.Frag:

> *quote:*
>
> There is much promise there and it all begins with the small step of swiping your credit card through the card reader at your local shopping mall. 🙂

I always look at it from a price vs play standpoint, not that I personally care about the money ... Take the number of hours you will be playing over the price. Anything that drops below $1 is a great value. I suspect based on RDOA, HTTR will be in the < $0.10 range based on the number of scenarios and replayability aspects with variable reinforcements, different starting positions, etc. That makes it a fantastic value!

Tough to critique stuff that entertains for less then a dime an hour as I sit here drinking my Starbucks $3.00 coffee 🤑

- - - - -

> Yeh, I was thinking that the other day that good video games give tremendous value for the money you pay versus film and other media.
>
> However, I, also, find that even despite attempting to be discerning about what you buy, it is often hard to know prior to having a game for quite a while whether you will play it for years or after a few months move on to something else. It seems to be a highly individual matter that despite reviews and other awards can only be determined by spending time with the game itself.
>
> So, if one was to determine the true cost of this hobby, then you need to factor in the games purchased that you don't play for a couple years and the cost of computer hardware. For some people, such as myself (running a software development business),

having PCs is a necessity. For others the purchase of computer hardware is driven by their gaming hobby which then also needs to be factored into the cost. Oh yes, I forgot there is also the ancillary cost as the result of continuous software upgrades: new O/S, virus scanners, fire walls, backups software, office suites, etc...

So, is it a cheap hobby or an expensive hobby? I guess it depends on how creative your accounting is and how supportive your significant other is. (Mine is very supportive. Although she is unable to really appreciate my hobby or its subject matter.)

Okay, I think it is time to get this thread back on topic which is "HTTR Tips and Tactics".

Let's talk today about using the interface. Or more accurately, we will talk about how I use the interface and you can take away from that what you will.

I want to talk about the unit info box as you have them mapped to 10 function keys and there is quite a bit to choose from. I'll step through each and then do some additional posts showing some examples where I can.

It is important to note that all the information below is available in the side bar for each unit. However, the value of the unit info box is that it allows to summarize the overall situation at a glance as opposed to clicking through many units.

* F1 - Combat Power *

This measures the degree of fire power a unit can deliver. The important thing to remember is that it represents powers of 10. So,

1 = 10**0 = 1
2 = 10**1 = 10
3 = 10**2 = 100
4 = 10**3 = 1000

So, a unit with a value of 2 delivers 10 times more fire power than a unit with a value of 1.

I don't tend to use this one all that much. But it could be useful to beginners to get a sense of the value of your units. Mainly I use it when I have airstrike available. I want to find current units (intel toggle) with accurate contact information and a high combat power rating. You really don't want to waste one of your few precious air strikes on the company cooks.

* F2 - Strength *

This tells you the strength of a unit relative to its full strength in the Estab (TOE). So, remember scenarios can begin with units starting out understrength. As such, it is not a good measure of casualties taken or inflicted. However, if you keep that in mind, then you can still use it for that purpose. For me, I hardly use it.

Here is a handy trick to get your own actual casualties. Highlight the HQ of a particular force in question. Now, hold the SHIFT key and press the DOWN ARROW. You will have selected all the units. On the left side bar, you will see various statistics that represent the sum of all selected units. Thus, you can check your losses.

* F3 - Rout Status *

This tells you whether your troops are doing what was intended for them or they are getting very rattled by the enemy. I think I spend about 90% of the game in this mode. This basically answers the question at a glance: Is my attack succeeding? Is my defense holding? This along with objectives and the locations which your forces occupy on the map will tell you how the scenario is proceeding. (Yes, looking at the Win Meter in the upper left

is a good idea too.)

* F4 - Task *

This tells you what command a unit is executing. It can be the result of a direct order from you or an implicit order generated by AI superiors. For implicit orders, it need not match the order which you gave. For example, you may command an attack, but your AI superior will first give the command to subordinates to move to the FUP.

I find this mode useful for a number of things:

(1) You can watch as orders propagate through the chain of command. With order delays enabled, this can take simulated hours depending on the situation. Thus, you can get a sense of how close your orders are to reach the line units in the field. (My advice to new players is to get used to making a note of the time you issue an order versus when the entire force has received it. If you do this, you will start to develop an awareness of how long things take.)

(2) You can figure out why your force is not doing what you have commanded. For example, as above, perhaps they haven't received the new orders yet. Or perhaps, they are exhausted and are getting some rest. Or perhaps, they everything has gone FUBAR and they are reorging. Or perhaps, the given units have been placed in reserve and so they are not attacking.

(3) You can determine what stage an attack is currently in. Attacking units will go through implicit tasks of: MOVE to get to the FUP, REORG as they prepare at the FUP, ASSAULT as they head out from the FUP, REORG as they prepare to secure the objective, MOVE as they move to secure the objective, and DEFEND as the objective is secured. So, if you see your units REORGing at the FUP, then the assault will be starting soon. For example, when you see it switch over to ASSAULT, that's time to begin your prep bombardment of a primed bridge.

(4) You can determine what the enemy is up to. If you encounter his units, you may see MOVE or ASSAULT. If you see ASSAULT that means he is serious about making life miserable for you and and expect a coordinated effort as opposed to his units just stumbling about.

* F5 - Deployment *

This tells you just how prepared the unit is for contact from minimally prepared to it is sitting in a concrete bunker and has the exact range settings worked out for every MG42 position.

I find this mode useful for:

(1) Determining how ready your defense is for the enemy's arrival. You can see if a delaying action elsewhere has succeeded. If the defenders get dug-in, then your plan worked.

(2) Determining how tough enemy resistance is going to be. If you find enemy units entrenched, it is going to be tough going and take a lot of arty.

(3) This can also be useful for planning airstrikes. If you are looking to cause casualties, then it is better to hit a unit that is not deployed (as long as it is stopped).

* F6 - Facing *

I use this rarely.

I find this mode useful for:

(1) Where does the AI think the threat is?

(2) Did you catch the enemy by suprise? (Units will reorient their facing if need be.)

* F7 - Cohesion *

I use this from time to time.

I find this mode useful for:

(1) Determining how disorganized an attacking force has become. When it reaches a certain degree, the HQ will have the attackers fall back and regroup to make another push. {To some extent, closer FUPs reduce the likelihood of this occurring. It's best to avoid this as it can totally remove pressure from the enemy and give up ground already taken.}

* F8 - Fatigue *

This tells you whether your troops are fresh or have been pushed way beyond the limits of human endurance. What things will drive them exhaustion? Movement ... particularly on foot, through tough terrain, or at night; combat; and for mortar/arty crews lots of fire missions.

If find this mode useful for:

(1) Get a rough idea of how much you can ask of a force. For example, fresh infantry can be asked to force march at top speed into a battle. However, infantry that is already tired should be allowed to shift positions at a normal march and preferably in daylight.

(2) Get a rough idea of how a force is recovering its strength. For example, an attack force having taken its objective may go into a defensive posture while the front moves past it. After a while, it will recover and could be replaced by rear area troops (Senior HQ and supply) and be ordered into a new engagement.

(3) Figuring out why your mortars have stopped firing even when they still have rounds left. They are just plain exhausted.

* F9 - Morale *

I hardly use this.

* F10 - Arty Ammo *

This indicated the percentage of ammo still left to gun and mortar crews.

This mode is useful:

(1) At a glance determining who has ammo left and how fast it is going. In any active battle, arty will tend to get expended within a matter of hours as opposed to lasting an entire 24 hour period.

(2) You can use this in conjunction with a tip I showed you earlier which uses gun units in time shifts (on call and rest) in order to provide arty support through out a 24 hour period.

Once again, this is how I play. It's not how everyone else plays or how you should play. But I think this might help for those perhaps initially felt overwhelmed by the level of information available.

I'll try to find sometime later to post some examples.

From Golf33:

quote:

This measures the degree of fire power a unit can deliver. The important thing to remember is that it represents powers of 10.

Actually it's powers of two, not ten. A unit showing combat power 2 is twice as effective as one showing combat power 1, and a unit showing combat power 4 is 8 times as effective. It also represents a fair bit more than just firepower as it takes into account many other factors. Essentially it gives you a snapshot of the total effectiveness of the unit.

quote:

* F6 - Facing *

I use this rarely.

I find this mode useful for:

(1) Where does the AI think the threat is?

(2) Did you catch the enemy by suprise? (Units will reorient their facing if need be.)

I also hardly use this display since selecting a unit or group of units displays a white box for each showing their current footprint and facing. I find this easier to use and it provides more information than the F6 display.

quote:

* F9 - Morale *

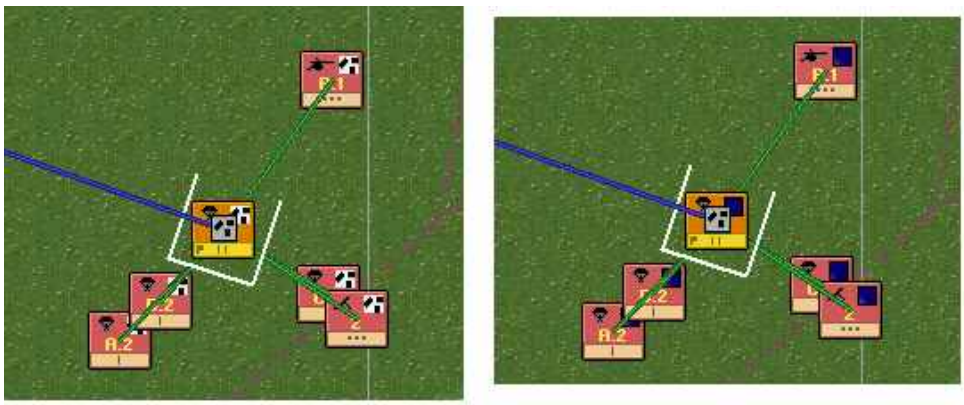
Morale is useful to keep in mind when formulating a plan, especially if you have troops of widely differing quality. Use low-morale troops for secondary or less dangerous tasks and high-morale troops for tough assignments and anything important to your plan. Low-morale troops will break under fire a lot sooner and take longer to recover, whereas high-morale troops can be tough to shift in defence and will press on despite punishment in the attack.

Good tips mate!

Cheers
33

- F4 - Task * / * F7 - Cohesion *

  Here we see a reinforcement force (air drop) which just arrived reorging automatically due to its low level of cohesion. They are not going to process any new orders until they get done with this.

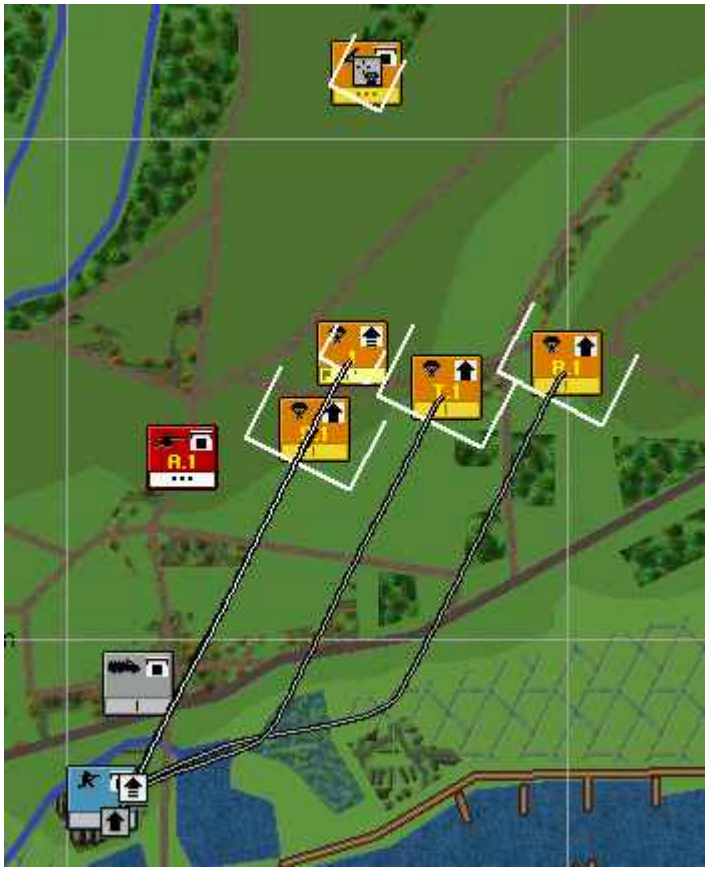


- F4 - Task *

  Here we see the implicit REORG tasks generated at the FUP by the AI prior to an attack getting underway. Also, note the implicit move task generated for the mortar unit to cover as it drops back to provide on-call fire support.

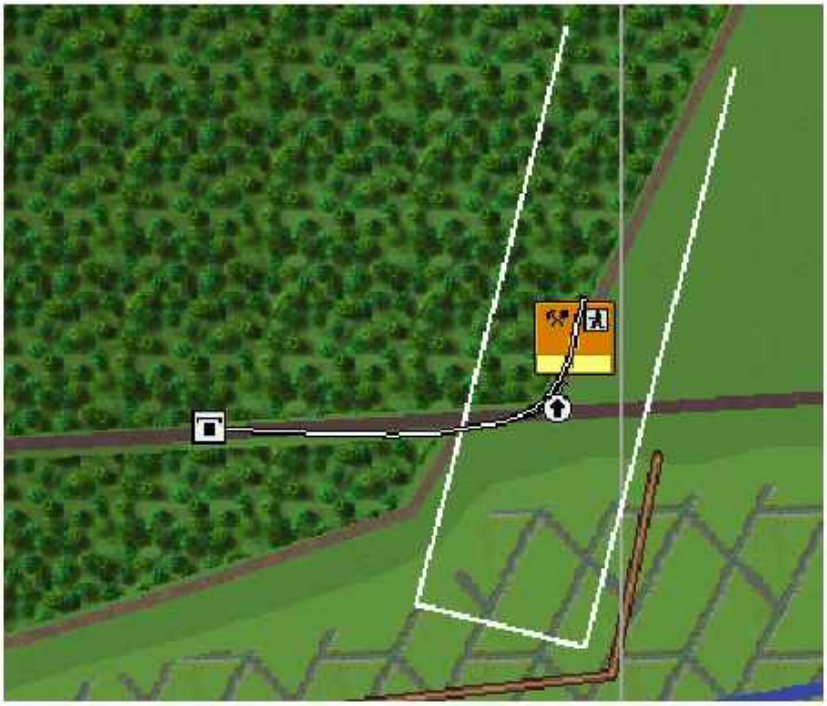
- F4 - Task *

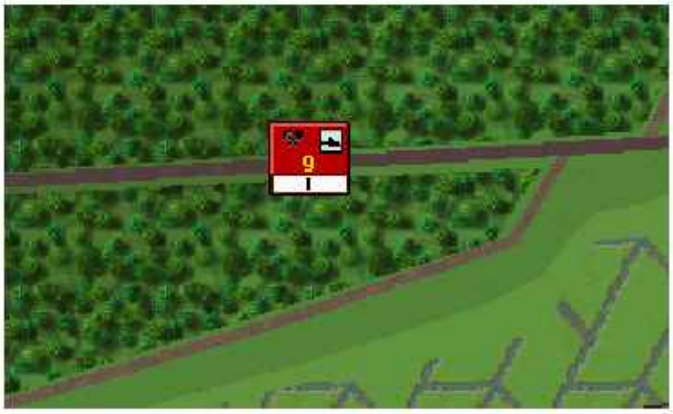
  Here is the same attack as above which has transistioned to the next phase in the process. Our units are now advancing with assault orders.



- F5 - Deployment *

  Here we see four screen shots of an engineering unit tasked with setting up a road block changing deployment status from: moving -> taking cover -> deployed -> dug-in. You will notice that they manage to get dug-in just in time as some German units are coming down the road. A good thing for us.

