

# HIDDEN MOVEMENT:

A NEW APPROACH BY PHILLIP D GRAY



One of the difficulties confronting any game designer concerned with simulating history is the problem of limiting information. After all, an actual commander could discover only a portion of the facts about his adversary's strength and dispositions. He had reconnaissance reports, prisoners to interrogate, the gleanings from spies, in addition to what could be seen by the naked eye or telescope. Recent technology has improved the situation somewhat but there is still a good bit about which even the modern commander is left in the dark.

However, in most boardgames, the location and strength of all units is open to anyone's examination. There have been many attempts to counter this and produce a bit of "fog": dummy units, inverted counters and untested combat strengths. All these are an improvement over omniscience but still one knows generally *where* enemy units are massing, hence one can work out possible strong points and impending offensives.

The best solution is completely hidden units off the board. To be workable, though, this needs an umpire (who has such a selfless third party available?) and either three (!) maps or reams of paper and a couple of secretaries.

I would like to suggest a compromise method of hidden movement which has the psychological advantage of units being kept off the board ("where *is* that armoured corps of his?"), while being feasible in a two-player game without much paperwork. My claims for the rule are modest. All I ask is that you try it and see what you think.

Basically, the rule requires that a number of **Deployment Centres** (Hereafter called 'DC's') be established behind friendly lines and lines of communication be traced between them. Units in a DC may be taken off the board and moved from one DC to another without being returned to the board. Units may be placed on the map again as desired at the DC where they are located.

Using *Normandy* as an example, let us see how the rule might be worked out. The German player is given ten DC's to place on the board at the beginning of the game. You will have to make your own counters to represent DC's. The DC's are placed on any road or city hex on the map. Placement is made at the same time that German units are deployed.

Let us suppose the player positions his DC's as follows:-

DC1: C14	DC6: Y8
DC2: J15	DC7: GG7
DC3: K10	DC8: OO14
DC4: U12	DC9: XX10
DC5: Y13	DC10: YY18

A table is then made showing the minimum movement point cost from one DC to another. All routes should be traced by road. These routes are the lines of communication.

It can be seen that a German armoured unit (movement allowance = 6) could transfer from DC1 to DC2 in one movement phase or from DC5 to DC10 in two movement phases, assuming the lines of communication are not broken. An infantry unit (movement allowance = 2) would take one movement phase to transfer from DC2 to DC3 or three movement phases to move from DC2 to DC4.

When a unit lands on a DC it may, although it need not, be removed from the map. Units may, of course, begin the game in a DC if they are part of the initial set-up. Place the unit on a sheet of paper hidden from the opposing player, next to a notation of its DC number. Then, when movement to another DC is desired, simply note the turn and phase it will arrive at the new DC. For example, 12th Regt, 26th SS Div. (movement allowance = 6) is in DC1. On turn 3, phase one, the player wishes to move it to DC4. This will take two movement phases. Next to the 12th Regt one writes "DC4, turn 4, phase one", since that is when the unit will arrive. Reinforcements which can reach a DC in their first movement phase need not be moved on the map at all; they are put in the DC immediately. Units which begin a turn on a DC may be placed back on the board before movement, if desired, and will thereafter operate as normal units.

What happens if a line of communication between DC's is cut by enemy units or zones of control? It would be possible to trace a *new* line of communication, re-do the table and continue. However, there are such monstrous complications with keeping track of the new lines and with determining what to do with units in transit, that I suggest the following: if the line of communication between DC's is cut, no transit between such DC's is allowed until the line is reopened. Units in transit when the line is cut move at once to the nearest traceable DC.

Although no Allied units are on the board at the start of the game, they may place DC's anywhere on the map, perhaps five of them. These may be used as the hexes are captured and transit may take place once lines of communication are secured.

If a DC is attacked, all units present but off-

board are immediately placed on the map. They defend at half-strength (they are not in battle-order, remember). Just sitting adjacent to a DC is not sufficient to reveal units. You must move a unit onto the DC during the movement phase or attack during the combat phase. If the moving player has moved a unit onto the DC during the movement phase and there are units in the DC, the moving player retreats his unit(s) one hex (i.e. back into the hex from which it entered) and must carry out an attack on the newly revealed unit(s) during the combat phase. If there is no one in the DC, treat the hex as empty and continue movement.

Stacking in DC's is double the normal, but once units are on the board again they must return to normal stacking by the end of the movement phase following their appearance.

You might try experimenting with some sort of reconnaissance rule, although I found this a bit unwieldy. For example, at the beginning of each player turn, roll one die to simulate air reconnaissance. If a 1 or 2 is rolled, the rolling player may ask what is in *one* DC. The player owning the DC must reveal the number and type (e.g. armour, infantry) of units in the DC, if any. Units in transit need not be revealed. The Allies should, of course, have a better chance of spotting German DC's than the Germans have of spotting Allied ones. Let the Allies spot units in a DC on a roll of, perhaps, 1 to 4.

Quite a few games are amenable to DC's, especially those with clear lines separating opposing enemy units, like *France '40* or *Destruction of Army Group Centre*. You will need to establish the number of DC's allowed, trace lines of communication, make a transit table, work out rules for stacking, reconnaissance (if any) and attacking DC's. If no roads or railways are available to regularise lines of communication, simply require the shortest movement point path to be the line of communication. If your game is at the tactical scale, don't forget that line of sight observation to DC's in clear hexes should reveal units in DC's. Don't be afraid to change, add or delete to suit your own ideas. Try it on your favourite game and see what happens.

	DC1	DC2	DC3	DC4	DC5	DC6	DC7	DC8	DC9	DC10
DC1	-	4	6	7	9	8	11	13	16	16
DC2	4	-	2	5	6	7	9	11	14	15
DC3	6	2	-	7	8	9	11	13	16	16
DC4	7	5	7	-	2	2	4	7	10	10
DC5	9	6	8	2	-	2	4	5	8	9
DC6	8	7	9	2	2	-	4	7	10	10
DC7	11	9	11	4	4	4	-	4	7	7
DC8	13	11	13	7	5	7	4	-	3	4
DC9	16	14	16	10	8	10	7	3	-	4
DC10	16	15	16	10	9	10	7	4	4	-