

Here we continue from last issue in contrasting what is actually done with what is actually played. The game system used to illustrate this article is *Mech War 2*, a system that encourages the use of good sound doctrine (probably to its disadvantage as a would-be easy to play game). Presuming you've liked what you've read so far, we'll add to this series with help from Mr. Prutch's pen.

—Redmond

THE DEFENSE

The offense may be the more exciting part of playing a wargame. The joy of over-running your opponent's units or watching him remove counter after counter as your successful attacks roll down the board is only a small portion of the overall action found in play. A player who neglects his defensive planning will soon find himself losing games even if he is a master of the attack.

There are several reasons for military units going on the defensive. It is not always possible to maintain the momentum of the attack, and a break in operations is needed to bring up fresh units or provide the attacking force a needed rest. Nor is it possible to have attacks going along an entire front in combat. In order for military commanders to concentrate sufficient forces for the attack in one area, a second area must be guarded with reduced numbers of units. This means going on the defense.

As in the attack, there are hasty and deliberate defenses. Again the designation refers to the amount of time available to building and planning of the mission. The considerations used in arranging the defense are the same in either case.

What are the types of defenses? There is far more variety to defensive planning than to attacking. Options open to the defender are positional defense, active defense, delay, and strongpoint.

- **Positional Defense.** This is a classic style of defense and the type most familiar to wargamers. A unit is given a specific area of ground with the mission of remaining on that area unless ordered to move by the commander of the overall defensive area. While some planning is given to moving to other areas for conducting a defense, the unit is primarily intended to hold that spot of ground. As an example, a company size unit may be given the mission of defending a small town. While the platoons and squads might move as necessary within the town to defend against attacks, the company will not seek to leave the town to defend from a woodline or hill outside the town without receiving a specific order from a unit at a higher level.

- **Active Defense.** A more recent development in defensive positions is the active defense. Units are required to plan for movements to several different defensive positions. Overall the operation resembles a delay (to be discussed next), except that the movement of the defenders is intended to concentrate forces against the attack instead of stalling for time. Movements are performed on the order of the overall area com-

mander. Initially, the active defense looks similar to a positional defense set-up. Units are spaced to provide mutual support and given specific areas to defend. Then, as the enemy attack develops, the defensive units are moved into planned positions along the enemy attack route. Some units are left along the flanks of the defensive area, which requires greater areas to be covered by their positions. As the attack continues, the defender may have to defend deeper within his territory to halt and destroy the enemy attack. Once the enemy attack is halted or destroyed, the defender then seeks to re-establish a defensive line at the same positions as at the start of the defense.

- **Delay.** A delay is intended to trade ground for time in an effort to halt or slow down an enemy attack. It can be distinguished from the active defense by the lack of lateral movement to bring defenders into a position in front of the enemy attack. It can be distinguished from any other defense by the generally reduced preparations around the positions. Minefields tend to be hasty instead of deliberate, few engineer-emplaced obstacles are in evidence, and planning to move back under enemy fire is emphasized. The reduced effort is not a deliberate intent of the commander, but is a function of the lack of time available to plan and prepare a regular defense. A delay operation is usually given to an area where the available units are not sufficiently strong to stop an all-out attack by an enemy force. Notice that this does not mean that all units automatically begin a delay under enemy attack. If the enemy force is weak, the delaying force might not move and simply destroy the attack from the first delay position. Each movement back is planned to bring all units into a defensive line. In order to perform this movement in the face of a heavy enemy attack, units are directed to begin their moves prior to the enemy force reaching a point where the enemy fires prevent a unit from moving.

- **Strongpoint.** This is actually a specific case of the positional defense, but it merits its own discussion. In a strongpoint, a unit is given an area to defend and maximum effort is expended in preparing the area to resist an attack. Typically, a town is chosen as the site of a strongpoint. All other units in the defensive line may be required to defend in a positional or active defense, but are also required to plan around the strongpoint as the main effort of the defense. This means that a delay cannot be planned around a strongpoint: the resulting gap would create a weakness when the delaying units pulled back, and the strongpoint defender would end up surrounded.

What are the key factors in planning a defense? Conducting a good defense requires more than placing a unit on a piece of ground. How the defensive fires are oriented, where artillery will be used, what engineer-emplaced obstacles might aid the defenders, and what movement might be required to conduct the defense — these are a few of the considerations.

- **Alternate and Supplementary Positions.** A military unit does not plan its entire defense from one specific spot on the ground. Planning is made for conducting the same defense from a second spot in the same general area. This second location is called an alternate position. When the first position is under heavy enemy fire, the defender will shift to the alternate position. This forces the attacker to shift artillery and direct fires, giving the defender a respite from losses.

Supplementary positions are planned for the defender to use if the enemy attack should come from another direction than the one the defender plans for the first position to block. As with the alternate position, this area will be close to the first position used.

Both positions must be within relatively short movement times of the first position.