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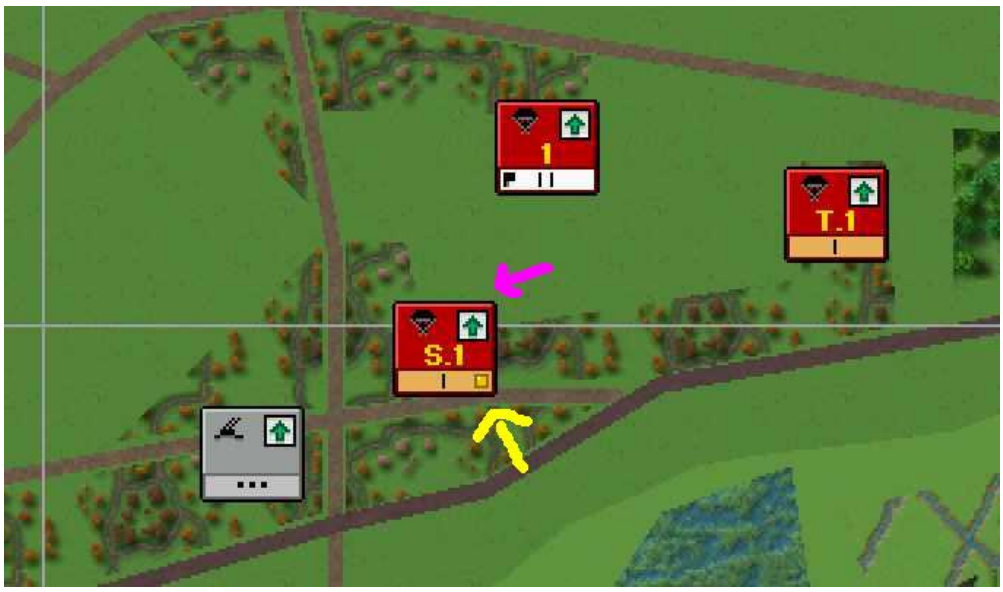
- Engagement Status *

  We have been talking in this thread about the Unit Info Box. I would just like to point our here that besides the Rout Status of your units being a good indication of how an attack or defense is doing, there is also the engagement status. This will also let you know if your units are giving better than they are getting, so to speak.

  Purple arrow is the Unit Info Box (showing Rout Status).

  Yellow arrow is the Engagement Status (indicating under fire).

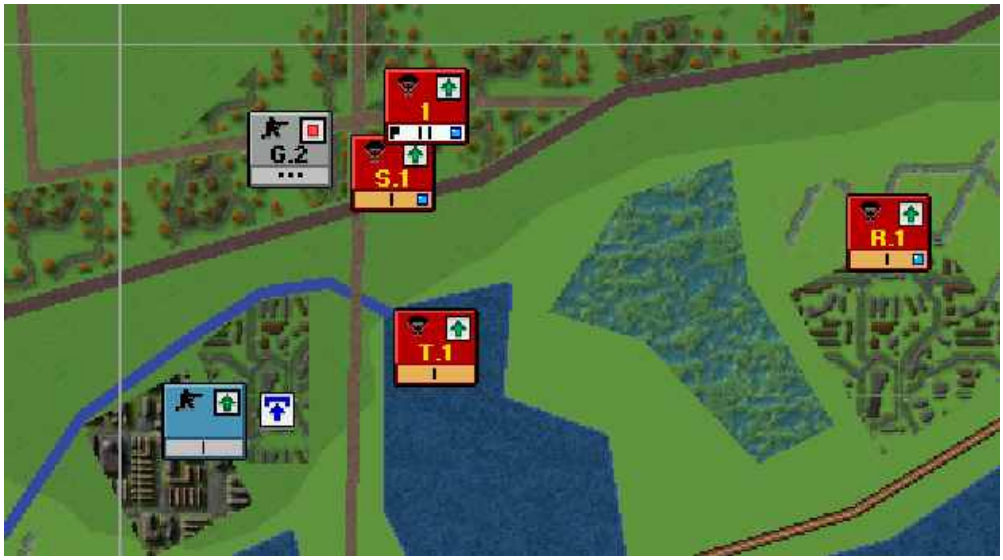
  (Taken from the same attack show above.)



- F3 - Rout Status *

  Here is our attack from before. Notice the green arrows meaning our troops are advancing and focused on the job to be done. Notice the red box of the enemy unit. This unit has been broken by our attack.

  Remember I am doing very small isolated screen shots, but the main value of the Unit Info Box is to be able to view a lot of units at once to quickly access the big picture.

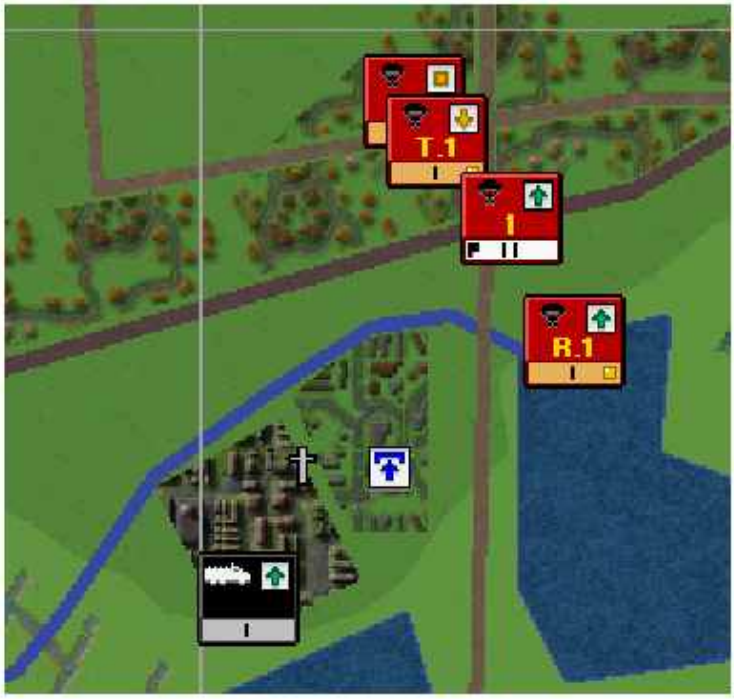


- F3 - Rout Status *

  Oh, this does not look good! Here you can see our attack has begun to falter. Two of our units have already retreated. I guess I underestimated how much fight the German Bridge Garrison had left in them.

  Well, I have run out of time. I'll try to post some more illustrative screen shots regarding the Unit Info Box when I get a chance.

  {Just a 11 more days until 11/17/03. Of course, you could always wait until December, but if you think that German Road Garrison was tough wait until you see the crowds at your local Mall this holiday season. Every American who got a Bush tax cut check this year is going to be over at the EB counter spending it. Simply, brutal. 🙂}



From elmo3:

Great stuff Mark. Keep it coming while we wait, and wait, and wait... 🙂

Two questions please:

1. Is there any variability in the strenght of the para units when they land? IOW will their strength vary each time a scenario is replayed due to some randomness in losses while landing or is strength fixed?

2. In the shot of your unit defending the road in the woods, is there an easy way to tell facing? Also is there a way to order the direction of facing when they dig in so they're not all facing away from the expected line of attack?

Thanks,
elmo3

- - - - -

No, there is no random variable degree of force strength provided in the scenario editor. <=== See Dave's post below.

{Steve, could you simulate this feature by using the random/drop/reinforcement feature in the scenario editor?}

I, myself, am not too familiar with the scenario editor. I've looked at it a few times to see what it's capable of; and again, recently, to review the reference manual as part of the beta testing process. I'd rather take advantage of the fine work of others than spend my time developing maps and scenarios.

Two ways you could determine facing:

F6 - Facing: It will show it in the unit info box.

or

Select a unit and a 3 sided box will be drawn around the unit which shows it's facing.

Yes, you can explicitly order the facing for a force along with formation and the size of the footprint they cover. Otherwise, the AI will handle it for you.

From Arjuna:

> *quote:*
>
> Is there any variability in the strenght of the para units when they land? IOW will their strength vary each time a scenario is replayed due to some randomness in losses while landing or is strength fixed?

When a unit arrives as a reinforcement by para drop or glider landing there is a chance that it will suffer casualties. The chance is increased the more covered the terrain. In clear or heide terrain its around 1-2%. Glider landings suffer more casualties than para drops when the terrain is covered. A glider unit landing in woods or city can be decimated - not pretty!

From Golf33:

> *quote:*
>
> No, there is no random variable degree of force strength provided in the scenario editor. <=== See Dave's post below.
>
> {Steve, could you simulate this feature by using the random/drop/reinforcement feature in the scenario editor?}

There is a way to do it but it's reasonably technical - if someone actually wants to create a scenario with this feature let me know and I'll talk you through it.

Cheers
33

- - -

This post is in response to Phil. Phil asked in our French support thread for a discussion how to employ frontage|depth in the game. I'll answer here and JeF can do the translation over there for me.

As with many features of the game, my use is fairly basic. But I'll stress a point which I made previously ... good application of the basics will get you a victory nine times out of ten.

{If there are any errors here, I am sure Dave will jump in and correct them.}

An important point to realize is (which I didn't when I started playing RDOA) frontage|depth only applies to groups of multiple units and not to a single unit. I believe, this is also true of formations. So, if you give a single unit a frontage|depth setting it has no impact. On the other hand, if you have multiple units, then it will affect how the AI positions each unit. (Note, that facing works for single units.) {Hmm, I am not 100% sure of this, since I do note that box size drawn in HTTR for a single unit does appear to change. Dave?}

Given what I said above this increases the utility value of frontage|depth in HTTR versus RDOA, since the Estabs now consistently go down to company level as opposed to the just battalian level. Also, the ability to give individual orders to a company allows a greater degree of flexibility when some micro-managing is desired.

Also, I believe there were some fixes/enhancements made to how HTTR handles (frontage|depth)+formations. However, I don't recall what they were. {Dave?}

* Defense *

The AI will provide a default frontage|depth which is appropriate to the force at hand. Here are the times when I will manually adjust it:

(1) I am trying to occupy a wooded or urban area. The area is smaller than what would be the default footprint of the force, but I don't want the force to place units out in the open. So, I adjust the footprint to fit the area available. (Within reason, of course. You are not going to try to pack a battalian into a single house!)

(2) You have an objective with a large perimeter radius. You can adjust the frontage|depth to cover required area. This is useful when the perimeter is only slightly larger than the standard 1km-1.5km diameter objectives. If it is much larger or the enclosed area is wooded or urban, then you a probably better off establishing a number [D]efend tasks with multiple forces. (The latter would be superior both in terms of achieving the required footprint and creating a more effective defense.)

(3) I commonly use line formations when building a defense of multiple positions (usual done when you suspect attack/approach from particular directions and are trying to exploit terrain features). I will tend to adjust the frontage|depth for the line to conform to the terrain feature (woods, urban, etc ...) that I am trying to take advantage of. You'll also be adjusting the facing.

(4) Keep in mind that thin forces give you better spotting/interdiction/harassment ability versus denser forces which give you better firepower/mutual support/stopping ability. As

such adjusting frontage|depth is often done with the construction of layered defenses. (see earlier in this thread a fairly extensive example of constructing a layered defense) The initial line which is intended as a screen for the purpose of making first contact with the enemy is usually set up with a wide frontage. You don't want stopping power. You mainly want to make contact by having spotting ability to cover as much area as you can a good distance from the main line of resistance. Correspondingly, the main line of resistance is intended to stop the enemy. As such, you will adjust frontage|depth to use a more dense footprint to increase fire power.

* Attack *

The AI will provide a default frontage|depth which is appropriate to the force at hand. Here are the times when I will manually adjust it:

(1) Often you may be trying to attack through a narrow corridor of trees or an open field. You will want to keep infantry forces in cover and armor in the open if possible. You can use the frontage|depth to adjust the shape of the force to try to prevent the attack from spilling over into inappropriate terrain.

(2) On the attack, you are often making a bold thrust to try to break the enemy defense. You can, of course, increase the ferocity of your attack by adjusting AGGRO parameters, etc... You can also reduce frontage|depth to increase the fire power. This can help you punch through an enemy line. Once you have broken through, the total enemy defense is more likely to crumble. Depending on the scope of the battle, you may also further exploit the hole.

(3) Sometimes your attack has been more or less successful, but you still have isolated enemy units stubbornly refusing to yield. Their presence within the perimeter of an objective can cause you to forfeit its point. You can often launch a follow on attack with a force having a large frontage mainly intended to mop up any isolated enemy units which are still resisting.

Well, I hope these thoughts prove useful to you.

{JeF, s'il te plait traduir a Phil dans notre thread Francaise. Merci.}

Here is map tip for those of you who may be trying to learn to read the map while you play (and you will also notice that the game manual is b/w).

You can place your mouse pointer anywhere on the map and right click. This will bring up a description of the terrain underneath the pointer.

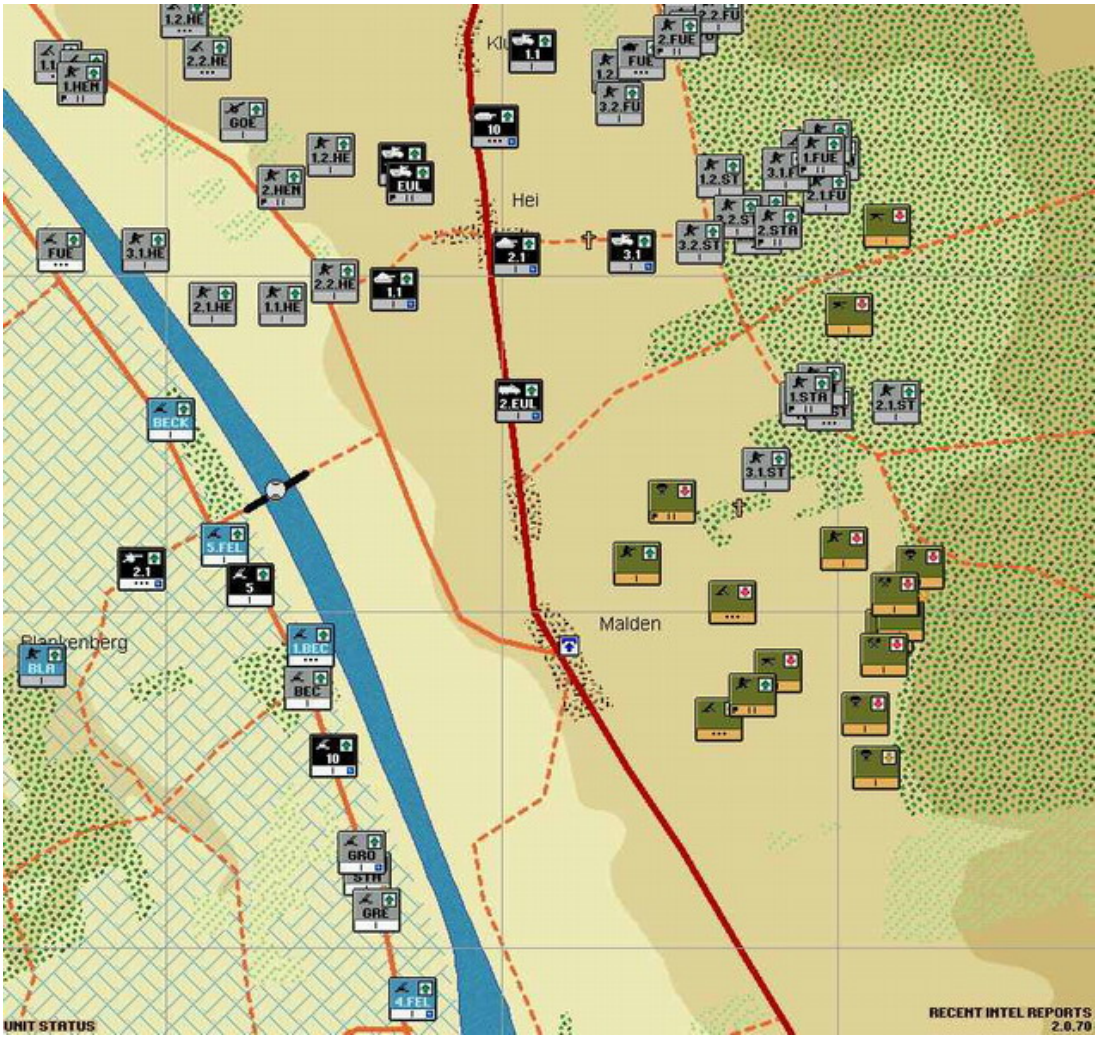
Another map tip ... there is an option to anti-alias the map. This smoothes out lines. (It has nothing to do with the AA feature built in to your 3D video card. It's a static rendering of map by the game. "If possible" refers to whether a larger map cache has been generated for the map to support this feature. For all the CD maps, the map cache files include support.)

I, personally, do not use this as I feel it tends to blur the place labels a bit. Also, I understand it requires a little more CPU and I would rather use my CPU cycles elsewhere.

