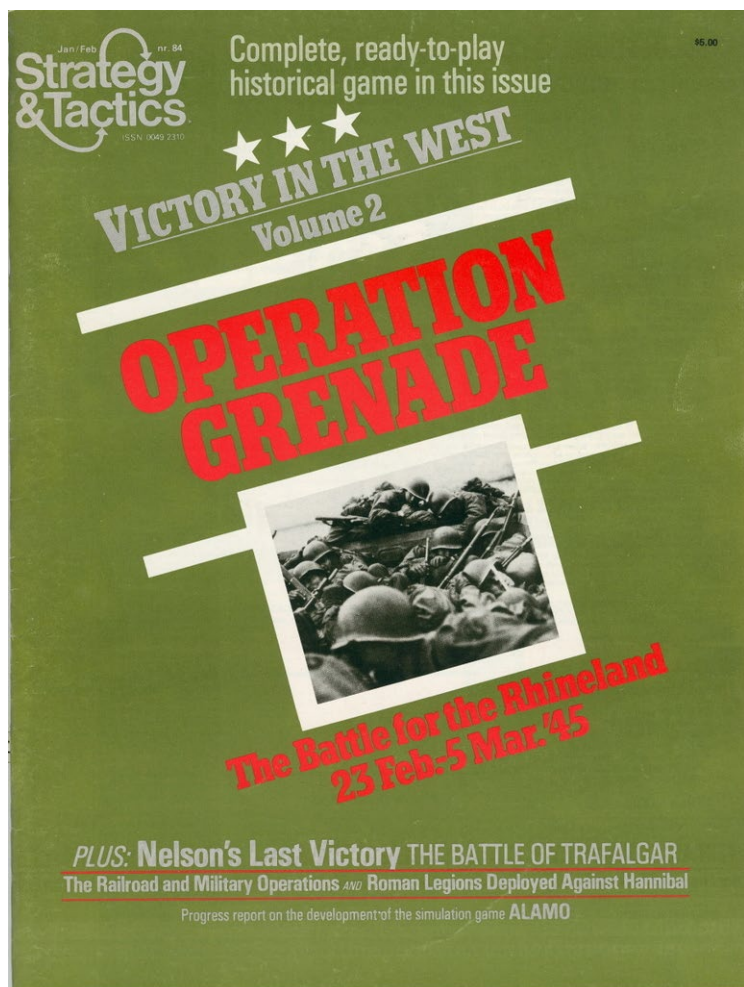


Operation Grenade

Victory in the West, Volume 2, SPI Games, 1980

by Nathan Mueller

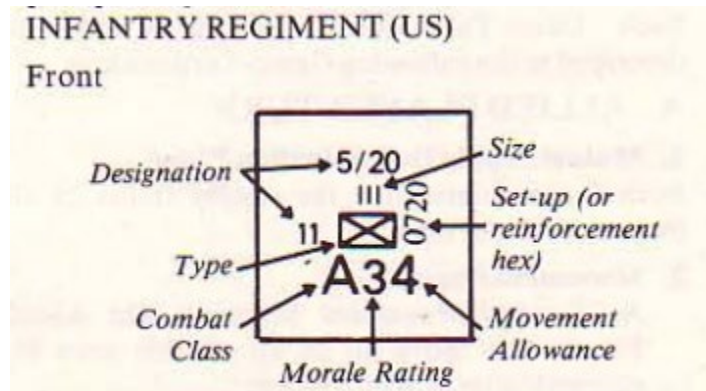


*Editor's Note: I find **Operation Grenade** to be a 'perfect puzzle' to use for solo gaming. The opening setup is fixed, the objectives are known, and the fortified Germans are no pushover. Add in the randomization of the chit draws for strength, and the choice of a 'fast start' or 'slow start' option, it is made for repeat plays. Yet, it gets the least love of any of the Victory in the West (VITW) series of games. I asked Nathan if he would mind giving his thoughts on the trick of getting across the river. Enjoy! – RHG*

Operation Grenade was the second hex and counter game I ever played (after SPI's Cobra). The first time I played **Operation Grenade** the Americans couldn't get their offensive going. Now that I have more games under my belt, it seems hard for the Germans to stop the Americans (though, depending on their reinforcements, they certainly can launch, or threaten to launch, some serious counterattacks).



