



SMALL UNIT 1980s COMBAT

*Updating
the*
FIREFIGHT[®]
Game

by James E. Meldrum

THE FIREFIGHT[®] GAME WAS PUBLISHED first in 1976 as a game of contemporary small unit combat and tactics. Since that time, several interesting changes have occurred in the structure and function of different kinds of US Army units that might hypothetically meet Soviet Army formations in combat. A lot of new equipment has been produced — for example, the M1 Abrams tank and the Bradley M2 and M3 fighting vehicles (formerly the MICV in the earlier versions of the game) — thus adding more firepower to infantry and armored cavalry formations. In addition, more reliance has been placed on ATGMs and their increased firepower.

Now, with the republication by TSR[™] of this classic tactics simulation, used by the US Army to demonstrate small unit combat, boardgame players can once again enjoy the flavor of hypothetical tactics in the 1980s.

Until recently, gamers playing the FIREFIGHT Game were limited to conducting mostly mechanized actions against formations that were, for a long time, standard in both the US and Soviet Armies. The new formations introduced below give the game a little extra variation. These optional rules and scenarios are intended to

update and add to the existing game rules. For any differences that might arise between these variants and the game rules, use the game booklets to resolve any questions that arise.

New Units

AMONG THE NEWER US ARMY UNITS IS A redesignated "leg" infantry division that is heavily armed with Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (ATGMs) and is supported by tanks and mechanized infantry. The reinforced infantry company simulated in this article can be used to provide a cross section of the new unit, along with an idea of how it might be expected to perform in combat. This new unit was developed after the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979-1981, which demonstrated to the US that lighter, more easily transported units with fewer vehicles were needed. Prior to this time, most US ground units were heavily mechanized with large numbers of heavy, bulky vehicles.

To simulate the new infantry unit, the US player starts with the infantry company given in the game's Scenario 3 (6 TM, 6 TM+, 2 M150, and 6 Dragon missiles to be assigned) and adds 3 M60A1 or A3 tanks, 1 M113, 1 TM+, 1 TM, and 2 M150s. Artillery support depends upon the game sce-

nario to be played and is the same as is stated for the scenario currently in play. This unit is then substituted into any of the scenarios in the FIREFIGHT® Game in place of the US units originally listed. This new unit can best be used in Scenarios 2 to 6 in the rules booklet.

All the recent developments and changes in tactics in the past several years have not been confined solely to infantry units. Originally, armored cavalry units were to be used to delay any advancing Soviet formations during a theoretical Soviet invasion of Germany, and also perform reconnaissance duties to determine the strength and axis of the attack and seal flanks between formations. For example, an older-style armored cavalry troop was equipped with 4 M60A2, 4 M113, 4 M150, 2 TM, 1 TM+, and 1 81mm mortar.

Lately, the US Army has strengthened the armored cavalry units and assigned them to a different mission. Now, the armored cavalry is expected to meet the advancing enemy as far forward as possible and function as a tank-destroying formation with a secondary reconnaissance and flank security role. Consistent with this new mission is the fact that the Army has removed the M115 light tanks formerly used by the armored cavalry and added M60 medium tanks and the M3 armored cavalry fighting vehicle. A newer-style armored cavalry unit could consist of 4 M1, 4 MICV, 2 TM, 1 TM+, 1 4.2" mortar, 4 M113, and 6 M150 elements.

Again, players can substitute these units for any of the US units in the scenarios in the FIREFIGHT® Game. Both kinds of units can be used to test performance in combat in Scenarios 1, 2, 4, 5, and 8. The amount of artillery support and all other rules are the same as in the original scenarios. In all cases, including the infantry scenarios, the Soviets use the same units listed in the original scenarios.

Scenario 7 can also be modified to demonstrate how an armored cavalry unit can be used in a reconnaissance-in-force situation, where the armored cavalry unit tries to detect a Soviet unit of unknown size and strength. When simulating this situation, the US player gets 5 M1 tanks, 4 MICV, 2 M150, 4 M113, 5 TM+, and 1 TM. The Soviet units in Scenario 7 receive 6 more dummy counters, 3 T62 tanks, 2 BMP, and 2 SPG-9 counters. The US player does not receive any additional artillery support, but the Soviet player receives the same amount of artillery with the same conditions as in Scenario 7. Both the US and Soviet players have the identical missions, deployments, and victory conditions as in Scenario 7. In addition, the special rule affecting the Soviet player remains the same.

New Vehicles

ANOTHER FEATURE OF THE FIREFIGHT® Game is the Vehicle-X counter. Frequently, when searching through the countermix, a gamer comes across this counter and wonders what to do with it. The following vehicles can be simulated for this counter to expand the game and update it for other NATO vehicular units.