The following series of posts had been permanently lost, but I still had the images. So, I have recreated them from memory more or less.

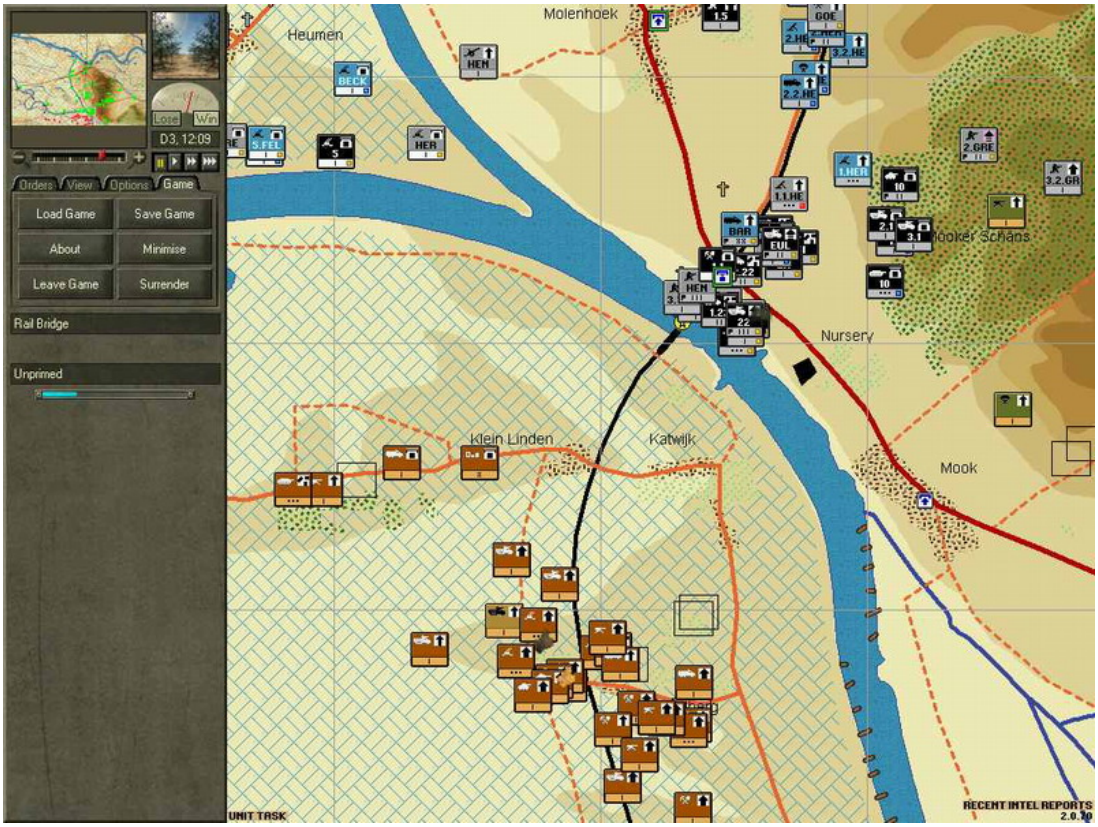
We had previously discussed how the unit info box helps the player understand the big picture very rapidly. My other screenshots presented had very few units displayed. Here is an example of a successful attack by my forces (Axis). Notice all the red arrows (routing) of the Allied units, they are running for their lives.

{I have changed my map textures to use the RDOA Classis Look for this screenshot.}



Here we see an example of an Allied attack in progress. Notice that the unit info box shows that these units are assaulting. Sometimes when you encounter enemy units, they may just be in transit. But we can see that this is an organized attack, and this could mean serious trouble for the defenders at the bridge.

{I have changed my map textures to use the RDOA Classis Look for this screenshot.}



For new players, trying to implement your conceptual plan (especially at the start of a non-trivial battle) in HTTR may be a bit daunting. I'll share with you how I approach it and maybe it will help you.

I use a "bottom up" approach. This is a term that comes from computer systems development. It means to start at the lowest levels and work your way up. This is how I approach formulating orders for a large scale plan. This does not mean that you need to formulate your plan in a "bottom up" fashion; only that it is more convenient to construct it with the HTTR interface in a "bottom up" fashion.

Why do I advocate doing it this way?

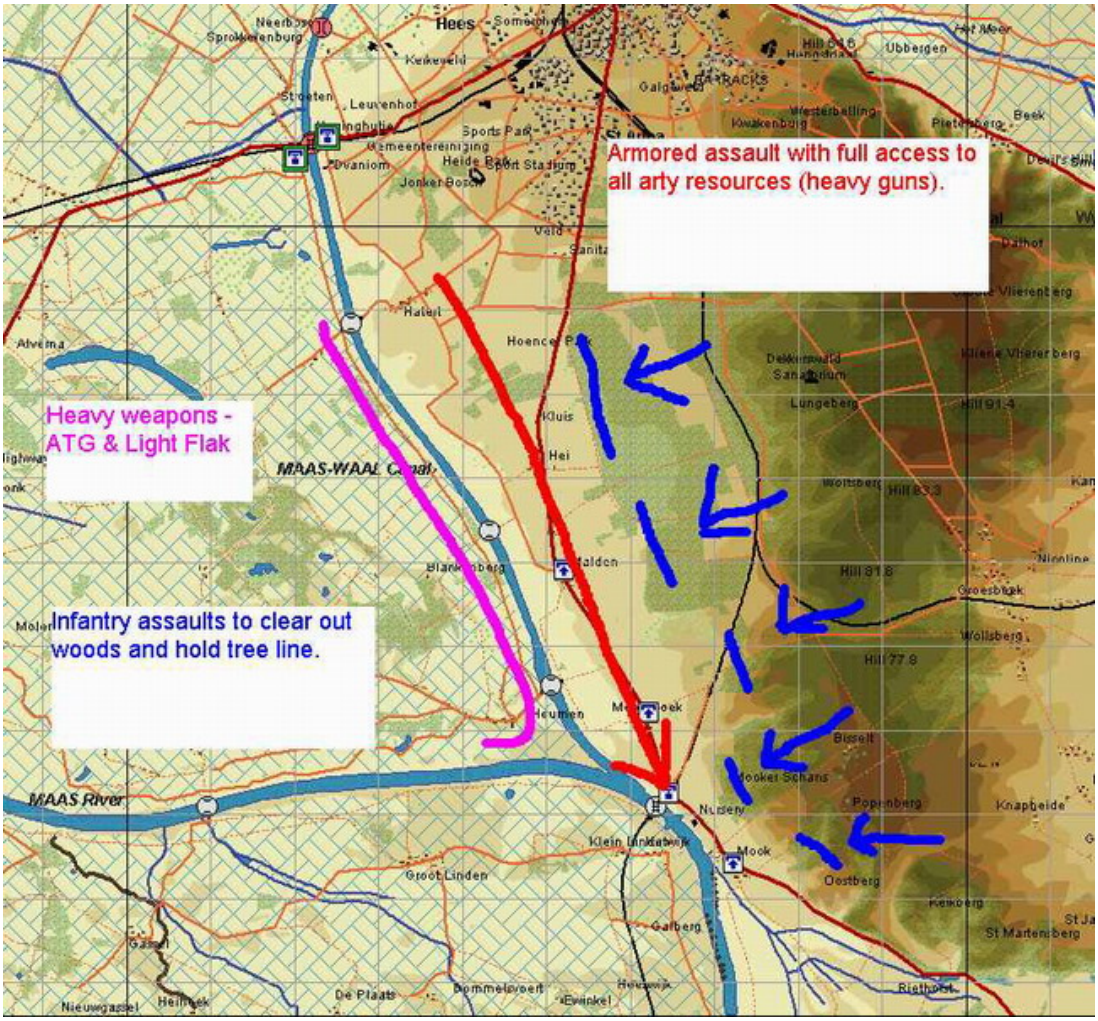
(1) You are less likely to forget important support units if you give them their orders first. If their organic superiors are given orders first, you may loose them track of them.

(2) From an accounting perspective, HTTR rolls up your force estimates to the commanding HQ. If you plan to dettach forces from an HQ later, then numbers you are looking at will be misleading. Additionally, default force footprint sizes will also be misleading.

(3) This forces us to think of our dettachments first and initially. Deattaching units once orders have been given and plans are in motion can be very disruptive.

(4) {I had more reasons when I first wrote this, but I cannot remember them now. Oh, well ...}

Below is an example of a conceptual plan I have for a battle. My goal is to clear away Allied forces from along the Canal. Let's look at how I implement with the HTTR interface.



In constructing a plan, we usually have two class of units that we give orders to: individual units and forces. Individual units tend be heavy (support) weapons such as: arty, ATGs, light flak, ... Also, we can consider single unit recon as part of this class. Forces tend to be battalions, brigades, regiments, divisions, ...

Working "bottom up", we will start with individual units.

However, before we do, let me highlight some important interface tools that will be a great aid to us:

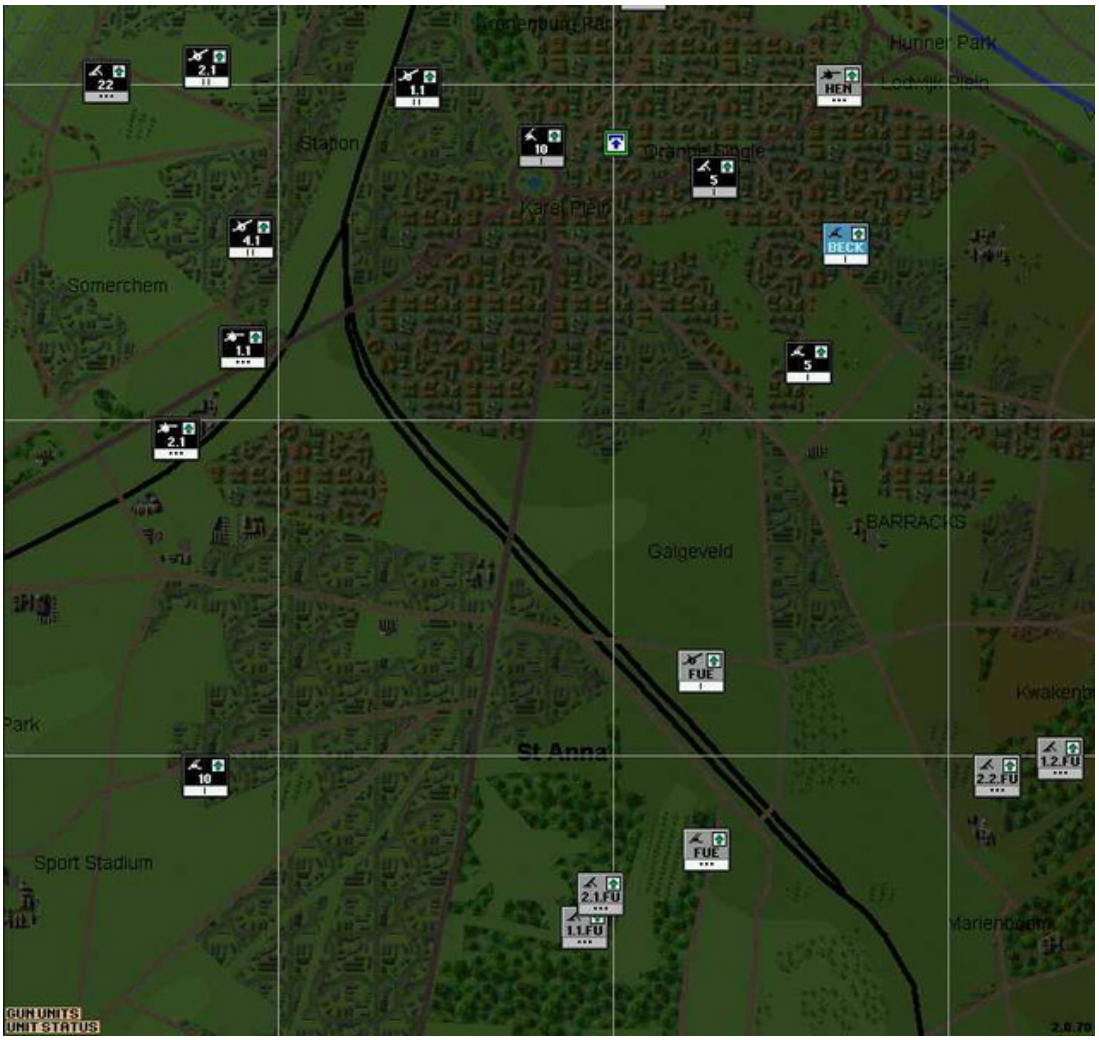
(1) The command bar - this will let us know who we have given order to.

(2) Filters - this will allow us to find specific types of units, HQs, who is waiting for orders, and review our plan's implementation.

Below we see an image of a unit's command bar before and after given orders. We'll use that to check off whether we have ordered a particularly unit or not.

If you recall from my plan, I planned to deploy my heaving weapons to the cover the West Bank of the Canal on one flank of my attack.

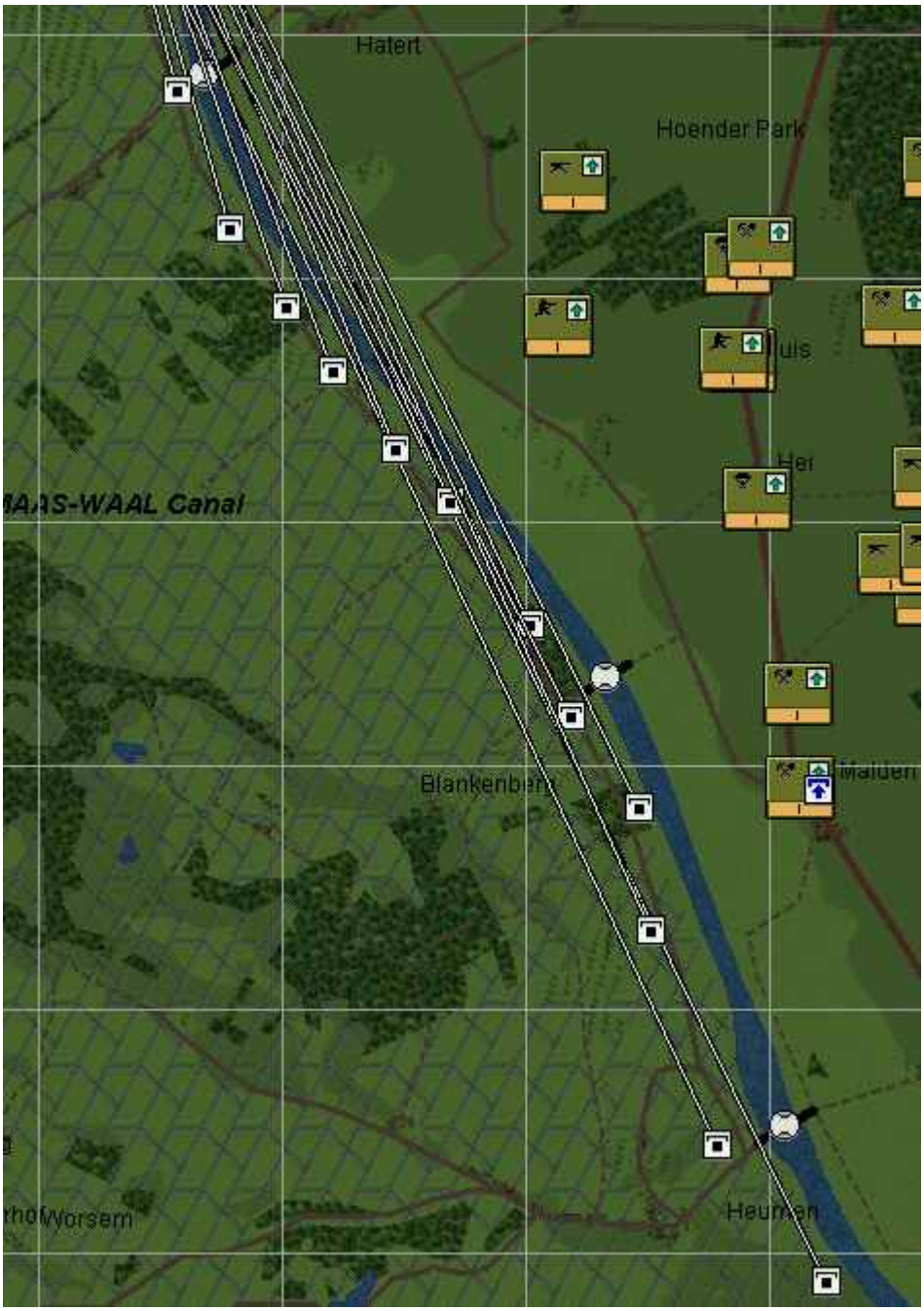
In the screenshot below, I have set my filter, "8", to display gun units. This allows me to easily locate just the particular units I want and verify that I have given orders to each unit by checking the command bar.