- **Orientation of the Defensive Effort.** At first glance, a map of a planned defensive area will look as if the attack can come from anywhere. But to the careful eye, certain details will become evident, indicating areas of enemy attack. Note Figure 3. The large arrows indicate the probable enemy movement routes for an attack against friendly forces in a "typical" defense scenario (i.e., an enemy force enters from the west edge of the map against a prepositioned defender; the victory condition for the attacker is to exit the east mapedge with a maximum number of units, and the defender's goal is to prevent the attacking force from exiting by destroying units). Before continuing, it must be understood that the routes shown do not indicate that the attacker will never utilize the woods and villages during his attack. It simply means that the overall movement of the attacker will be along the areas indicated.

The resulting pattern shows that there are only two routes possible to the attacker for the first half of the map, and only one general route off the map in the second half.

Continuing the analysis, it is evident that there are three distinct areas which an enemy force would probably travel through or near. These areas are designated kill zones, and the defense is planned with these areas as the primary consideration for how to orient the defense.

In planning the defense, it is best to assume that the enemy force will be large enough to have some elements by-pass the defensive positions if a positional defense is utilized. Since the overall objective is to prevent any enemy units from getting off the east mapedge, an active defense will be used.

The initial positions of a battalion assigned to defend this sector would be along a line from the town of Utzwingen to a point in the woods on the north mapedge (vicinity of hex 3700). The later positions of the defense are also shown in the Figure. Since the game enjoys far more information and control of the units than a real commander would, the exact sequence of use for the positions is not required. Simply put, a company size unit will move back, as necessary, to occupy a defensive position which will permit fires into the enemy forces.

1. Terrain which limits the effectiveness of direct fires and is highly useful to enemy forces. Examples of this type of terrain are woods and towns.
2. Terrain which cannot be covered by direct fires. Back slopes of hills and depressions are typical targets.
3. Areas around obstacles where the enemy would choose to go around the obstacle rather than attempt a breach.
4. Major road junctions.
5. Areas where the terrain would restrict the lateral movement of military forces, such as bridges or trails through woods/forest.

The artillery fires should be planned on such areas that meet any of these criteria, whether the area is in front of or behind the defensive positions. Additionally, artillery should be planned on the defensive positions in case the defender should leave the area due to a highly successful enemy attack.

• **Obstacles.** This is a much more difficult aspect to plan than artillery fires. Obstacles take a great deal of time to construct. Thus, if an obstacle is placed wrong, there is little opportunity to build a new one in front of an enemy attack.

Obstacles must always be covered by the direct or indirect fire of the player who emplaced the obstacles. Without such covering fires, an enemy force will breach the barrier with impunity. Granted that there is a loss of time to the enemy commander, but the main use of an obstacle is to delay the enemy under the effective fires of the defender by denying the use of critical terrain.

As with artillery fires, obstacles should be planned in front of and behind the defensive positions. One problem with obstacles is that they will hamper friendly movement if not carefully emplaced. In some instances, the barrier may be created after friendly forces are through the area (such as blowing a bridge), but the drawback is that the commander may find when the smoke clears that the barrier did not result. History is replete with examples of such disappointments.

What other factors are to be considered? Smoke is helpful to the defender. It can provide a needed screen when moving between positions. It can also be used to block the line of sight from portions of the attacking force. This allows the defender to "piecemeal" the enemy attack into groups that are outnumbered by the defensive units firing upon them. Care must be taken by the defender in using smoke. It is all too easy to inadvertently create a smoke screen which helps the attacker move around defensive positions.

If the defense relies on movement for maintaining effective fires on the attacker, then care must be taken to begin movement with sufficient time to make the move to the next position before the enemy is able to fire on the path of movement. If the attacker gets too close to the defender, the latter will find himself unable to move without opening his units up to effective direct fire from the attacker.

One of the best ways to avoid this problem is to stagger the movement of a defending set of units. As soon as the attack has begun, one or two small units start the move back to the next position. As the attack develops, more units from the defensive position are sent back. Finally, the last one or two units are pulled off just in front of the enemy, but with the next position back already occupied so that the defender can protect the last departing units.

Taking all of the points discussed on defense, it is time to go back to the map and look at the final set-up used by the defender (see Figure 4). Notice that the defenders do set-up on elevated ground in order to obtain effective fields of fire, but the tops of the hills and ridges have been avoided as much as possible, because defending units occupying such positions would be silhouetted against the skyline, permitting early detection. ■ ■



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Arab-Israeli

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though well drawn, are thick and clumsy and do not remove cleanly from their matrix.

Hits are cumulative, reducing movement and gunnery factors until the boat is sunk. Should a boat close with its opponent, it may also engage in ram combat. Victory goes to the survivor. The campaign game basically plays out a number of smaller battles for a cumulative total of wins.

Fast Attack Boats is fast, easy, and highly playable, but it only simulates the equipment, not the nature of the navies involved. It would be considerably better if played on a larger map, since the small playing surface forces artificial tactical constraints on the players. The game could also use some rules to simulate the morale and training of the different crews. However, it is a game worth considering when searching for one to introduce a novice to wargaming, since it offers fast action, lots of shooting, and is quite inexpensive.

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