M114: Now obsolete, the M114 is a light scout vehicle similar to the M113, but has a lower silhouette. The optional rules here apply only to the version armed with the 20-mm cannon. Movement is at movement points per turn, and is identical to the MICV in combat against vehicles.

M551 Sheridan: The Sheridan light tank is currently only in service with airborne units. It is simulated by using an M60A2 counter, but with the movement allowance increased to 5 per movement phase.

Leopard 2: The Leopard 2 is the standard tank of the West German Army and is also used by a number of NATO countries, including Canada, Norway, and Turkey. Its movement allowance is 5 and it functions like an M1 in anti-vehicle combat. See rule 27.3 in the rules booklet.

Marder: The Marder is the standard West German APC, mounting a 20 mm cannon, and has a lower silhouette than an M113. The movement allowance is 5, and vulnerability is standard for an APC, as per the APC rules. In vehicular combat, the Marder is the equal of the MICV. Infantry fireteams may conduct mounted combat from the Marder as per rule 16.1.

Jagdkanone: This vehicle is a tank destroyer similar to some of the old World War II tank destroyers used by the German Army. It mounts a 90mm gun in a fixed mount, and has a low profile, good speed, and light armor.

Chieftain: The Chieftain is currently the main British battle tank. It has very heavy armor, a low profile, poor mobility, and a main gun that loads slowly. In combat against hostile vehicles, it functions like an M60A3. Movement allowance is 2. When firing at the Chieftain, the values of the RPG-7, SPG-9, and BMP gun are reduced by 1 at all ranges.

Challenger: The Challenger is the replacement tank for the Chieftain and will enter service in 1985. It functions exactly like the Chieftain, but its mobility is increased, with a movement allowance of 3. As an option, players can use rule 27.3 for the new armor with which this tank might be equipped.

Scorpion: The Scorpion is a light tank equipped with a 76mm gun and is fast, with a movement allowance of 6. When attacked by the RPG-7, SPG-9, or a BMP cannon, all ratings are increased by 2 at all ranges. The ratings for tanks firing at this vehicle are increased by 3 at all ranges; the rating for the Sagger ATGM is increased by 1 at all ranges.

S-Tank: The S-Tank is the main battle tank for the Swedish Army. It has a fixed cannon, which is governed by all the rules governing the *Jagdkanone*. A variable suspension system is used to elevate and depress the main gun. It has the same vulnerability as the M1 Tank (see rule 27.3) and has a movement allowance of 4.

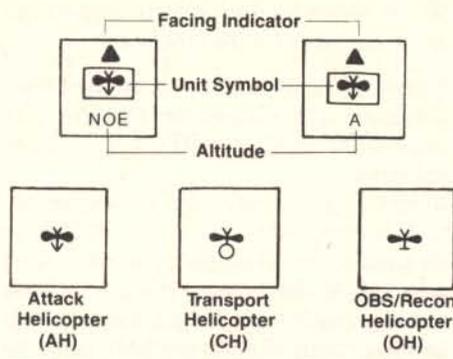
LAV: The Piranha 8x8 armored car has been chosen as the US Army's Light Armored Vehicle (LAV), and will probably take the place of the M551 Sheridan in some of the US Army's units, especially those earmarked for the US Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). Many of these vehicles will also serve with the US Marine Corps. This vehicle is treated exactly as an MICV, except that it has a movement allowance of 6. One point is added to the values for the Sagger ATGM and SPG-9 at all ranges.

T-72: Another counter that gamers seem to have problems using is the Russian XMBT unit counter. Since the game was first published, the Soviet Army has introduced two new tanks into service. The first of these is the T-72, with the next tank being the T-80; the latter is due to enter service in the near future.

The T-72 is actually very easy to simulate. Players use the XMBT row on the Attack Effectiveness Charts and use rule 27.4 to simulate this vehicle, since they're the same. To simulate the T-80, players use all data for the T-72 but apply rule 27.42 and reduce attack effectiveness for NATO units at all ranges by 2.

Trucks: Two squads of infantry can be carried by a single truck. Breakthrough scenarios into rear areas might involve supply or transport trucks, which have mobility on roads per hex at the rate of 1/4 movement point per hex. Trucks are always treated as personnel units when fired on, and all units firing on a truck have 2 added to their ratings at all ranges.

The US player in the FIREFIGHT Game can maneuver his units any way he wishes to deal with the opposing Soviet forces. The Soviet player, on the other hand, is governed by a tactical doctrine that routinely makes use of standardized formations, organizations, and tactics.