Once I have given my orders, I can easily review what I have done by filtering, "=", to display units with orders. I can then group select all the units displayed to see their individual orders.

Besides reviewing the orders given already, this can be a very useful technique for fine tuning your orders. As you know, I am trying to do a good job of covering the West Bank of the Canal with heavy weapons. However, when giving individual orders, it is hard to remember exactly where you placed each final waypoint.

You can display all orders here at once like I have done. Then, you can move individual waypoints and adjust parameters. Thus, you can get good coverage and fine tune the implementation. BUT REMEMBER, DO NOT DELETE OR ADD ANY WAYPOINTS AS ALL HIGHLIGHTED UNITS WILL BE REGROUPED TOGETHER AS A SINGLE FORCE!!!

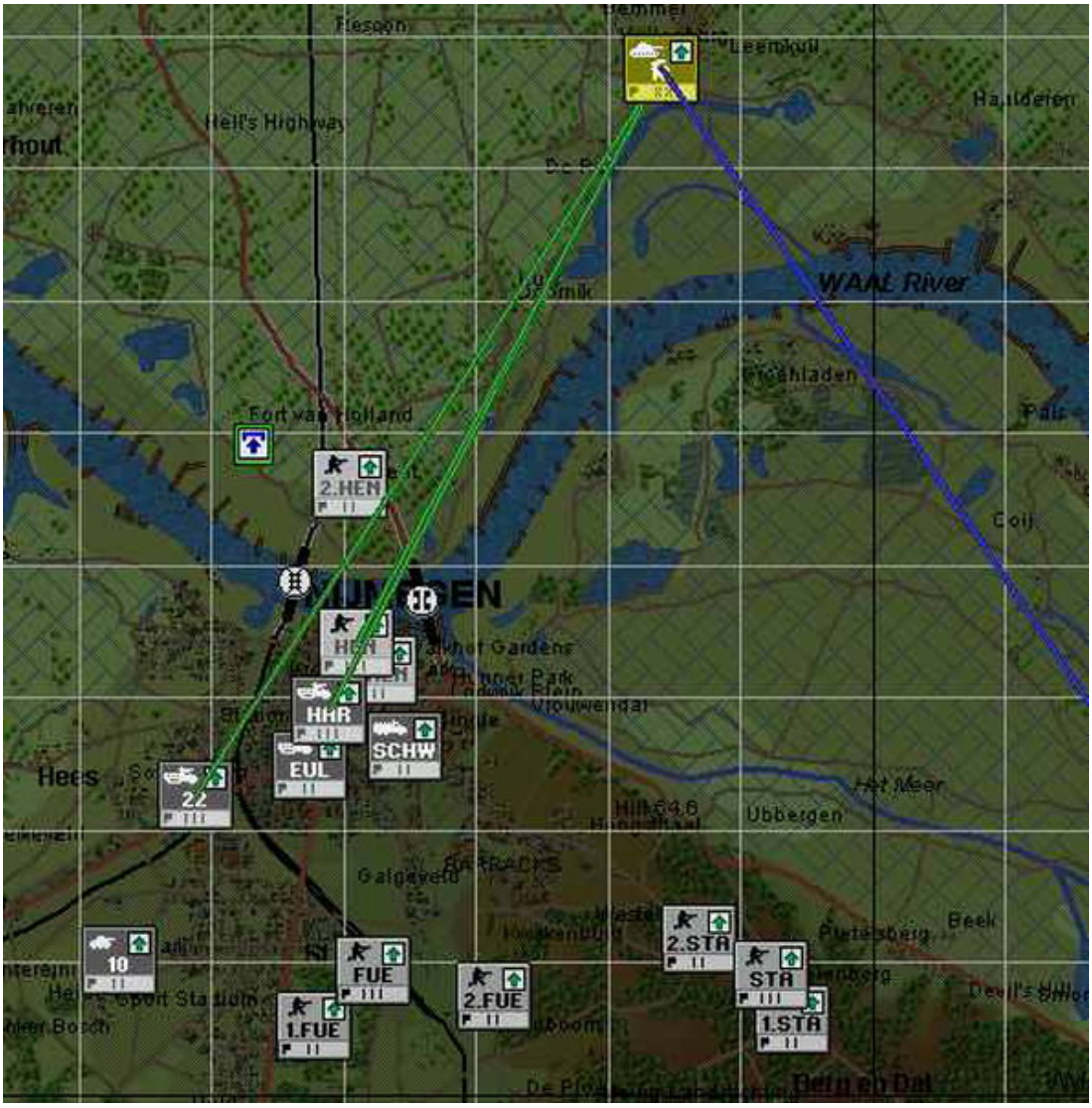


After giving orders to individual units, you then move on to giving orders to forces. Again, you should work "bottom-up". So, choose the lowest level of force organization with which

to start. (for example, if you plan to issue orders to some single battalions, then do this before brigades)

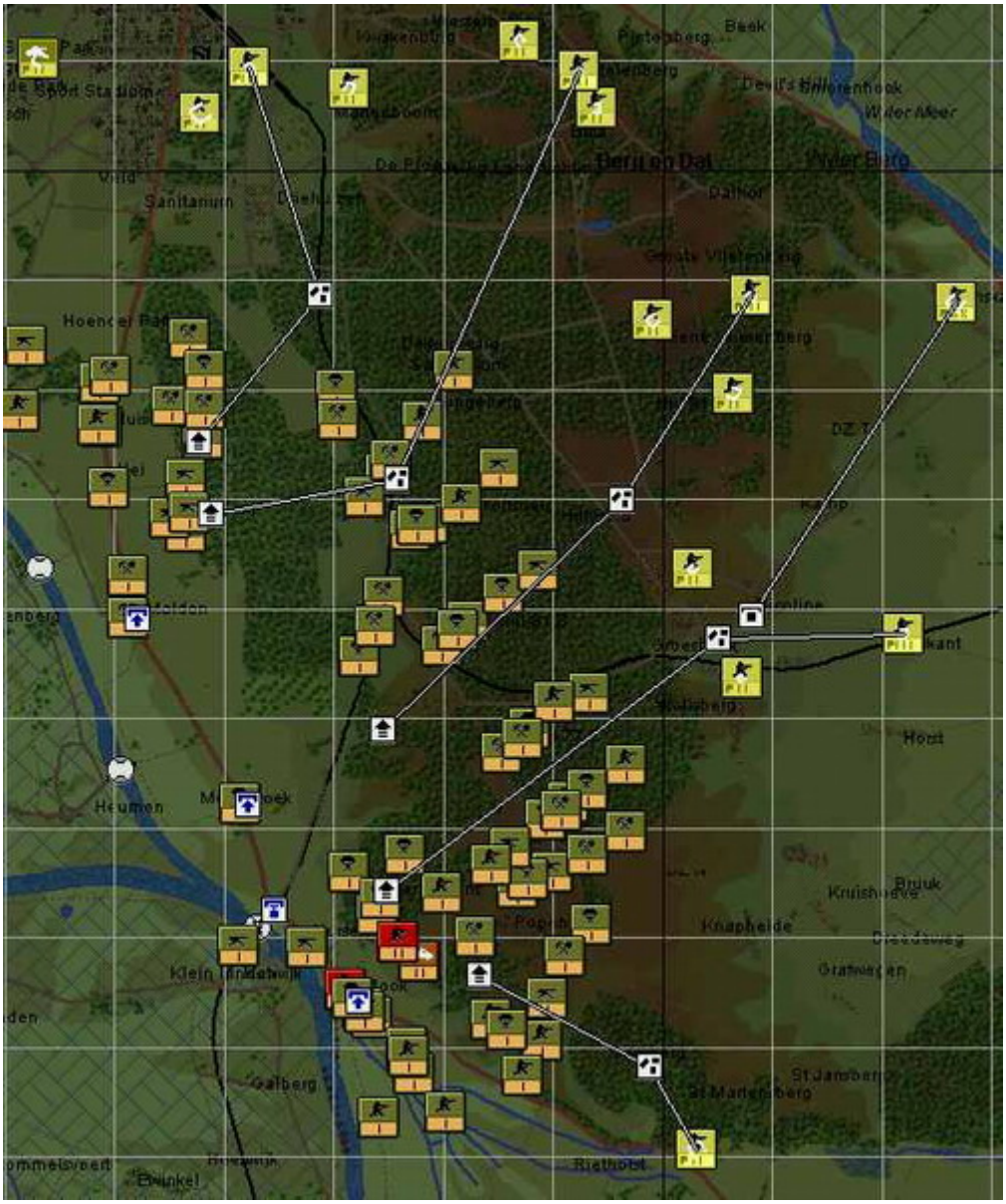
The "2" filter for HQ units is most useful for this step. This basically puts all your command units (and the chain of command) in front of you. Of course, if you want to do more than just create separate task forces, but also rebalance forces (like segregate armor and infantry forces), then you may need work with all units displayed.

So, below you see that I have filtered just HQ units to display and have selected my armored force for the attack. I will order them to a pre-attack deployment (defend) to the North of the engagement area.



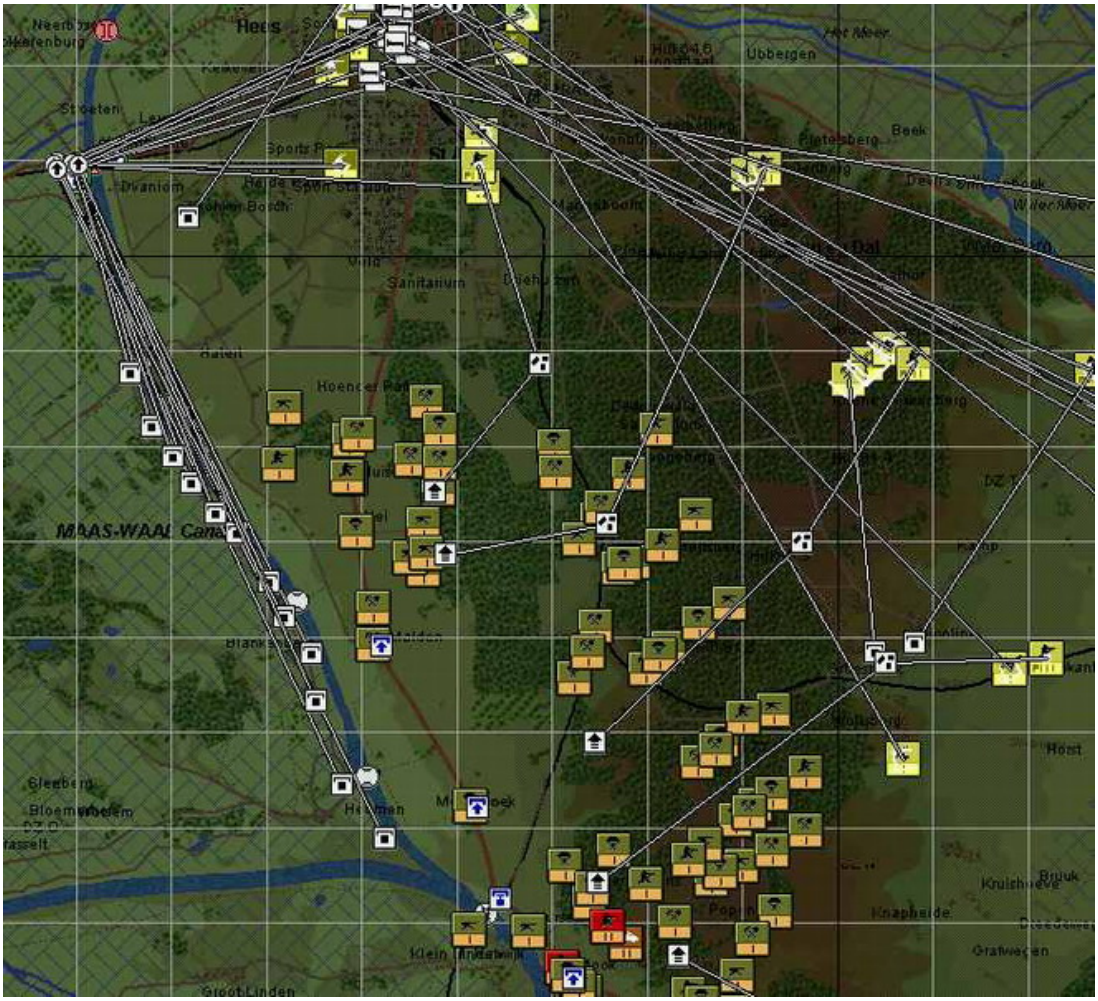
If you recall from my conceptual plan, I entended to use my infantry to drive the Allies from the woods overlooking the East Bank of the Canal and take up defensive positions along the tree line.

Below, I still have the filter set for HQ units. I have also enabled the small icon option, "~", to further reduce clutter. I have issued the attack orders to the various infantry brigades to clear out the woods and I have collectively highlighted them so that you can see it.



So, we are all done. At this point, you should use the "-" filter, units without orders, to check that no one is still waiting for orders. If there is anyone still waiting for orders, well, you have messed up along the way.

Otherwise, you can use "=" filter, units with orders, to review the complete implementation of your plan. That is what you see below.



That concludes my series on using the interface to construct large complex plans. I always do this with the game paused. There may have been more material in the pre-hacked posts, but I did the best I could to recall the material from the screenshots that I had.

02/18/04 - This post is very significant as it represents the first new tip since the great hacking fiasco of 2003! :)

Here goes ... The other day I was beta testing. Now, I had planned a nice little massed force attack. It comprised a rear mortar fire base, an intermediate line of heavy weapons for support, and an infantry attack force. I was pretty pleased with it.

However, it failed miserably! :(For hours (6-8 hours), as my troops tried to get this organized they got hit by one mortar volley or arty barrage after another! In the meantime, my commanders had not a single enemy contact to report. How incredibly frustrating!

And how did that happen? Well, it happened due to differential LOS/sighting. (By the way, I borrowed that term from the Combat Mission forums where I saw it.) This means that just because they can see you doesn't mean that you can see them. HTTR implements this ... however, I am not too sure of the exact details.

I have used a trick of taking one of my save games (I usually have many given my play style) and surrendering at that point so that I could see what things looked like.

Here you see my forces and an enemy company dug-in to the North at Nicoline. Well, I

never saw them until my botched attack was well underway, but by then my operation was already doomed to fail. However, they clearly knew everything I was doing as their brutal bombardments of my forces certainly indicated.