Editor's Note: Refresher on Victory in the West -



In these games, a unit's strength is unknown until their first battle. After committing to the battle, the attackers and defenders draw **strength** chits from a pool based on their Morale rating. (1,2, or 3). The unit uses the strength rating for their Combat Class. (A, B, C)

To limit enemy intelligence, the opposing player may NOT

examine the *strength* chit of enemy troops prior to battle.

Unit Types: Mech and non-Mech. Mech units are Tanks, mechanized Infantry, and self-propelled Artillery, and Reconnaissance. Non-Mech are all other types of units.

Combat losses are in steps. A Unit with an original strength of 3 has 3 steps, if 2 strength or less the unit has 2 steps. Example: A Regiment-size (III) with a strength of 4 loses a step. It flips the *strength* chit for the first step loss. If he loses a second step, the chit would be removed, and the Division counter flipped. Another loss would remove the unit. *Note:* An original 1 strength Chit has *only* 1 step – remove the chit and flip the unit instead.

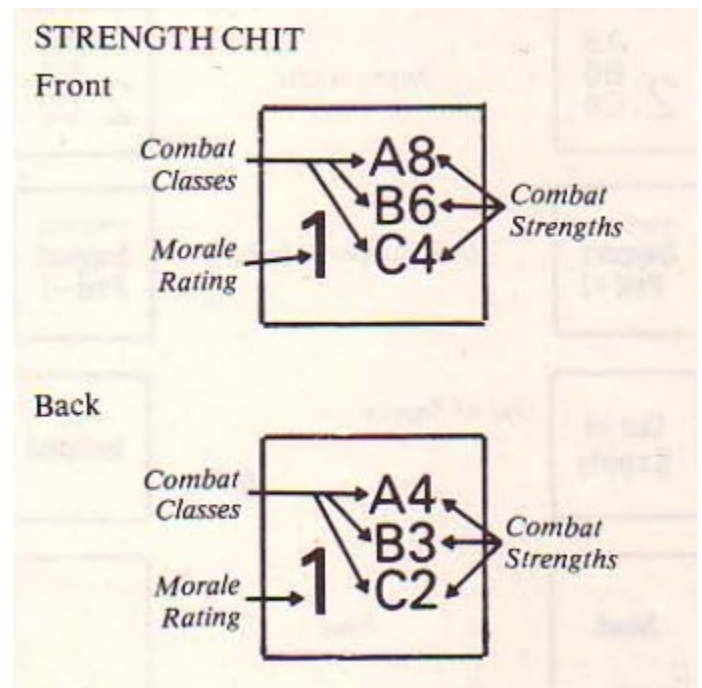
Cadres (CDR), Artillery Brigades (X) and Battalion (II) sized units are only 1 step total. If they lose a step, they are eliminated.

Zones of Control exist in every hex adjacent to a unit. *Exception:* Cadres (CDR), Artillery Brigades (X) and Battalion (II) sized units DO NOT have a ZOC. **Terrain** never affects ZOCs. Units must end their movement on entry into a ZOC. Units that BEGIN a movement phase in an enemy ZOC may exit by paying an additional MP, but cannot enter another Enemy ZOC in this phase.

Movement: Two types of units: Mech and non-Mech. Mech includes Armor, Artillery, and mechanized units. Non-Mech are Infantry.

Movement Type, Strategic and Tactical. BOTH types of movement, the unit will pay terrain / hexside costs to enter a hex for its Unit type, EXCEPT: To move **Strategically**, units must remain at least 3 hexes from an enemy unit for the entire Movement phase. If on a road, it may use the road bonus (1/3 MP) for movement and ignore other terrain costs. **Tactical** movement is used if unit is 1 or 2 hexes away from an enemy unit, OR will move within 1 or 2 hexes during the turn. If on a road, may move into the next road hex using the road for 1 MP, ignoring other terrain costs.

Mech units that are out of supply at the start of a movement phase are halved on movement, fractions round down.



Opening Choices:



The US should attack along a broad front, from the 01XX - 09XX columns, except for the 04XX column. This will give the US 8 units in position to attack 7 German units (not much of an advantage, but the best the US can get).

Not every attack will succeed of course, but the attack frontage needs to be wide enough to ensure some success. During setup, make sure the mechanized artillery is pushed as far up as possible so it can support the infantry while the US armor is under movement restrictions.

Once the Roer River line is cracked, VII Corps should push as hard and fast as possible (since they will not be available in the last part of the game due to movement restrictions). XIX Corps should take a wide right hook to the Rhine while XIII Corps sidles to the right to protect XIX Corps' flank. XII and XVI Corps should *not* conduct any opposed crossings of the Roer unless the Germans pull back except for the thinnest of screens.