Helicopters

ONE MAJOR TYPE OF MECHANIZED WEAPONS system has been ignored previously in the game: the helicopter. These variant rules are intended to be of a generic nature, since the same rules can be used for both US and Soviet helicopters. Any major differences in individual performance between helicopter types used by the US and Soviet Armies exist in the weapons system types installed on the aircraft. At this point, players are reminded that unit strengths and mechanics are not calculated as precisely as the original rules; but these optional rules convey the effects and mechanics of airmobile warfare as simulated in the game.

In order to use helicopters in the game, players have to construct their own counters. This can be done either by using the appropriately colored blank counter sheets or by coloring white counters with a felt-tip pen. The letters NOE and A indicate the altitude at which the helicopter is flying in the current game turn. NOE means "Nap of the Earth," in which the helicopter is flying so low that it is literally skimming the ground; and A indicates that the helicopter is flying at altitude, a significant distance (50-500 feet) above the ground. The format shown below ought to be used when constructing helicopter counters.

All helicopters have a movement allowance of 12. Helicopters expend one movement point for each hex through which they move, regardless of the terrain in the hex the helicopter counter occupies. Furthermore, each helicopter must expend one additional movement point to change altitude in either climbing or diving maneuvers. While a helicopter is moving, NOE is its normal flight altitude. Helicopters can fly over all forest, hill, and town hexes and are subject to opportunity fire, just as ground units are. Helicopters flying at NOE are affected by artillery barrages, but helicopters flying at altitude are unaffected. All helicopters can stack in a hex without expending movement points, but no more than two helicopters can be in a single hex.

Any helicopter flying at NOE is subject to the same Line-of-Sight (LOS) restric-

tions as a ground unit is and is treated as a ground vehicle for this purpose. See rule 11.0 and table 11.1. Helicopters sight units in town or forest hexes when flying directly over those hexes and are fired upon by the units, or else if the helicopters move adjacent to those occupied hexes.

All types of helicopter units can spot for artillery. Helicopters at altitude have an observation range of 60 hexes for all types of targets. Helicopters which are flying at altitude or else hovering (remaining stationary in the hex) can be detected and observed automatically by all personnel or vehicle units within a 10-hex radius. As a result, all units within a 10-hex radius can fire at a hostile helicopter even though, for this purpose, a helicopter is considered to be a personnel unit.

Transport Helicopters (CH): These aviation units can carry a maximum of 12 men and can function like an airborne APC in game terms. Each HMG, mortar, recoilless rifle, or ATGM unit is considered to be worth six men for airlift purposes. Transport helicopters are bound by all transport rules (see 7.4) and by all mounting/dismounting rules. The exception is that the

helicopter must expend two extra movement points to mount and dismount personnel. Transport helicopters are the only aviation units which are allowed to carry personnel units.

Observation Helicopters (OH): These types are used only by the US Army and spot for any friendly unit by conducting armed reconnaissance missions. When conducting armed recon missions, the OH functions like an attack helicopter, except that it is armed with a machine gun and uses that effectiveness rating on the Combat Results Table (CRT). Observation helicopters only attack personnel units. If attacks on vehicles are attempted, see rule 24.0. Observation helicopters used in this variant represent either OH-6 Cayuse or OH-58 Kiowa aircraft.

Attack Helicopters (AH): Attack helicopters function to provide fire support to friendly ground units and to escort transport helicopters. Their armament consists of MG and ATGM weapons; any major differences in helicopters are noted in the armaments for American and Russian attack helicopters. For game purposes, all attack helicopters are assumed to be armed in the

ANTI-VEHICLE ATTACK EFFECTIVENESS CHART

Range in hexes		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11-15	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
Firing Unit	Target Unit																
Jkanone	Tank	9	9	9	9	8	8	8	8	7	7	5	4	2	1	1	
Jkanone	APC	9	9	8	8	8	8	8	8	7	7	4	4	3	1	1	
Scorpion	Tank	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	5	2	—	—	—	—	—	
Scorpion	APC	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	5	2	1	—	—	—	—	
Swingfire*	Tk/APC	—	—	—	—	4	4	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	
Vigilant**	Tk/APC	—	—	—	4	8	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	—	—	
Milan**	Tk/APC	4	4	8	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	—	—	
Cobra*	Tk/APC	—	—	—	4	8	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	—	—	—	
HOT*	Tk/APC	—	—	—	4	8	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	
C. Gustav**	Tank	8	7	7	7	7	7	7	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
C. Gustav**	APC	8	7	7	7	7	7	7	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	

ANTI-PERSONNEL ATTACK EFFECTIVENESS CHART

M114/20mm	7	7	7	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	2	—
Marder	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	3	—
Leopard 2	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	3	—
JKanone	1	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	—
Chieftain	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	2
Scorpion	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	4	3
S-Tank	1	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	2

There are some vehicles whose anti-vehicle effectiveness is identical to vehicles found on the US anti-vehicle chart. These are:

M114, Marder, LVA - MICV

M551 - M60A2

Leopard 2, Challenger - M1

S-Tank - M60A1

Chieftain - M60A3

* Indicates that this ATGM system is mounted on a vehicle that is equivalent to the M150 for game purposes.