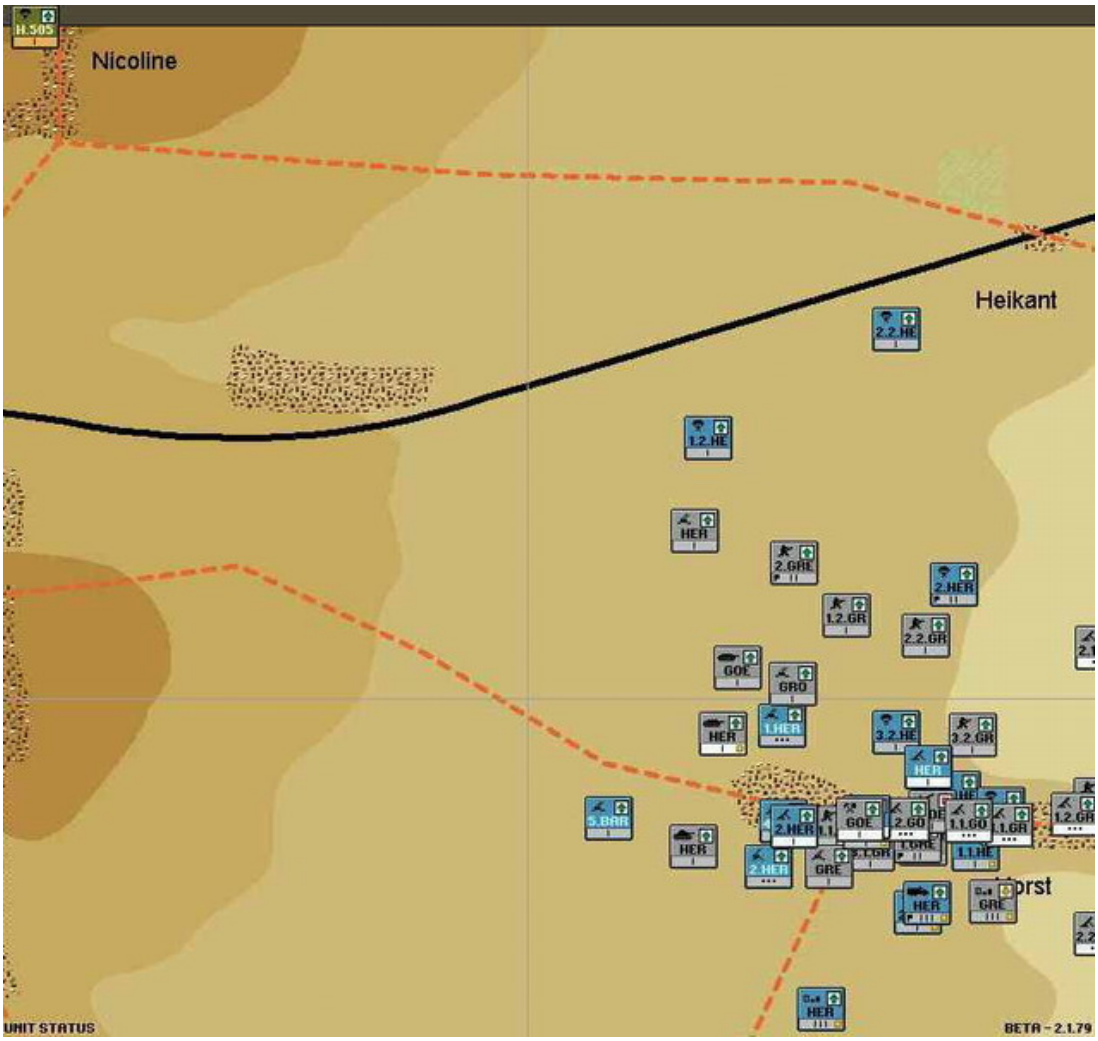
Lessons:

(1) Beware setting up in open ground.

(2) Beware setting up at low elevations.

(3) Beware differential LOS.

{I have changed my map textures to use the RDOA Classis Look for this screenshot.}



Tzar007 asked elsewhere:

quote:

Here is a situation that makes me mad:

I need to hold on to an objective, so I garrison it with appropriate forces. Then the damned AI blast them continuously with some damn heavy arty hidden somewhere in the bushes God knows where. It's an easy target for him since they are immobile at the objective. This makes me crazy.

I sent 1 or 2 units in recon in the area to try to spot the bastards but to no avail (my recon units

get repulsed easily as soon as they meet some opposition).

What do you do guys in such a situation? I am now thinking about gathering a task force to go around and clean up forcefully the whole area, but this is a long process and my forces are stretched thin for now anyway (I am playing the Eindhoven Campaign as Allies, and I need to hold on all the objectives placed along the highway, so I don't have much forces to spare beating the bushes around the highway).

My thoughts:

There are two components to being hit by arty:

(1) The battery.

(2) Those who report your position to the battery.

Forget about finding and silencing the battery. That is only achievable in a meeting engagement against the AI or if the AI foolishly parades its guns out in the open; which it will do on occassion. In a meeting engagement, you have a pretty good idea from where the AI will start and if its guns are in range, they may very well stay put. (But probably still not worth the effort to locate them.)

You have a better chance of dealing with item #2; those who report your position. A layered defense will tend to keep the AI away from your main defensive formation and its guns will hammer at what little they can see as their probes contact your screen. In the mean time, the main defensive formation will be in ear shot of the barrage and just keep digging in deeper. The more dug-in they get, the better they will deal with attacks and arty.

Additionally, you want to try to avoid setting up camp in areas with large fields of LOS. Although good for stopping attacks on your position, it's bad for keeping a low profile of those who will call in a barrage.

You might also try establishing defensive positions at night when LOS is limited, arty stocks are possibly low, and you have some time to dig-in.

Another general strategy towards the scenarios which does have some relationship with arty vulnerability is this (I am assuming that a large portion of your points are of the completion variety):

(1) Give priority to those objectives which are wooded or BUA. These areas will be the hardest to take if the enemy gets time to dig-in. So, make sure that you are the one who gets time to dig-in.

(2) Remove priority from those objectives which are in open terrain. These objectives will be hard to defend and most likely cause you to suffer significant attrition by virtue of your exposure.

(3) Towards the end of the scenario seize the objectives in open terrain. During the scenario two things will have happened. First, you should have attrited the enemy who tried to take the more easily defended than attacked objectives away from you. Second, the number of defenders at the easy to attack objectives and previously unthreatened should be relatively light. Defenders tend to go where they are needed and leave behind that which is secure.

From Arjuna :

quote:

ORIGINAL: MarkShot
(1) Give priority to those objectives which are wooded or BUA. These areas will be the hardest

to take if the enemy gets time to dig-in. So, make sure that you are the one who gets time to dig-in.

A word of caution. Arty fire into woods is "enhanced" (115%) because of the "tree burst" effect - ie the rounds hit the branches and detonate creating an air burst which is more deadly than detonating on the ground. This can be offset by digging in, but units not dug in or better will be very vulnerable. Thus for arty protection purposes it's best to deploy your defences in urban terrain rather than woods.

However, woods offer other advantages, such as concealment and protection from direct fire and sometimes you have no better option.

- - -

I know I have addressed this in my tips, but I thought I would reraise it here as it is a clear error in the documentation.

Page 41 of states that you can have arty provide on-call support by issuing a [D]efend task and adjust ROF as per your requirements. This is incorrect ROF will always be LOW. The only way to adjust ROF for bombard capable units is manually issue [B]ombard orders.

ROF was hardcoded to low so that arty would not run out to rapidly; as I understand it.

quote:

Para rescue? (in reply to MarkShot)

I haven't been able to get better than a draw on this scenario as the Allies. How do you do better?

When I go straight to the Son Bridge it gets blown up every time. Same with the bridge to the east. I find the only way I've been able to secure the bridge intact, and secure the area, is to go waaay east, cross at the unprimed road bridge, and Assault from the East. I can secure the bridge and the obj, but I do not have the strength to take the northern obj.

Any tips?

Crimguy,

You are in luck! My stickied AAR/tutorial is precisely that battle.

The keys to taking a bridge:

(1) Don't dilly dally. The longer you take, the more enemy arrive and dig in.

(2) If possible set up road blocks and prevent enemy reinforcements from making it into the engagement area. (Of less consequence, in this particular battle.)

(3) Hit the area with arty and prior to making contact with the defenders and continue it until all is secured. Don't worry about friendly fire, the barrage will let up automatically. Make note of defender positions (entrenched garrisons) at scenario start so that you can hit their positions. I think the intel behavior was or is going to be changed for HTTR that garrison intel reports don't time out; unlike other units.

(4) Make a crisp and decisive attack. Be bold and apply maximum pressure. This is no time for a protracted effort of falling back and rallying the troops again. You may want to employ engineers in the attack to secure the bridge or you may want them to hold back out of harms way until the area is secure and issue separate orders at the appropriate time. Your call.

(5) Avoid overly aggressive recon or troops deployments near the bridge. If the garrison feels too threatened, they will blow the bridge.

I hope that helps.

Today's Topic: Disruption and Harassment

Well, I think I would like to add a new topic to this thread as derived from a fun scenario I played the other day. It made me realize just how important disruption and harassment can be in a commander's repetoire of tools.

These two alone do not have the power to create a victory. However, they can be contributing factors. Effectively, they can alter the key coeifficients of preparedness, support, and coordination that apply to a major confrontation elsewhere on the map.

The two places I applied these was at the enemy's LZ/DZ and in the rear of the enemy's movement and FUP areas.

The DZ/LZ is a place of high enemy vulnerability. He arrives out of formation, disorganized, and totally exposed in largely open ground.

Ideally, if we could, we would love to simply create a pocket out of the area and anihilate him with direct and indirect fires. However, that generally won't be possible as the audacity of the enemy's plan has caught us with our pants down and we are scrambling to cobble together a viable defense with every rag tag unit at our disposal.

So, if we cannot eliminate the enemy as he touches down should we simply accept his landing as a "faite accompli" and move directly towards organizing the defense of his assumed objectives? Not necessarily.

We may lack the strength to mortally wound him, but we certainly can still hope to disrupt him with a small force and some indirect fire. As the off balance defender, we can pursue a strategy of many small blows as opposed to a single decisive blow.

Here is one such example. Over the last 43 minutes, I have been bombarded with reports of an Allied landing in vincinity of Johanna Hoeve. I have but a few hundred men in the vicinity of what looks like to be a few thousands Allied soldiers. They don't train you for stuff like this!

Here take a look.

I'll be back with more later today after lunch and some meetings.

So, what to do?

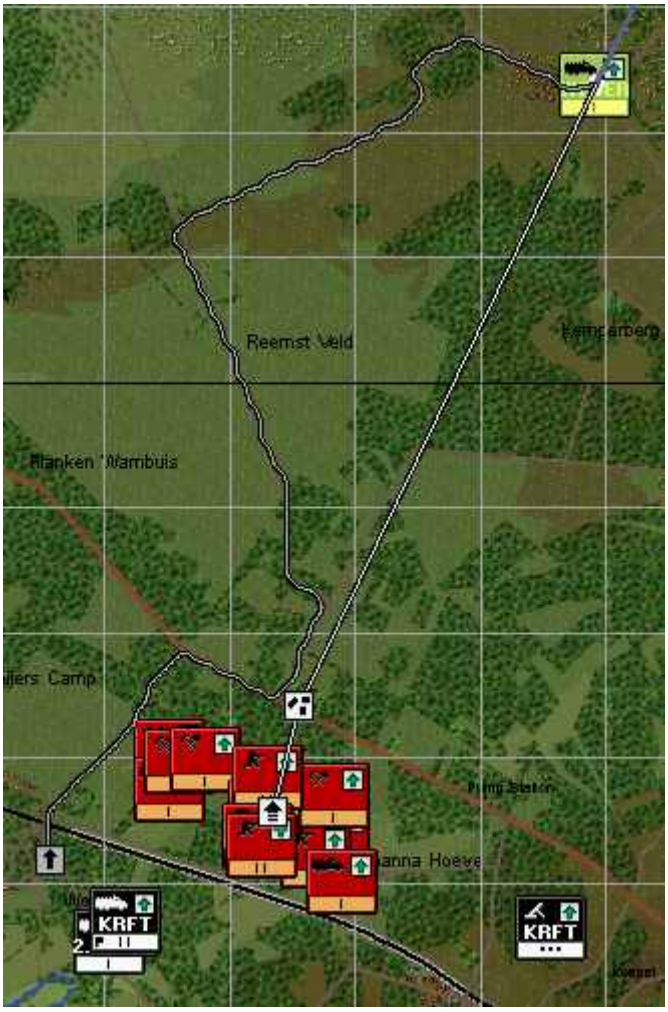
I order KG Weber, about 90 Luftwaffe personel with rifles, to jump in their trucks and race down Johanna Hoeve and boldly attack right into center of the Allied landing. They will fulfill their orders nobly and suffer high casualties as the result. Over the next thirty something hours while making repeated attacks, they will suffer 65% casualties.

However, their contribution will not have been in vain and many German lives will be saved. By striking hard into the LZ/DZ, they will disrupt the Allied effort to rally and begin the march to their objectives. By virtue of their early on the scene presence, they will allow mortars and later artillery to lay down fire on Allied units when they are exposed and thus most vulnerable.

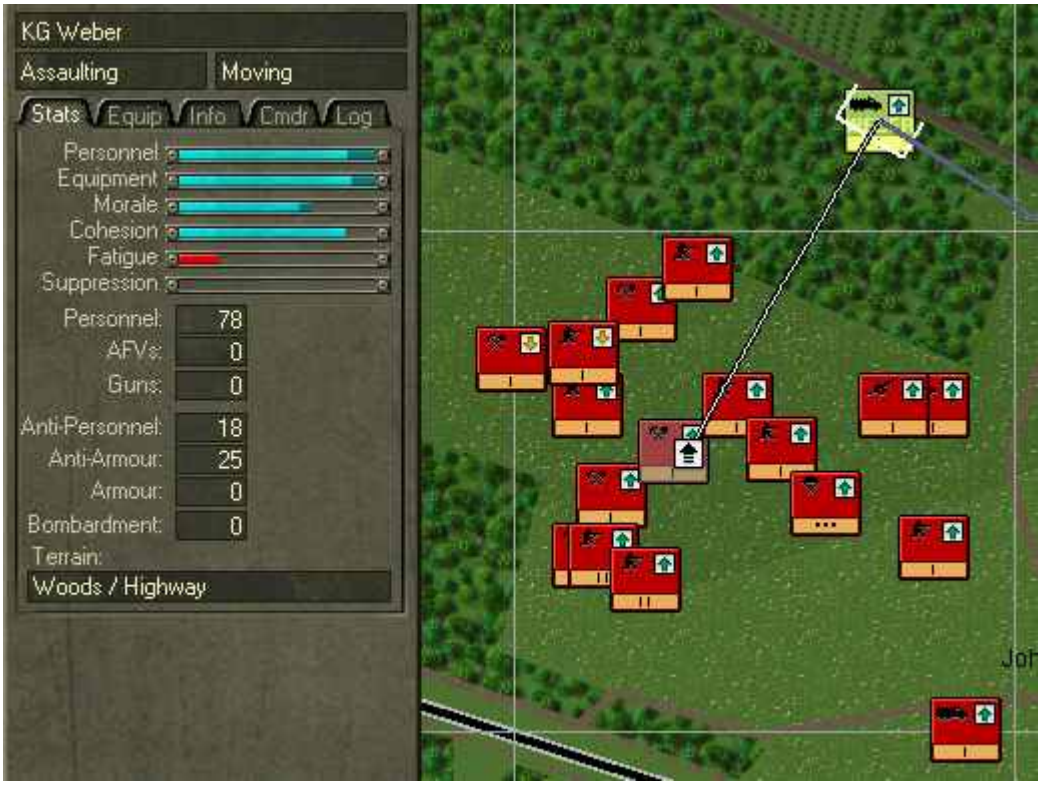
In particular, the delay they cause by disrupting Allied movement out of Johanna Hoeve, will permit road blocks to be quickly set up to the East on the major highways and routes leading towards the critical bridges. The blocking companies will have time to dig-in and properly meet the Allies. Conversely, the success of the road blocks will allow other units in and around the bridges to prepare their defenses.

KG Weber will not have stopped the Allies from ultimately reaching the areas around the bridges, but KG Weber will have changed the odds to be faced in these fights yet to come.

(more to follow later)



Here we see that KG Weber has retreated and is preparing to attack out from the tree line again. KG Weber lost 12 men in the last drive, but you can see that they also shook up a few Allied units (that and the indirect fire they called in).



At the same time as the screen shot above, I have a platoon of four tanks (PzKwIII J) that are entering the area from the East about 16Km away.

I see another opportunity to disrupt the Allies and quickly issue orders for them to make all due speed along the roads I still control and hit the Allied force in the rear.

They will cause more havoc among the Allies. Thus, further slowing down their advance towards the bridges and reducing their capability to quickly overwhelm the waiting road blocks to the East. The price will be the loss of two tanks. Once again, in the total scheme of things well worth it. As the sun sinks below the horizon, I will withdraw them and save my remaining tank section for creating more mischief the following day.

{It's a little hard to see in the screen capture, but there is a track through the woods up by the FUP big enough to accomodate a platoon of tanks.}

The next morning, my screen in the North West of Arnhem reports Allied units either forming for an attack or attempting to out flank the defenses there.