End Game

[22.26] RHINE BRIDGE BLOWING	
Condition	Bridge Blown on Die Roll...
Non-volkssturm German unit occupies the eastern terminus hex.	3-11 (inclusive)
No non-volkssturm German unit occupies the eastern terminus hex.	4-11 (inclusive)
US rule is attempted.	5-11 (inclusive)

End game should see the Americans pushing north, with one flank along the Rhine, trying to capture the Rhine bridges. In the six or so games I've played, only once was a Rhine River bridge captured intact, but it's the only way to secure a better than marginal victory.

Regardless, if Geldern and Rheinburger are captured, an American victory will be achieved, and any German units who have not pulled back across the Rhine will be pocketed. (See map below).



Usually, the German panzers will be concentrated around Duisberg, west of the Rhine if they are in force. Krefeld can make a good defensive anchor if the panzers counterattack.

General thoughts for the US:

1. You have overwhelming force, but still bypass strongpoints. Go for the "big solution".
2. Your goal is to capture the VP cities since the Rhine bridges are a big gamble you can't really influence. A marginal victory is all you can be assured of.
3. Set D-Day at Feb 20 through 22 (better not roll high if you choose one of those earlier days). You'll appreciate the extra days at the end of the game.
4. Keep the Germans on the run. If the front stagnates, you're attacking along too broad a front. (I think *VitW* is best at modeling mobile warfare. It doesn't hold up well as an attritions model; which is why Mark Hinkle had to modify it so much when designing *The Killing Ground*).
5. Divisional Integrity is determined at the moment of combat. If possible, sequence your combats so that advancing regiments end adjacent to German hex being attacked by the same division and so can provide Divisional Integrity to a combat that otherwise would not qualify.

General thoughts for the German:

Position to Improved Position, and finally the Rhine). Don't let the Americans get in your rear.

2. Do not try to stop the US VII Corps. Make sure you have a unit guarding the only bridge in the VII Corps sector. If that bridge is blown, the VII Corps can do little harm to your formations after they have breached the Roer.
3. Maintain at least a threat of a counterattack. You cannot let the Americans have the initiative uncontested.

How to Cross the Roer, One Man's Plan in Action



Picture 1

(Above): Morning February 21st, 1945. The Americans have moved into their jump-off positions, prior to H-Hour, attacking on a broad front. Though the Roer has been turned into a torrent, the Americans are gambling the extra days to reach the Rhine is worth the risk.

Editor's note: Time for a review of how combat works now!

Combat: In the Combat phase, non-phasing units in the ZOC a phasing unit must be attacked by someone – but only 1 unit in a stack [9.0, 7.2] Exception: German units in entrenchments are not forced to attack adjacent enemy units.[12.0]

SUMMARY OF SHIFTS TO RATIO COLUMNS

A. Shift one column to the right (if employed in the attack) **or one column to the left** (if employed in the defense):

1. Divisional Integrity (see 9.4)
2. Artillery "Support Bonus" (see 9.62)
3. Hilltop Combat Bonus (see 9.3)
4. Ground Support (see 13.1)

B. Shift one column to the right:

1. Combined Arms Combat Bonus (see 9.5)

C. Shift one column to the left:

1. If Mud Game-Turn is in effect (see 24.2)

shift the combat odds one column to the LEFT.

Divisional Integrity (Attacker): If at the moment of attack, if the attacking unit has all the regiments of his division adjacent to the defending unit, shift the attack one to the RIGHT on the CRT. (If the attacking units are from 2 divisions, and all the regiments are adjacent, they could get a second shift – but that is the maximum.) [9.44].

Divisional Integrity (Defender): IF the Defending Unit is stacked with or adjacent to ONE other regiment of his division,

Combined Arms: For each attacking STACK that has a tank and non-tank unit, it gets a shift to the right on the CRT. UNLESS the DEFENDER has a tank and non-tank unit. Then there are NO Combined arms shifts. [9.51-9.54]

Combat Support (Artillery): If adjacent to an enemy unit, Artillery must use its printed Combat Strength. But Artillery not adjacent but are within 3 hexes of the unit defending, can add a Combat Support Shift for each Artillery unit – up to a max of 1 shift for Defender, or 2 shifts for Attacker.