** Indicates that this ATGM system is used like the Dragon.

A helicopter is a rather flexible aircraft and can be used for other missions. US transport helicopters can lay airdropped minefields.

same manner and, unless otherwise noted, the AHs used for each side are AH-1s or MI-24 Hinds.

Attack helicopters can use their onboard weapons in a direct fire role. They fire either of their two weapons systems during a game turn, but never both in the same turn. Attack helicopters flying at altitude can fire their weapons at enemy units in forest hexes without having established LOS first — this is an exception to the normal Line of Sight rules. All attack helicopters can move sideways in order to keep their facing indicator (and consequently, their onboard weapons) facing in the direction that they are intended to be fired.

For game purposes, the gun armaments of most US and Soviet attack helicopters are the same. Both sides' helicopters are armed with MGs; Soviet helicopters will be armed with an MG+, while US helicopters are armed with an MG-M113; both use the indicated rows on the CRT to compute their fire strengths.

Lately, the US has been equipping its new AH-64 attack helicopter with the 30mm chain gun. If players wish to simulate this weapon and its use, they should first consult the Vehicular Attack Effectiveness Chart for US units firing at Soviet vehicles, then locate the MICV row. Players should use these ratings when the AH-64 is firing at both Soviet vehicles and personnel.

ATGM Armaments: ATGM armaments for the US attack helicopters are TOW; for the Soviets, the Sagger missile. When helicopters are flying at altitude, these missiles are used exactly as in the FIREFIGHT® Game original rules. However, when the helicopters are flying at NOE, the ranges for these ATGMs are halved. US attack helicopters fire their ATGMs a total of eight times during any single scenario, while Russian attack helicopters fire their ATGMs four times.

Anti-Aircraft Fire: As mentioned earlier, all hostile helicopter units are automatically detected and observed when flying at altitude and can be attacked by any unit within a radius of 10 hexes. Any fire directed at helicopters flying at NOE is gov-

erned by the game's LOS rules.

Both the US and Soviet Armies have deployed mobile anti-aircraft weapons systems for use against both hostile helicopters and low-flying aircraft. For the US player, this system is the DIVAD (Sgt. York) system; for the Soviet player, the ZSU-23-4 system is used. Both of these vehicles can be simulated by using the Vehicle-X marker included in the game. For game purposes, both of these vehicles perform in the same manner. In terms of movement and combat against personnel, they are treated as M113 or BMP units, except that ATGMs can never be used. Opposing armored vehicles can never be attacked. Both of these vehicles may attack helicopters flying at altitude at ranges up to 15 hexes in all directions. The effectiveness of both US and Soviet weapons is 9 at 1-10 hex ranges and 8 at 11-15 hex ranges.

Any helicopter flying at NOE and caught in an artillery barrage either in the impact hex or in any one of the six adjacent hexes is considered to be destroyed immediately. There are no further effects for helicopters that are flying at altitude or are flying in some other hex at the time of the artillery barrage.

Helicopter Facing: Each simulated helicopter unit has a facing indicator printed on the front of the unit counter which represents the front of the aircraft. Each helicopter unit must always be pointed only at hexsides perpendicular to the helicopter and can never be facing a hex juncture. Helicopters carrying onboard weapons fire these through the 120 degree arc in the front of the helicopter counter as indicated by the facing indicator, i.e., the hex and hexside immediately in front of the unit.

Helicopter Tactics: Most of the time US attack helicopters approach their targets at NOE, then pop up to launch their ATGMs. Targets and launching locations are scouted by OH units before the actual attack begins. Gunfire attacks are usually made at NOE and at close range. In Afghanistan, the Soviet Army has been observed using Hind attack helicopters in groups of three; two of these fly at low level while the other one

flies at higher level to perform support and recon functions for the other two.

Units: Helicopter units can be used independently or in conjunction with the units used in the existing FIREFIGHT® Game scenarios.