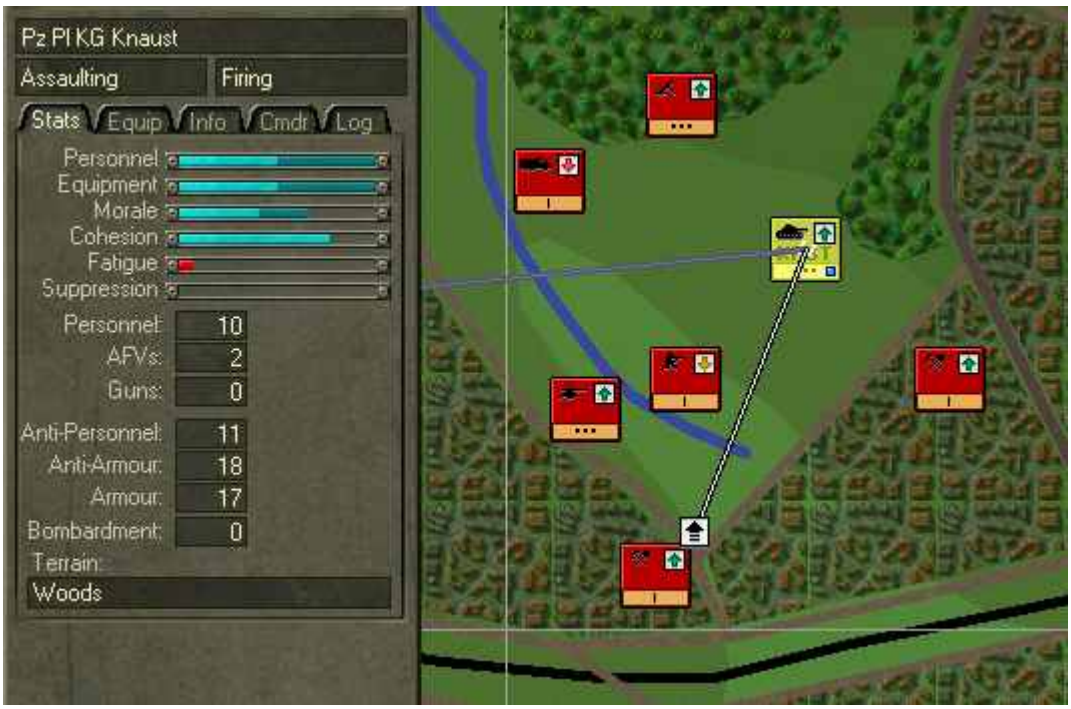
My tankers got a few hours rest had a few slices of that notorious German army hard bread and black coffee. Not much of a comfort for men who will likely not see another sunrise.

Orders are dispatched and they are to once again to race on secure roads to skirt the general engagement area. Then, they will make a hasty attack bursting out of the trees from behind the Allied force and hit them hard in the rear.

We see their orders here. Once again, there are no false hopes that two tanks will turn back the Allied tide. Just another small action of harassment and disruption; death by a thousand cuts.

Here we see just a brief glimpse of the heroic action by this tank section.

The dispatches from the battle are somewhat confused, but it appears that they managed to catch a couple of mortar platoons and some infantry companies totally by surprise.



As a final thought, hitting the enemy in the rear can do more than just surprise him. You are more likely to catch arty, mortar, and HQ units when you do this. Clearly, separating attackers from their fire support (by breaking them or forcing them to bug out) can be very significant. Also, forcing HQ units in direct command of a force to retreat or rout can be paralyzing.

An HQ unit retreating or routing will not perform replans or process new orders. What does this mean? This means that line units which have run into unexpected opposition or are part of an attack that is faltering will not be given updated orders to bypass or fallback and regroup. They are on their own and left to suffer whatever fate the enemy has in store for them. Also, the HQ will not process any new orders at this time. Thus, it effectively lengthens whatever order delays will be experienced by the force which needs to execute new orders. Not a complete decapitation strike, but close enough for our purposes.

Well, that concludes this installment of tips. Remember that a battle can be won with a decisive engagement, but it can also be won through a series of smaller measures each contributing to the overall outcome.

Until next time, may your arty be plentiful and may your tanks not get bogged in the polder! :)

From Golf33 :

The question:
quote:

ORIGINAL: Paul Roberts

This raises a further question: what is the cost of attacking when you could just move? Why should we ever use move instead of attack?

I'm assuming that move orders take less time to plan and fulfill, but I'd like to make sure. Does an attack order cause more fatigue even when no enemy is encountered?

The answers:
quote:

ORIGINAL: MarkShot

You have already answered your own question. Move is faster (no FUPing) and a lot less stressful.
quote:

ORIGINAL: Golf33

In a Move, all units will travel in formation. They will also prioritise fire over movement. In an Attack, some units will remain behind in the reserve location. Units in the actual assault will prioritise movement over fire.

In a Move, your Speed setting will affect how fast all units travel along the entire route. In an Assault, your speed setting will only affect the move to the FUP; the assault will always be undertaken at Fastest speed.

In a Move, your Aggro setting will affect whether your units attempt to bypass (low Aggro) or deploy and engage the enemy (high Aggro). In an Attack, your Aggro setting will only influence what proportion of the force gets held in reserve (I think, have to double-check this one).

In a Move, your units will follow the path you specify, with the Route type you specify, along the whole route. In an Attack, your units will follow the path and Route type you specify to the FUP, but will always follow a Shortest path from there to the objective.

There are some considerations to start you off!
quote:

ORIGINAL: MarkShot

Steve,

In your very detailed analysis, you neglected to mention that forces ordered to [A]ttack are not required to pay parkway tolls at the toll plazas unlike forces which are simply ordered to [M]ove. :)
quote:

ORIGINAL: madmickey

One thing that you can do with a move is change the formation type and aggression level without order delay. I also assume that transition time for deploying armor units is faster than for infantry therefore quick moves to control open territory is much better with tanks. Still if I have a 30 combat power formation Is it a waste to attack a 1 combat power unit especially if I am worrying about the enemy moving reinforcement in the time it take me to launch the attack.

Regards
33

The question:
quote:

ORIGINAL: Mr.Frag

even a move command is subject to a reorg phase unless you specifically order a formation type of In-Situ (ie: go as you are).

The answers:
quote:

ORIGINAL: Golf33
Moves aren't subject to a reorg phase as such, but on beginning a Move, they will shake out into whatever formation they have been ordered to adopt which will take a few minutes. It's still not generally the lengthy and vulnerable reorg that happens before an Attack though.

If you order Move In-Situ your troops will stay where they are. I occasionally use this to halt a

move already in progress, by setting the formation to In-Situ; doing this does seem to incur orders delay however, as does restarting the move by selecting a different formation. Changes that don't require the whole formation to stop do seem to happen without delay.
quote:

ORIGINAL: Arjuna

If you set the formation type to in-situ for a Move, the force/unit will just stay where it is. It won't more at all. So don't use it for a Move task. (Perhaps we should make it inactive for a Move task. I'll add that to the wish list).

Further, a Move is one simple task conducted from the units current locations to the objective. An attack is a complex network of tasks one of which will be an advance to an FUP where units reorg and shake out into assault formation. This reorg does not take place in a straigt Move task. The only reorg task which may be imposed on any other task occurs involuntarily when a unit/force's cohesion is so bad that it must stop temporarily and organise itself.

Regards
33

The question:
quote:

ORIGINAL: Mr.Frag

Ok, now I am royally confused ... why would an order to move NOT be subject to the very same sets of delays that an attack would be except for the actual timing of the kickoff?

Are you saying that I can effectively bypass Painfully realistic orders by running around with line formations each pointed at their own personal spot coordinated by my mouse instead of the command HQ? That doesn't sound right.

The answer:
quote:

ORIGINAL: Golf33

This is a confusion of terminology. In HTTR, the term "Reorg" refers to a specific type of activity - the reorganisation - which occurs in four specific circumstances only. Units conducting a Reorg are shown with the reorg symbol in the unit task icon ("F4" key). Units will conduct a Reorg only under the following circumstances:

1. After a reinforcement arrives by parachute/glider/aircraft.
2. When a unit's cohesion becomes too low.
3. When ordered to reorg by the player using the Reorg command (hot key "R").
4. When the unit has an Attack task and has reached the FUP, prior to beginning the assault.
<edit - thanks to MarkShot for the reminder:
5. When the unit has an Attack task and has completed the assault and is securing the objective.>

This is separate from Orders Delay, shown as a pink background to the task icon. All fresh orders from the player incur orders delay. Under some circumstances, changing the parameters (Speed, ROF, Aggro, Formation etc) of an existing order **may not** incur orders delay. Some situations which **generally don't** incur orders delay are listed below. The list isn't complete, so there is still room for you to experiment and discover some of this for yourself, but in general anything not specifically mentioned below will probably incur orders delay.

<u>Move task</u>
Changing Speed, Route, Aggro, ROF, and Losses.
Changing Frontage, Depth, and Facing.
Changing Formation, **except** for In-Situ, which does incur orders delay. If you set a Move-ing force to In-Situ, it will incur orders delay, and any further changes you make will not take effect until after it has processed the In-Situ formation order. Similarly, once the force has processed the In-Situ order and stopped moving, if you change the formation type, it will again incur orders delay and once it has processed the change it will start moving again.

Defend task
As for Move tasks.

Attack task
Changing Speed, Route, ROF, and Losses.
Changing Frontage, Depth, or Facing.
Changing Formation (except for In-Situ) during the move to FUP, or **sometimes but not always** during the assault.

Changing the objective of any task (i.e. the location of the final waypoint, the one that shows the task type), or the FUP of an Attack task (which shows the Reorg task), will always incur orders delay. Like setting In-Situ, no other changes to the order will be processed until after the new location has been processed. However, intermediate waypoints (the ones shown by a small circle with an upward-pointing arrow in it) can be moved without incurring orders delay - so if you are looking to bypass any resistance on a Move, or during the move to FUP phase of an Attack, it's a good idea to plot the route using waypoints every 1000-2000m and send a scout unit ahead. When the scout discovers enemy defences, you can move the waypoints to bypass the enemy.

Regards
33

quote:

Hi all,
Started the game a couple of weeks ago. Nice game. What I'm getting confused about is when I set waypoints. From A to B I would like to Probe between the points At B reorg and Assault to C. Only the last action is implemented. Did I miss the explanation in the manual? Is the move from A to B Probe by default?

Lifer

My response:

quote:

Lifer,

The game does not implement actions specific to each waypoint. I think Dave had put this on the wishlist for me.

It sounds to me like you are trying to combine the actions of recon and attack together. What I do:

(1) Use a single unit recon element to evaluate whether the route is open and that the FUP is safe for use. The unit terminates its travel at the FUP and keeps an eye on it. I use the [D]efend command for this.

(2) Follow the recon up with an attack order to a force to take the same route and FUP where the recon unit ended. Often you can issue these orders concurrently, since the recon will happen much faster. Later, if there are problems you can change the force's orders. Also, at the start of the game or with reinforcements, you generally have 58 minutes to conduct fast recon and issue orders on the the 59th. minute with no delays. (assuming that you are playing with order delays)

What follows is an example of this technique in action.

In this particular situation, the Germans know that the Guards Armor Division are concentrated at Arnhem and plan to seize the Deelen Airfield.

I am assuming that their initial plan will be to block my movement North out of Arnhem. So, I will attempt to flank them and initial attack from the North.

Now, you are only seeing part of my plan as I have deleted any orders other than what I want to illustrate. Also, I am only show units with orders.

Below, you see {left to right} an armored car squadron unit (being used for recon), a light tank unit (being used for recon), and the Irish Guards force (attack force).

The recon units have received the mission to scout the route ahead of the attack force and to verify that the FUP is secure. If they report provide a good report back, then the attack will proceed; if not, I must revise my plans.

All three were given their orders at the scenario start during the period which orders delays are waived. They all started from Arnhem.

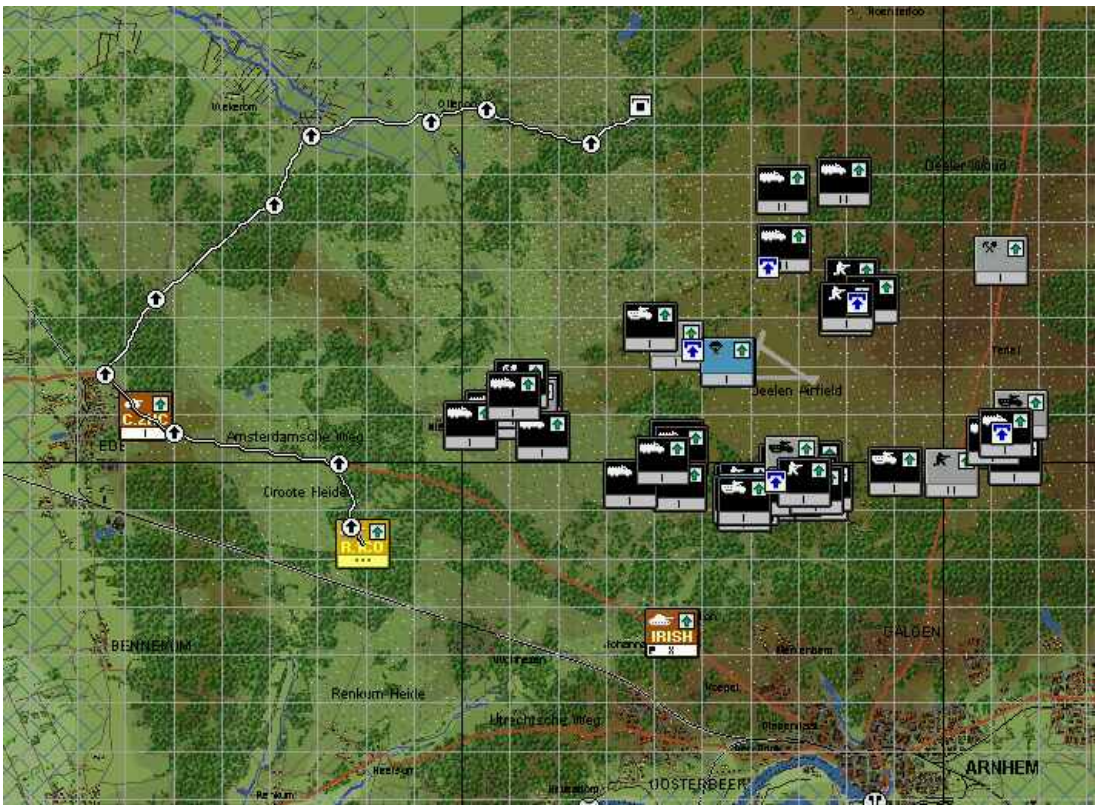
I am doing recon with two units, since I wanted to explore two slightly different paths to the FUP. The first path was quicker, but risked detection by the Germans. The second path was slower, but pretty much was out of LOS from the Germans. Thus, you can see that the two recon units have traveled different distances from Arnhem (bottom right).

It is also important to note that the attack force is traveling much slower than either of them as it moves by bounding overwatch.

In the next series of posts, I'll show you the individual orders.

Recon mission #1 ...

Recon mission #2 ...



The attack mission ...

Force order delay for the Irish Guards HQ (the attack force) stands roughly at two hours. (Also, note that this HQ is one of the better ones; shorter delays than what otherwise might be.)

Orders delay for one of the recon units stands at roughly less than an hour.

So, here are the points which I was trying to make through pictures:

(1) Use recon to lead an attack.

(2) You can issue orders concurrently. With no delays, the recon unit will very rapidly out pace the attack force due to its greater speed. For a short haul with order delays temporarily waived, you can have the attack force instantly respond to new orders.

(3) You can issue orders concurrently. With order delays in affect besides the relative movement speeds, the difference in relative delays will have the recon unit move out in advance of the attack force. Of course, you can always lag your attack orders if you want.

(4) Even when order delays are no longer waived, the distance that develops between the recon unit and the attack force should be sufficient that you can issue new orders to the attack force if the recon unit runs into trouble. The intervening distance and slower rate of the attack force's travel should give them adequate time to respond before they too find themselves in trouble.

