
Infantry Leaders In ASL

Description



This article stems from a discussion that took place on the [ASL Discord server](#). A user asked if people playing the Finns used their leaders differently because the Finnish units can self rally. JR VanMechelen provided a really nice answer, offering a broad overview of how to use leaders in ASL. Some of his thinking mirrors the advice I offered in my article on attacking in Le Franc Tireur [From the Cellar 12](#).

I asked JR if he would like to author an article but he demurred, saying all of this is obvious. I agree, amongst grognards, much of this is a hard earned lesson. Fortunately for me, I have an audience with a broad range of experiences and I am sure this will be a revelation for some readers.

So without further buildup, here are my thoughts on the roles of leaders in ASL, prompted by JR's comments.

The Roles Of Leaders

Leaders in ASL have five primary roles:

- Rallying Broken Units
- Fire Direction
- "Steadying" positions
- Mobility
- Deploy/Recombine

Leaders in ASL have some secondary roles:

- Manning weapons requiring Elite units
- Cutting Rout paths of Enemy Units
- “Bump” scouting
- Other Single Man Counter Abuse Options
- Nationality Characteristics

Rallying Broken Units



This is a leader’s most important role in ASL. If you only have one leader, it better hide in the back, well protected, and solely focused on rallying units. This applies whether you are on the attack or defending. The only thing more important than planning for rout paths and rallies is understanding the Victory Conditions and how to achieve them. Without the VC, you cannot win. Without rallying troops back into the battle, you will probably not win.

Even if a unit has self rally capability, a leader-directed rally attempt removes the self rally penalty.

Fire Direction



Leaders with a negative Leadership DRM can apply this DRM to fire attacks from units in their Location. This Leadership DRM effectively strips the target of TEM. The better the Leadership DRM, the more TEM disappears. A 9 -2 directing a shot at a target in a Wooden Building changes that shot from a +2 DRM shot to a zero DRM shot. If that unit being directed possesses a MMG/HMG, there is a one third to one half chance the 9 -2 will get to use that Leadership DRM again. You must weigh this against the 9 -2's ability to rally troops. Units under DM and in Rally Bonus terrain, will have a net +1 DRM to their Rally attempt. This is a large swing in the odds. The offensive bonus must outweigh the ability to recycle units back into the line.

For this, I also include CCRF, to include the associated PAATC.

Steadying A Position



This is using a leader's DRM to help pass morale checks. Obviously, the higher the leader's morale, the more likely he can apply his Leadership DRM to the units in his Location. Leaders with a negative Leadership DRM occupy this role.

Secondarily, leaders prevent units from Cowering. This ensures your units will get full use of the firepower they possess. For key SW positions, leaders are almost a must if you can spare a leader for this purpose. Cowering shots do not place firelanes, cannot use SW ROF. On the defense, a unit which cowers is marked Final Fire and loses the ability to Subsequent First Fire. Even a leader with a zero Leadership DRM works in this capacity.

Mobility



Units stacked with a leader move at the rate of the leader. They have six Movement Factors (MF) moving normally and eight when Double Timing. A leader can carry one Portage Point (PP) which adds to a MMC's capacity. A unit carrying a 4 PP SW on its own has 3 MFs. Add a leader and that same unit has six MF.

Deploy/Recombine

Most units cannot do either without a leader. Deploying squads in half squads (HS) gives a player more options. A HS can still portage three PP. This allows you to spread the load over more units at the cost of some reduced firepower.

Extra units also provide tactical flexibility. You can spread out on defense. On the attack, you can take more Buildings, surround more broken squads, and cause more mayhem. A line of HS forming a firegroup in the AFP can be deadly if your opponent doesn't like shooting HS.

Secondary Roles



I will not go into each of these here. I offer most of these as simple food for thought. Single Man counter abuse takes many forms. My favorite is using Assault move with a MMC to get adjacent to a concealed unit and then using the leader to Non-Assault Move into the concealed unit's Location, stripping its concealment. This comes with Considerable risk. He could shoot your leader and all that implies. The enemy could be a Dummy Stack and your leader could find itself broken in a hex which it must Surrender from.

Still, a leader with a DC sitting behind your front line must be respected by the Defender. Your opponent must consider the possibility of a 30 FP attack delivered by a leader.

I include SW Recovery from broken units as a secondary role. Unless the SMC can man the weapon independently, recovery is most likely not your best option. Remember, SW can only be transferred in the Rally Phase and the Advance Phase. An SMC can recover and drop the SW in the MPh and hope a unit coming to the SW recovers it.

Specific Nationality Considerations

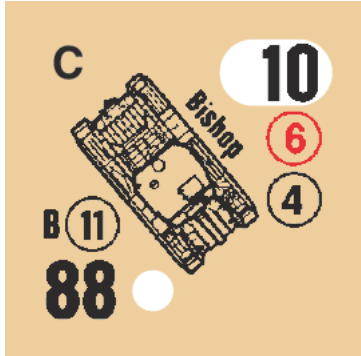


This section will cover nationality distinctions and how these might affect employment of

leaders in a specific scenario. I am sure there are other considerations and if you have some, please add them in the comments below. In no particular order:

- **British** – British elite and first-line units do not cower. There is no need to use a zero Leadership DRM leader to stop cowering.
- **Japanese** – Leaders are Commissars so remove DM before attempting a rally. Japanese units stripe rather than break so there is less need to play for rally. We need a leader to conduct a Banzai! which is likely the primary role of Japanese leaders.
- **Russian** – Can use Commissars in scenarios set before November, 1942. Russians have very few leaders. Those you have should likely think about rally before anything else. We need a leader to conduct a Human Wave but this is difficult to pull off after the scenario starts. Russian units cannot deploy but a leader may recombine HS into full squads as combat losses mount.
- **Finnish** – Finish units can self Rally and self Deploy/Recombine so you need not have a leader everywhere to accomplish those tasks. Finnish first line units may use a DC and flamethrower as if they were elite so no need for a leader to man those either.
- **American** – USMC may self deploy. For those playing Korean War scenarios, US Rangers can self Rally and self Deploy/Recombine.
- **Red Chinese** – We need a leader to activate a Dare Death unit's berserk charge. They possess "Kinder, gentler" Commissars. Leaders can direct Human Waves.
- **North Korean** – Leaders are Commissars. North Korean leaders can also direct Human Waves, when such are in effect by SSR.
- **Communist Chinese** – Leaders raise the morale level of other Good Order Chinese Communist Infantry/Cavlatry as if they were a Commissar.
- **CPVA** – May be granted Political Officers at setup. These are treated *almost* like commissars, but have different rules covering their capabilities.

Conclusion



As I said above, this is not likely comprehensive. If you have additional roles you use, please take a moment to share those in the comments section below. If you are a first time poster, your post will go into moderation status. I do this because it also moderates spammers who I can delete before you ever see them. I do not moderate your content, I just make sure it's legitimate ASL content. Once moderated, a cookie is set (if you allow it) so your future posts are not moderated. Sorry for this inconvenience but I don't want spam cluttering up my content.

Otherwise, I hope you enjoyed this article. I enjoyed writing it and thinking about what JR was saying. I know he thinks it is less than earth shattering, and while I agree, I also think there are some subtleties which are often overlooked by new and intermediate players alike. Until next time.

Finally, a couple of thank you notes. Thanks to JR for prompting this article. While I had covered some of this in my attacking article, I had covered none of the nationality distinctions. JR also did a much better job labeling the roles of leaders than I have done in the past. All credit for that goes to him.

Thanks to Andy Hershey for his clarifications on the KW leaders. I am personally weak on KW and Andy helped make sure this is right. - jim