Soviet Units: Soviet AHs are commonly used in groups of two or three, with four to six usually used to support a battalion-sized attack. A Soviet airborne infantry battalion would probably resemble a mechanized rifle battalion minus all tanks and BMP units. As an option, the BMP units could be airlifted in by helicopter units four game turns after the airborne infantry units arrive on the map.

US Army Units: AirCav Troop — 11 × OH, 9 × AH, 5 × CH, 1 × mortar section, 1 × TM, 5 × TM+. AirCav Platoon — 3 × OH, 7 × AH. AirCav Section — 1 × OH, 2 × AH. AeroRifle Platoon — 5 × CH, 1 × mortar section, 1 × TM, 5 × TM+. AeroScout Platoon — 8 × OH. AeroWeapons Platoon — 3 × OH, 9 × AH. US helicopter unit organization is extremely flexible, and helicopter types are often mixed and matched as required by missions in the game.

Scenarios: The units described here can be added to the appropriate forces in any of the original FIREFIGHT® Game scenarios. Also, players should try adding some of the US airmobile units listed above in several of the scenarios. An air cav platoon, an aerorifle platoon, or an air cav section of US units can be inserted into Scenario 2. In Scenario 4, an air cav troop, with or without the 4.2" mortars listed in the scenario, might be used in place of the original US forces. When playing Scenario 8, the US player should use either an aerorifle or air cav platoon. Another scenario might consist of a Soviet air assault or airmobile battalion (infantry units carried in helicopters) landing ahead of a Soviet mechanized advance, attacking in-place US units. Or, the same scenario might place a US air cav troop landing in front of a US armored/mechanized company against an opposing Soviet battalion. In all the scenarios in the game, players could try adding 2-4 Soviet helicopters.

A helicopter is a rather flexible aircraft and, as such, can be used for missions other than those suggested here. For example, US transport helicopters can be used to lay air-dropped minefields. When this is done, the minefield is deployed as in rule 25.0, except that no scatter occurs. All types of helicopters of both sides can be used to lay smoke screens from the air when flying at NOE altitude. Attack helicopters can attack each other so long as both are either at altitude or at NOE mode and there is an uninterrupted LOS between them. US

fireteams can conduct fire while mounted in transport helicopters. While doing so, they are governed by rule 16.2, except that no ATGMs can ever be fired from a transport helicopter.

ATGMs: Another feature of combat emphasized in the **FIREFIGHT®** Game is the use of ATGMs. The ranges given in the rules seem to be a bit far when examining the terrain on the map. No doubt the ranges and accuracy as simulated in the first edition of the game are possible — on the armor ranges at Fort Hood in Texas. But in Germany, where these weapons would be used in combat, that is another story. Germany is a land of small villages, thickets, forests, and rolling terrain. To simulate this, the ranges for the ATGMs should be reduced to a maximum of 30 hexes for the US TOW and the Soviet Sagger missiles, and a maximum of 10 hexes for the US Dragon missile. Only when ATGMs are launched from helicopters should the indicated ranges be used — 60 hexes.

Last Notes

LATELY, THE SOVIET ARMY HAS BECOME increasingly mechanized, with more self-propelled guns appearing in Soviet units. One of these is the M1974 122mm SP gun, which functions in a direct fire role to suppress and destroy enemy defensive positions. These guns are assigned to each motorized rifle or tank battalion with a battery of 18 guns assigned to each regiment.

To simulate the M1974 122mm SP gun, players should use the Vehicle-X unit counter and consider this unit to be a vehicular unit if attacked. If any K or Kf result is obtained against an M1974 unit, its onboard ammunition will detonate; when this happens, all units in adjacent hexes are attacked with an attack effectiveness rating of 3. The movement allowance for this unit is 3, and its attack effectiveness rating at all ranges is 9 against all units, except helicopters in flight. In order to preserve play balance, no more than 6 M1974 units should be used in any single scenario.

Currently, the US M60A2 tank is no longer being used, so players should use M60A3s instead of the former in all appropriate scenarios. The M551 Sheridan light tank has been withdrawn from all units except the 101st Air Assault Division. To simulate this vehicle, an M60A2 unit is used and is given a movement allowance of 5. Aircav units receive Sheridans five game turns after aerorifle platoons have been inserted; in addition, they are landed by helicopter in clear terrain only. Usually, three Sheridans are used in conjunction with the aerorifle platoon as reinforcements. An additional vehicle entering service with the US Army is the Piranha armored car, known as the LAV. This is simulated by using an MICV, giving it a movement allowance of 4 to represent the LAV.

Readers' comments on all these suggested variants are welcomed. If there is enough interest in this game, as we've seen in our own gamers here, we'll probably be doing another article on this topic with more variants. ■■

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