[9.88] COMBAT RESULTS TABLE

Defender's Terrain

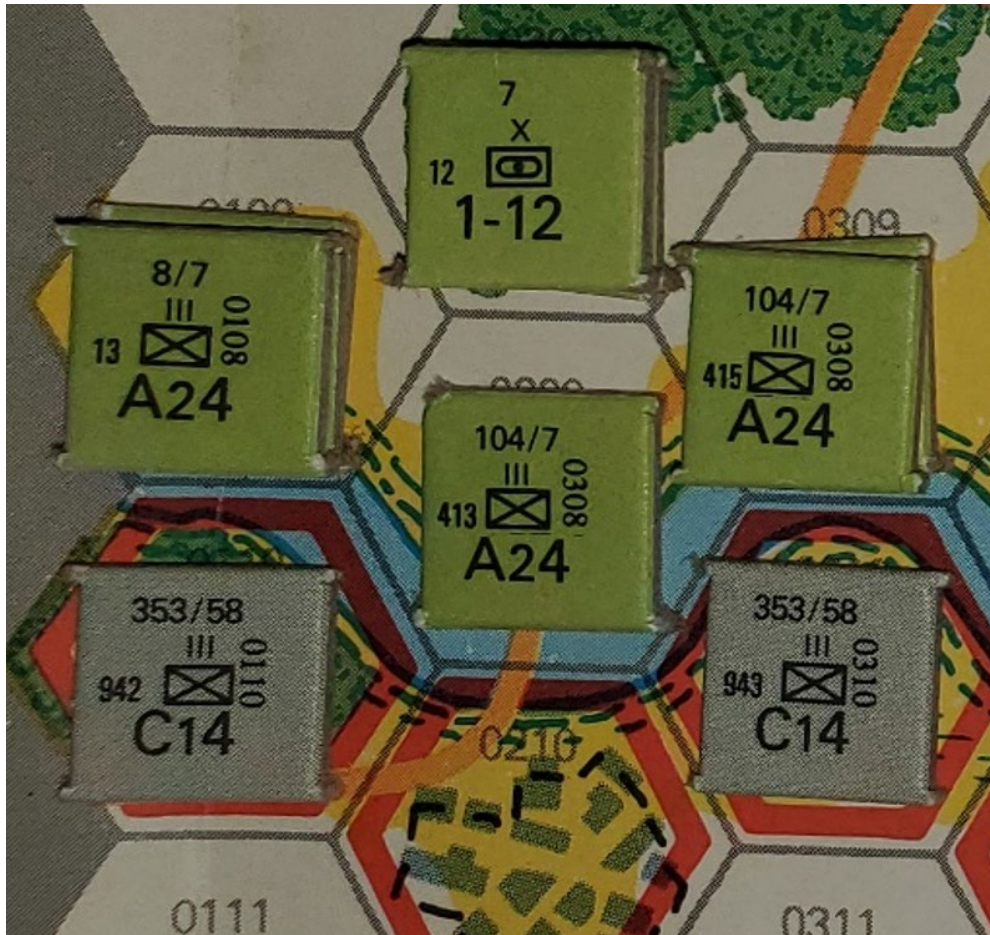
HILLTOP	1-3	1-2	1-1	2-1
WOODS, TOWN, SWAMP	1-4	1-3	1-2	1-1
CLEAR	1-5	1-4	1-3	1-2
DICE				
2	A2(3)	D1(1)	A2(3)	A2(2)
3	A1(2)	A1(1)	D2(1)	D1
4	A1(2)	A1(2)	A1(1)	D1(1)

Terrain is integrated into the combat table. *Exception:* Units in Entrenchment hexes OR Attacked solely across river hexsides have their defense strength DOUBLED. If both cases are true, they are TRIPLED. [9.32]

CRT Results: These are always Side x(y). (y) is the number of **STEPS** that **MUST** be lost by the listed side, either (A or D as noted.) These can be taken from any units in the stack, even if they were not the attacking or defending unit. **AFTER** those steps are removed (they **MUST** be satisfied by step losses, before any retreat) THEN you **MUST** choose how to satisfy the x listing, which can be a step loss or a retreat, or some combination. Example: A2(2) means the attacker would lose 2 steps, and THEN could retreat 2 hexes, or lose 1 step and retreat 1 hex, or lose 2 steps. (A total of 2 steps PLUS a combo of 2 MORE steps lost or hex retreats.)

Combat Retreats through an Enemy ZOC require an added step loss. If it is a stack retreating, this loss may come from any unit in the stack. Also -- Victorious units can follow the line of retreat -- but must stop if they enter an enemy ZOC.