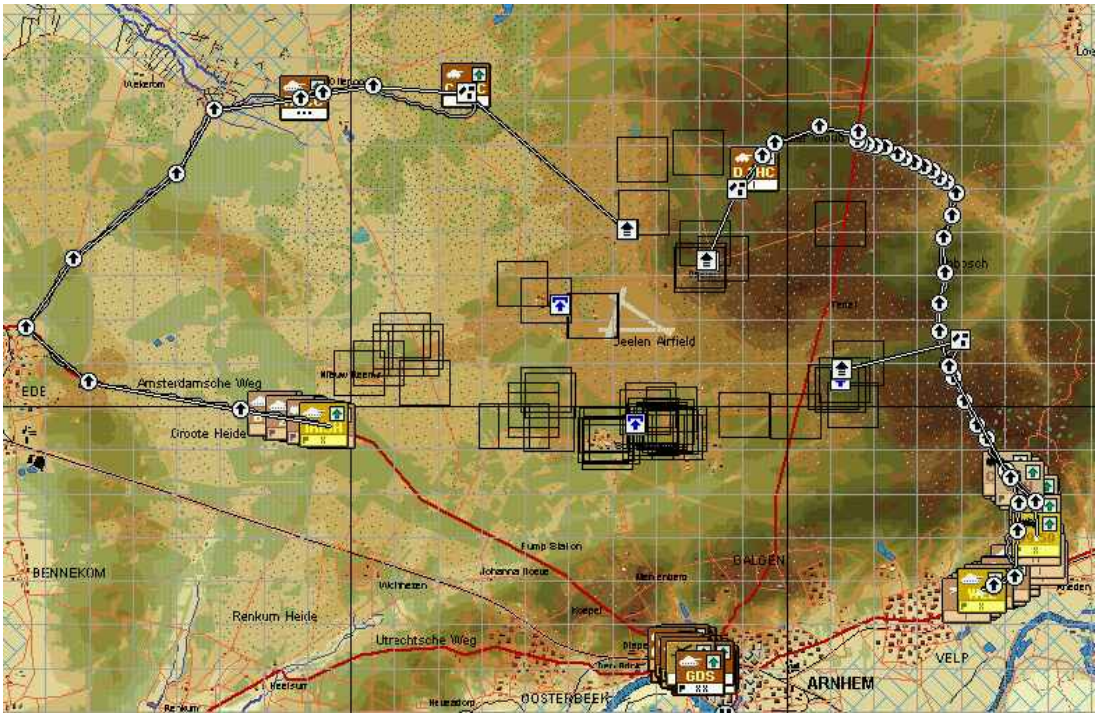
Okay, I have to get back to my game and see how this all turns out. :)

Sorry, I just had to add one more screenshot.

Look at this. Recon for my three attacks on the perimeter of the airfield has revealed the roads are free of German road blocks and the FUPs are clear.

Yes, I think it is going to be a simply fine day at the Deelen Airfield today; well, at least, for the British! :)

{By the way, I haven't changed my textures back to take this screenshot for you. These are my preferred textures - the RDOA look. I like the high contrast of it.}



quote:

Question by CriticalMass

I notice the guide mentions a technique where one can use the "In-Situ" defence as another type of "Delay", great, but, what implications does this have on a static defence where one is "forced" to issue "In-Situ" order to stop the force HQ re-positioning units.

First, just to bring everyone up to speed ... you can use "in-situ" formation in lieu of some other formation for [D]efend as a form of short range delaying action. So, normally a unit will retreat/route and then attempt to resume its former position. With "in-situ" it will fallback and then reestablish itself whereever it currently is which should be just somewhat out of range of the enemy, but in his intended path.

I would think that "in-situ" defense for the purpose of delaying the enemy (as opposed to just overriding an AI HQ) is most useful when that static defense is in relatively homogenous closed terrain and being done more as a screening action. Why?

(1) If the environment only provides a few key terrain features, then you probably want to attempt to reoccupy your former positions if the advancing enemy gets thrown back. Otherwise, your unit could end up being left highly exposed. Also, remember that units that reoccupy previously improved (dug-in or entrenched) positions, then go through the position improving process faster as compared to a map location which was never improved. {Note: the game tracks this on the map, but you cannot see it. By the way, I have requested for such position improvements to be made visible to the player.}

(2) If it's homogenous close terrain, then whereever the unit stops to recover should be relatively defensible. Although their former positions might have previously been improved, the unit will be most vulnerable while it is on the move back to its former position. So, being caught by the enemy deployed in its new position is probably preferable to being caught on the move on the way back its former position.

(3) In homogenous close terrain, the unit which falls back has a better chance of being out of LOS of the enemy for some time (so that it can get dug-in) and the enemy advance may be slower than an advance over open ground.

(4) This haphazard giving up ground is more appropriate for a screening force than your main line of resistance. Since this giving up ground is not something which you can easily control, it is likely that holes will be left in your line. For your main line of resistance, holes are not a good thing, since it is your last and best hope to turn back the enemy's assault. However for a screening force, its mission is somewhat different. It is mainly attended to slow the enemy and to maintain contact with the enemy in order to provide you with intel, time to deal with the developing situation, and an opportunity to apply arty and mortar barrages to weaken and possibly break the enemy advance before it hits your main line of resistance.

I hope that helps.

Some more comments ...

I would choose "in-situ" to override the AI if and only if, the my units are dug-in and I like the positions, footprint, and current facing. Otherwise, I would let the AI HQ reorganize its defense as it sees fit ... of course, with some hints from me.

Well, it's been quite a while since I have posted on either of the tips threads ...

The page views of these two threads have been steadily climbing. If you add up the current pages views with what they were prior to the hacking of the Matrix Site, then in total it is in the area of 13,000 - 15,000 page views. So, some questions ...

(1) Who is reading this stuff?

(2) Did you read this material prior to purchasing HTTR? If so, did it help with your decision?

(3) Did you read this material after purchasing HTTR? If so, did it help you get more out of the game? What concepts or topics were most helpful?

(4) If I produce some form of materials for COTA, any comments on what would be the greatest value to you?

(5) None of the above {a beta-tester with a stickied thread and keyboard is dangerous and future testers should be resticted to only using the mouse}

Thanks.

From Murky71 :

1. well... me (a while back though)
   2. No I had fiddled around with RDOA (for 10 euros in the bargain bin) and thought I'd get HTTR (as it includes the rest of the market garden campaign (NIJMEGEN!))
   3. yes, it most certainly did. My first games were spent wondering what to do all the time. After reading your work I wondered half the time.
   4. I think you have done and are doing a great job. Keeping it up would make me happy enough.
   5. Hmmm... now that I think about it. The mouse may even be too much...

   I should thank you!

From Daft :

MarkShot,

I'm very impressed with all your posts and they have indeed enrichened my experiences with the game. After reading the official strategy guide as well as this thread several

times, I'm now taking my time finding the best attack routes and most suitable defensive positions everytime I play. Before, I took a more casual approach, charging in without doing much recon or giving second thoughts to where to place my arty, or even if I should detach them at all. A highly commendable effort on your part. Thanks for making me get the most out of HttR!

Daft,

My pleasure.

I started doing guides/instruction when playing flight sims. I quickly found that they helped me very much too. The process of analyzing what works and what fails and why ... allows the instructor to further refine things as he seeks even better results. Additionally, in trying to formalize concepts so that they can be conveyed to others, one develops clear frameworks by which to examine situations and measure results.

In the end, it is the instructor who becomes the student and learns the most. There you have it; a very Taoist perspective on wargaming strategy. :)

From Bonxa :

I've read all of it (and some of your Shoot to kill guide too). It's great stuff to learn the game mechanics even though I like to experiment with the tactics myself.

So to answer your questions:

1 - Me!

2 - Some of it. It was so quick and easy to buy the downloadable game that I had it in my hands before reading through all of this.

3 - Yes, I read the rest of it before getting fully into the game. There is a lot of detail which is mostly good. It's important to keep the structure that you have done so it's comparatively easy to find a specific topic. The most important stuff in this kind of guide are the small tips that you don't find in the manual such as the ~ key and which orders can be modified without order delay.

4 - Changes and improvements from HTTR. Also possibly changes due to the different era and terrain of the theater. Exemplifying AARs are also welcome.

5 - Maybe edit in all the regular stuff in the beginning of the thread and then let the questions flow in the latter part?

From Marc420 :

Well, this is my second time through....

I bought HTTR awhile back. Played it for awhile, and then took it off my hard drive. IIRC, HTTR only runs if installed on my laptop. So it has to fight for limited space on that small hard drive (if I can, I install most software on the 200+GB drives I have on my desktop and run the software over the network).

I bought the game based on what I'd heard. I read this the first time trying to figure out how to play it, and now months later I'm doing it the same again.

COTA --- probably not. Unless the price is much lower than I expect from Matrix, I doubt I'll buy it. The Matrix model of constantly reselling the same game system under new titles, and then charging the maximum possible price for each means I simply can't buy every title that comes out.

Thanks for writing this. I doubt I could have played the game at all without this sort of info.

Marc420,

You are welcome.

If it is any consellation, I can tell you no one has been getting rich off of RDOA/HTTR/COTA. It seems that the unit sales for this type of game just aren't enough to support a regular software development team a la standard computer industry practices. It seems that the only type of people who manage to work on games like these are crazed fanatics who love living the dream more than money. Sometimes I don't know how Dave O'Connor (one of the principles) manages to keep at this. He is no youngster ... has a family and responsibilities.

So, I don't think pricing by Panther and Matrix are predatory. Rather it reflects how narrow a niche market this is. Sad but true ... at least, there are a few dedicated individuals who cling to their dream regardless of the challenges ... and there is the Internet so that they can find that small niche market regardless of where they may reside.

Dave, Paul, Steve, and Adam ... take a bow! :)

From Arjuna :

marc420,

Please rest assured that COTA will not be a glorified scenario pack. We've spend two years now adding a plethora of new features.

Our policy is to continue to push the envelope here. Each new release will come with at least one or more new features. COTA comes with dozens of new features.

From Analog Kid :

I have a question about line of sight, at the edges of terrain (woods, town, industrial, etc) facing open area. I want my Companies to dig in and 'overwatch' the open area. Where do I place the icon so that the unit is in cover and concealment while maintaining maximum overwatch of open areas?

Example:

MarkShot what a pleasure to see you involved in this game I just recently bought. Your STK/EAW: Shoot to Kill / European Air War, has helped me understand the exact point in a Dogfight that I F***ed up :). Energy Mangement, the phyics of air combat explained in your the easy to understand/accessiable manual (even if i don't understand the math) has made me a better computer combat pilot, and even helped me with car racing games. I suck without alt nomatter how many times I read it, lol. Like the guy from sweden , if you ever in Denver ,Colorado I'll buy you a beer or three.

In the thread "Highway to the Reich >> Hello!...a few questions" you said

"....Perhaps, in real life detailed time tables and schedules are for railroads and not combat."

I beg to differ. Without time there is no cordination, there is no plan. Having served in the US Army as a Cavalry Scout (Armored Recon) I can tell you with experence that time is one very important componant of any battle plan. METT-T (Mission, Enemy, Terrain(weather), Troops and Time avaliable) is applied to any order recieved. Without time, mission planning cannot be completed. What I would like to see is an option of a time delay at the FUP before the attack and an EST. time of completion for orders issued. That in IMHO would make it easier to plan mulitiple unit (esp BN/BGE level attacks) attacks. Chris Craford's Battle of the Bulge, all tho simple (and very old from the days of the IBM 286, 2MB of RAM WOOHOO), was great in being able to plan attacks with mulitable units/formations aproaching from difference directions using time.

Yes combat timetables are not as rigid as the railroad's, and we all know the no plan surives contact with the enemy, but time is the one thing that cannot be resupplied. Time tables and schedules are very important.

For Reference.
An explaination of METT-T from a book that I wasnt supposed to take with me when I left

the Army :) ,Scout Platoon. METT-T is just 1 of the 8 steps in a plan. Which are called 'Troop-Leading Procedures'. Hope ya'll find it intresting.

Troop-Leading Procedures
1.Receive and analyze the mission
2.Issue a warning order
3.Make a tentative plan * this is METT-T *
4.Initiate movement
5.Reconnoiter
6.Complete the plan
7.Issue the order
8.Supervise and refine

METT-T

MISSION
-What tasks did the commander say must be accomplished (specified tasks)?
-What other tasks must be accomplished to conduct the mission (implied tasks)?
-What is the commander's intent?
-Based on the commander's intent, which of my tasks are absolutely essential?

ENEMY
-What type of unit are we up against?
-Where is he?
-What is he doing?
-How strong is he?
-What kind of equipment does he have?
-What are his capabilities?
-Where is he vunerable?
-Where are his kill zones/fire sacks?
-What are his intentions?
-What can he do in responce to friendly actions?

TERRAIN (WEATHER)
-Where can I effectively observe and engage the enemy?
-Where are the best covered and conceled routes?
-Where are the natural obstacles and how can they affect maneuvers?
-Where are the likely areas for enemy emplaced obstacles and how can they affect maneuvers?
-Are there bypasses or must obstacles be overcome?
-Where is the key terrain?
-How can key terrain be used in support of the mission?
-Where are the best avenues of approach for the enemy and friendly forces?
-How has the recent weather affected the area of operations?
-Will the weather become better or worse during the mission?
-How will fog, rain, dust, heat, snow, wind, or sand affect my men and equipmentduring the mission?

TROOPS
-What is the present condition of the vehicles, equipment, and men?
-What is the status on ammunition, fuel and supplies?
-What is the state of the training of the platoon?
-What is the state of morale?
-How much sleep have the men had?
-How much sleep can the men get?
-Does the platoon need any additional equipment to support or accomplish its mission?

TIME
-How much time is available to plan and conduct reconnaissance?
-How much time is available for rearming, refueling, and resupply?
-How long will it take the platoon to move to the line of departure (LD), the objective, or

the OP's?
-Do we have time to conduct rehearsals?

This analysis of METT-T is by no means an all-inclusive list, but it should help the platoon leader in his planning process. Eventually, the platoon leader should come up with one or more courses of action. He must choose the best course of action based on the advantages and disadvantages of each course.

The platoon leader must be able to refine his plan as new information becomes available. If he adjust the plans, his platoon must be informed. Once the operation has commenced, the platoon leader must be able to adapt quickly to new situations and new orders. Flexibilty is the key to effective operations

---

When time is available, there is no substitute for a good tactical plan. The odds of sucess increase conciderably when detailed planning and rehersal are used prior to an operation, Give good start instructions. Do not let troops down by failing to plan and practice an operation, even when time is short. Make the most of every available minute.

From Arjuna :

Analog Kid,

I agree that timing can be critical in military planning. One option on the wish list is to provide the means to coordinate tasks by allowing the player to set "no move before timings and HHours for attacks. We'll be considering this for future games.

Analog Kid,

Nice to hear from another prop head that goes way back. Ah, those were grand days!

In answer to your question, I usually place the task marker a little back from the boundary and assume it is working properly when the terrain is indicated to be what I want and the TLOS tool shows contact between my unit and the enemy when they are in the open. Depending on how dug in and what the enemy is doing, you may also derive a differential sighting advantage for a while too (meaning you see them, but not the other way around ... nice when you have arty to call in).

I have come across "METT-T" someplace before, but I don't recall when or where (I also play such games as CM series and SMG ...).

...

Now, to ramble:

I did get some sim racing exposure, but was never very good. (racing requires superb reflexes {shifting, braking, turning in just a few seconds} ... air combat has more strategy and maneuver selection/execution focus ... of course it is possible that my less than stellar reflexes made me into an "energy fighter" as opposed to a "stall fighter" ...). Sim racing definitely has fascinating physics which is much more exposed to the player than what is under the hood in flight sims.

My latest interest is subs. After four efforts at Sub Command (SCXIIC mod) since 2001, a light bulb finally went off and all the pieces are comming together. Having a blast.