*NOTE: If the result is in **BOLD**, it is a "Breakthrough" attack. The retreating units lose their ZOC for the phase, and the attacker can move an additional hex.*



Combat Phase Example: Start of Turn 1 Combat.

We can see the 8/7 Division has all three regiments in 0109. Regiment 13 (Attacker's choice) will attack the German 353/58, German Regiment 942. (Defender's choice. Also in the Defender's hex is 353/58 Regiment 941.) Since only 1 unit in a hex may attack or be attacked! [7.21], only 1 unit in each hex will draw a Strength chit.

At the point of combat, the 942 will pick a chit out of the 1 Morale cup, and on the chit, cross references the unit Class – in this case C. The C lists 1 Strength – but a die roll decided the delayed flood is now a torrent, and in an improved hex, that is Strength x 5 in a torrent! Plus two for the IP, so the total defense is 7.

The 8/7 13 Regiment pulls a chit from the 2 Morale cup – and checking under the Class A for this new chit, the attack strength is 14!. So, the attack is 2:1, on the Woods/Town/Swamp line on the CRT.

Since the 8/7 has all of his regiments in 0109, he gets Divisional integrity which is a +1 Shift (right). However, the defender needs only 1 other Regiment of his

group to get the Defensive version of Divisional Integrity. Thus, this is now a -1 shift Left, placing us back on the 2:1 column. The Artillery units in 0208 are within 3 hexes of the target, so they will provide Combat Support. As it is an attack, they are limited to 2 only to apply. This gives the attacker a +2 shift (right) on the CRT.

The CRT is a 2D6 system. The DR is 8, so the result is D2(1) – meaning the Defender **MUST** lose 1 Step (the # in the parentheses) **and then:** either retreat 2 hexes, or retreat 1 hex and lose a step, or lose 2 steps.

As the defending unit has a 1-strength chit, they must flip it – normally, that is the one step - but a resulting C0 strength means they lose the chit **AND must flip the unit to satisfy the strength loss** – making 942 a Cadre. The Axis player retreats this Cadre and the remaining Regiment to 0112 two hexes to satisfy the D2 result. The Attacker can move his attacking stack along the path of retreat.

COMBAT RATIOS (Attack)		
3-1	4-1	5-1
2-1	3-1	4-1
1-1	2-1	3-1
D2(1)	A2(2)	A1(2)
D1	D2(1)	D2
D1(1)	D1(1)	D1(1)
A1(2)	D1	D1
A1(2)	A1(2)	D1(1)
A2(1)	A1(1)	A1(1)
A1(1)	A1(1)	D2(1)
A1(1)	D1	A1
D1	D2(1)	D1
D1(1)	D1(2)	D2(2)
D2(2)	A1(1)	D2(2)



Picture 2 (Left) Afternoon February 21st, 1945. The results are uneven, with the VII Corps unscathed and across the Roer. Further north (right), the 30th Division managed to cross the Roer, but the 29th and 102nd Divisions were repulsed. It is interesting to note that the Americans won every combat where the German defender drew a 1 strength chit. The broad front paid off in that four Germans

drew 1 strength chits, which allowed the Americans to cross at two locations successfully.



Picture 3 (Above): Morning, February 22nd, 1945. The Americans seek to expand their bridgeheads in the ensuing combat phase. First, the failures are not reinforced. Instead, the units already over the Roer conduct attacks to assist the regiments still on the far side. In fact, no Germans receive the multiplier for defending behind a river. Additionally, the 413th Infantry (104th Division) and the 119th Infantry (30th Division) are able to infiltrate forward because the German cadres opposing them have no ZOC.

Picture 4 (Left): Afternoon February 22nd, 1945. In only two days, the line has been penetrated by the Americans. Already the American right hook to the north is forming, threatening to cut off any Germans still defending their initial positions. The only remaining objective for the Americans is to capture the bridge in hex 0709 in order to maintain supplies and reinforcements during the drive to the Rhine.

Conclusion

Operation Grenade gets the least love of the **VitW** games, but I find myself drawn to it again and again. A very straightforward game with clearly defined objectives for the US. It's fun for the US because of their overwhelming force but tense because of the limited time available.

Thank you for the great pictures and commentary, Nathan! All- if you would like to share your thoughts on strategy and tactics for a game you enjoy playing, play the game, send me a note at rgifford@russgifford.net!! If you have pictures, great, but I can usually add those. Just send me the text! -- RHG