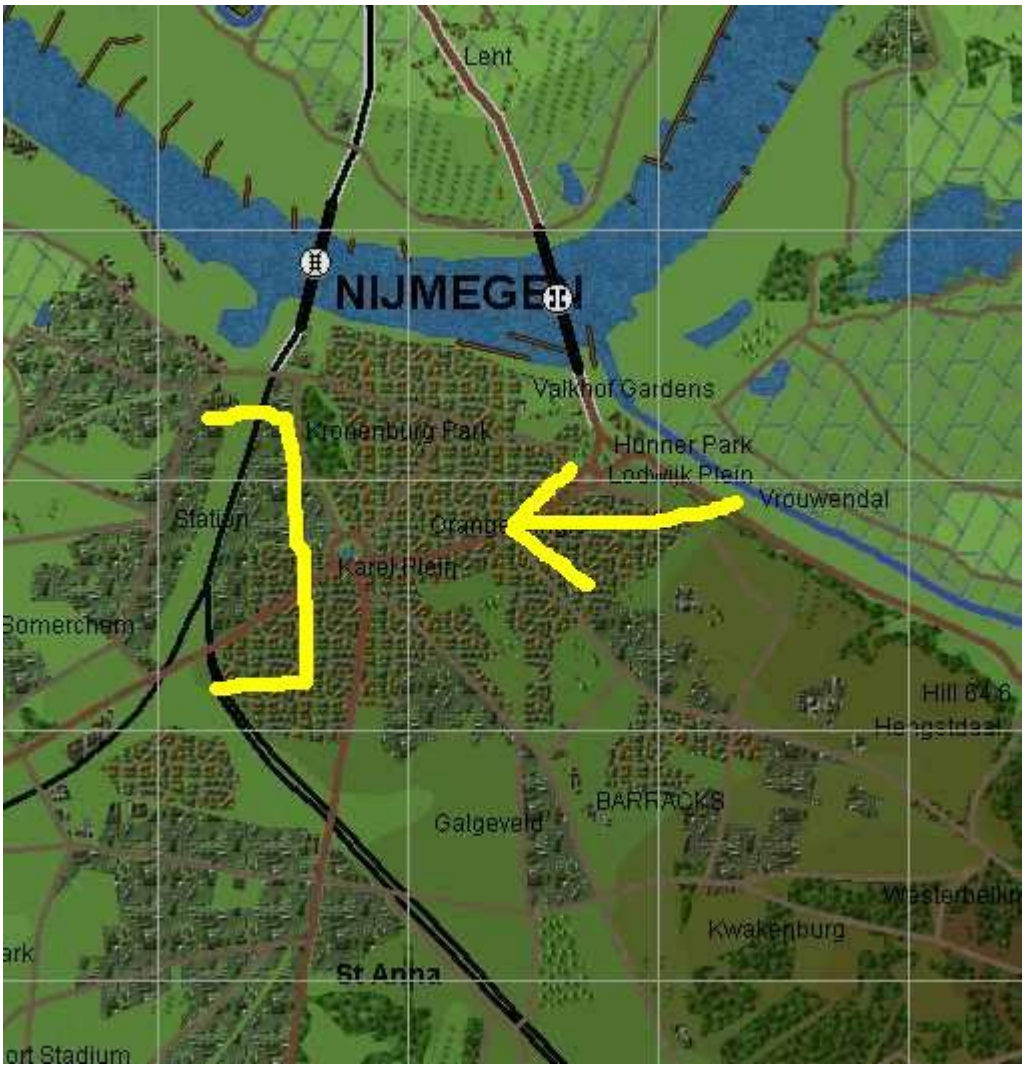
Years ago myself and the Mrs. spent a couple of weeks in Colorado. We loved Rocky Mountain National Park ... Thanks for the invite. :)

Enjoy HTTR!

One of my fellow beta testers, Bil Hardenberger (a former officer in the USA military), gave the following response. Something to the effect, that you will have to have one force fix them like an anvil and the other force drive into them like a hammer.

I assume he meant something like this. (see below)

Well, I didn't give it to much thought or attempt to do anything with it, since I still suspected that the enemy would get away from me. ☺



So, as I said initially I was playing a scenario where I had to take Nijimegen. In fact, there are quite a few of them.

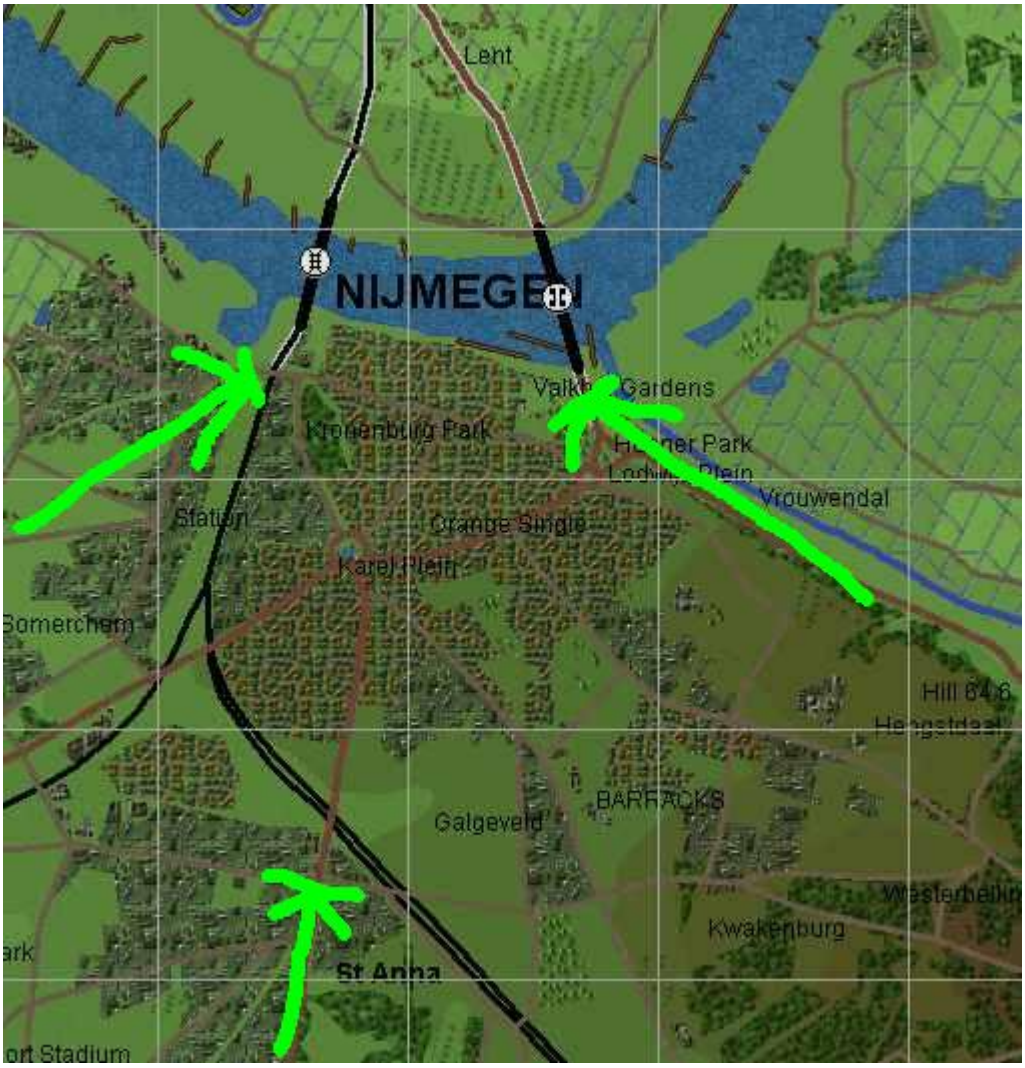
My initial thrusts towards Nijmegen looked like this. We'll use green to represent armor and yellow to represent motorized infantry. (I put a little line at the end of my arrows so you can see where my forces were supposed to hold.)

My intentions were two fold.

(1) Seize the bridge heads primarily to prevent German reinforcements from entering the battle for Nijmegen later on.

(2) Secure my staging areas for the attack on Nijmegen later on. A common strategy is

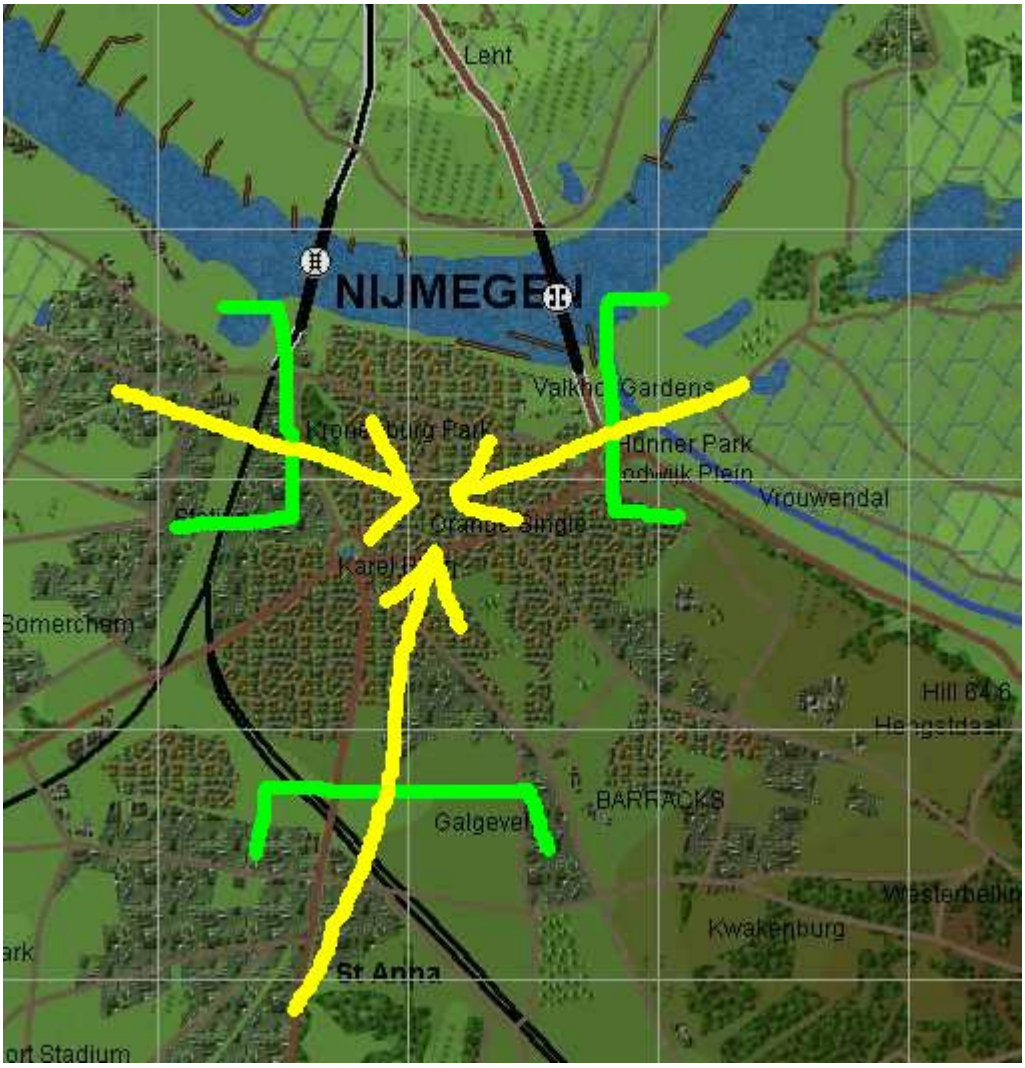
take a position and hold it. Then, have another force FUP behind it and attack through it's lines. You get the benefit of an undisturbed FUP relatively close to the enemy.



The final assault on Nijmegen looked like this.

Green for armor dug-in and defending.

Yellow for motorized infantry advancing through the city.

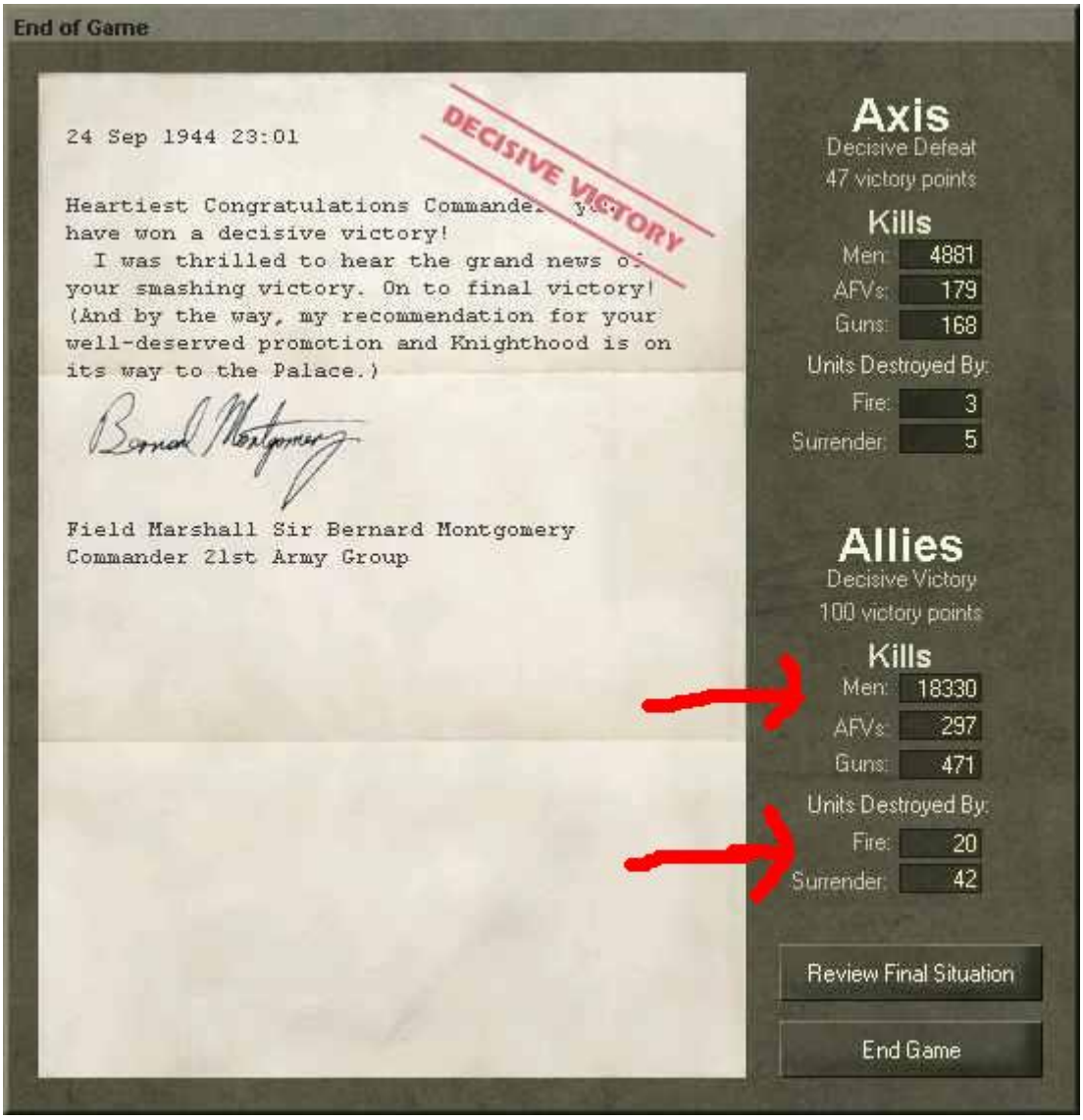


As I said, I had one of those light bulb moments when I saw the results. Here let me show you.

Look at the incredible death and destruction which took place. I've highlighted with red two locations where the enemy dead were piled so high that you couldn't even count them.

PS: The screenshot looks darker, since it was taken at night.

Also, look at the AAR report. Now, not all of these numbers happened in Nijmegen, but a large proportion did.



Okay, so what did I learn from this.

If you want to anhilate the enemy:

(1) Encircle the enemy as opposed to simply pushing into the very core of their strength. Of course, encircle on all sides.

(2) With separate forces push into the core of their stength.

Because in #1 you limit your advance, the enemy feels no pressing need to get away. Especially, if at the center of an encirclement is a high valued objective. Also, the encirclement need not be very hard, since you don't really need to press the enemy as you will take up positions somewhat beyond their defensive perimeter.

The encirclement creates a containment vessel which prevents their escape and neutralizes the problem of the attack forces not all having the same H hour and making the same rate of forward progress.

Time for lunch.

From MadMickey :

How much and what type of forces including HQ used should you use to protect the arty firebase in Arnhem? In a 9-day engagement do you think the Brits could have hidden their firebase? I tend to think just ordinary sound detection would have lead the Germans to Brits arty base. An art regiment in the wood can be heard not seen. Historically what did the Brits actually plan to do about arty firebase?

- - - -

Regarding the level of protection ... I am not sure without looking at the particular situation in detail. It's best despite having a security force to have the fire base some place which is less likely to be at an objective, on the way to an objective, or on or slightly off a major travel route. This is based on game play experience and nothing else.

Regarding what the Allies really did and realism issues ... I cannot help you there as I neither have military training nor qualify as an amateur historian. However, I can tell you that Panther and the beta testers do spend a lot of time discussing realism, abstraction, simulation, and game play issues. Arty has often been a topic of discussion throughout the evolution of the series. Also, among Panther and the beta team there are a few former gunners, military veterans, and no lack of amateur historians. Perhaps, one of them can shed some light on your questions.

Sorry I couldn't be of more help.