
Attacking in ASL

Description



This article was originally published in [From the Cellar #12](#) from Le Franc Tireur. Xavier has given me the green light to republish this article here. It was always my intent to place this article here, but only after sales of FTC 12 tailed off. LFT still has some in stock so please go get one.

When published, I also published a companion post [here](#). The information contained in that post will generally be back inline here on this blog post. Still, it is worth taking a look there to make sure you can find all the reference material.

There are some slight changes compared to the print article. Xavier has graciously allowed me to use the original artwork from the magazine. I am generally going to avoid that. I think the artwork in the magazine is awesome and really makes the article pop. If I were to use that here there would be no reason to go purchase the magazine. As such, I will be using the artwork I originally submitted with the article.

Unfortunately, there are also a few clarifications to make in the original article as well as one mistake to correct. I will point these changes out when I make them. Without further ado.

ATTACKING in ASL...



A Mid-Level Player's Perspective...

by Jim Bishop

After reading Toby Pilling's excellent article, *A Player's Guide to A Self Defence* in Le Franc Tireur's [From the Cellar #11](#), I began thinking about what a corresponding Attacking in ASL article would look like. As I have admitted before, [I am not sure I am anything more than an average player myself](#). I am under no illusion that I am as accomplished a player as Toby. Still, I have had some success, placing 4th overall in the ASLOk GROFAZ tournament in 2014 and winning the Texas Team Tournament in 2016.

In [Illuminating Rounds #63](#), Toby spoke at some length about his defensive manual and briefly mentioned the need for an attacking manual. When asked, Toby admitted there is no way he is going to write such an article. I pondered what such an article would look like. What follows is my guideline for attacking in ASL.



I have broken the attack down into three specific sequences: Pre-Game, In-Game, and Post-Game.

Lastly, I will not proclaim this is the definitive How to Attack in ASL article ever written. I don't have that much hubris. I do hope this will spark some discussion in the various on-line ASL communities. ASL is a hard game to play and a harder game to master. I write this for all the new and beginning players. I hope this helps to lower the mountain we are all trying to climb. Don't fool yourself though. Attacking is the most difficult task in Advanced Squad Leader.

The 10-11 Commandments of Attacking

As the Attacker in ASL, winning and losing is up to you. It is up to you to fulfill the Victory Conditions (VC) or lose. You bear the responsibility for making it all happen. I offer these simple commandments of attacking in ASL.

0. As the Attacker, you're losing. It's up to you to make that into a win.
 1. Know the VC. They define how you can win.
 2. Know the time allotted. It defines your pacing.
 - Monitor your progress. "Winning" one turn after the game ends is still losing.
 - A Pyrrhic victory is still a victory in ASL.
 3. Plan your rout paths. Deny enemy rout paths.
 4. Understand how the terrain will affect the battle.
 5. Prevent skulking by putting those positions under fire.
 6. If it's not needed for the VC, it's expendable.
 7. Encircle at every opportunity.
 8. Take important shots first - don't let the SAN rob you of a chance.
 9. Bad stuff is going to happen. Who deals with it best usually wins. (Thanks Bill Cirillo)
 10. READ Chapter H notes for both side's vehicles and ordnance.
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Pre-Game: Setting Yourself Up To Win

As I was thinking about this article, I kept circling back to my October 2021 article titled [My ASL Tactical Maxims](#). That article outlined my approach to breaking down an ASL scenario. It encapsulates how I lay out a plan to fulfill the VC for my chosen side. It covers



both Offense and Defense, and speaks to comparing and contrasting your given OB with your opponents. Where do you have the advantage? How can you use that?

The Maxims article also discusses the **Tyranny of Time**. No matter what you're playing in ASL, time is finite. It is a limited and precious resource. It is no good to accomplish the VC on turn 7 in a 6 turn scenario. As the Attacker, you should have a clock constantly ticking in your head. You should know just how much progress you need to make. You should seize opportunities to "get ahead of schedule" when presented. Time saved now is time available later to weather a setback.

The last significant topic in this article is a discussion on terrain and how it affects our planning. Terrain is the stage upon which we perform our play. Some piece of it is likely to be our aim. Some of it will stop our movement (No-Go), impede our movement (Slow-Go), or be flat out inviting (Fast-Go). At times, Some of it will be "high-speed avenues of approach", the fastest way to victory. As an Attacker, these options need to figure into your planning.

I encourage you to read [My ASL Tactical Maxims](#) article, especially if you are just learning ASL or trying to get better at it. It is a little over 4 pages, see page 29. It is light on rules and heavy on planning. IMO, it is a must read to get the most out of this article. In fact, I encourage you to stop right here and go read the article again, even if you've read it. Still, that Maxims article leaves a lot of application up to the player's understanding.

To see how I apply my method, several examples are [here](#). These examples offer in-depth analysis of selected scenarios. They discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of each side's order of battle compared to one another. Each of these articles spends considerable time examining the terrain and how it will affect maneuver through the scenario. These articles also discuss how a defense might be set up and how an attack might look. They also discuss tactics that might apply to the scenario. I encourage you to have a look at the examples to see how I go about analyzing a scenario and planning for an attack. You can do this at your own leisure.

Know How to Win

Understanding the VC isn't enough in ASL. You must also understand how to fulfill the VC. If the VC says to Control 5 Buildings by game end, do you know how to Control Buildings? If you don't, you better make sure you understand before the game begins or you're making the task more difficult than it already is. This applies to every VC. Know what they mean and how to fulfill them. There is a huge difference between "No Good Order Infantry



within 5 hexes of hex N” and “No Unbroken Infantry within 5 hexes of hex N”. Even if you are 100% certain, discuss the VC with your opponent before the game begins. One of you may know something the other doesn’t and agreeing will make the game more enjoyable for both sides?

[**Editor’s Note:** Since this article first appeared in FTC #12, I have release a new article titled [Control Freaks](#). This new article explores Control issues.]

Make A Plan

Based on your opponent’s setup, the VC, the time available, and terrain which you must cross, make a plan that allows you a chance to succeed. As part of your plan, decide which forces will play which roles. Some will be maneuver elements. Some will be over watch and firepower elements. Regardless of the roles you define, each unit should contribute to fulfilling your VC in some meaningful way.

Plan the route of the attack. The attack should be over terrain, providing cover (TEM) and concealment (Hindrances). Try to create positive DRMs to mitigate the potency of the enemy’s defensive fire attacks. Look for approaches providing unobserved Rally Terrain. Some forces are going to break. It’s best they rout to places where the Defender can’t easily put them back under DM in an enemy fire or movement phase. Take a moment to look at the game board from the enemy’s perspective. Does it change the way the map looks? Does it change the way the defense looks? Remember, there are No-Go, Slow-Go, and Fast-Go terrain on the board. If the Attacker can freely take the Fast-Go terrain-or easily limit the Defender’s ability to put fire-power into it, the attacker can “steal a turn” by covering more distance through aggressive movement. Look for opportunities to get ahead of the timeline.

Be sure to allow tactical flexibility. Bad things are going to happen. The Sniper is beyond control. Same goes for dice. How are you going to recover if a Sniper eliminates a leader on one side of your attack? Some things may not be recoverable, that’s the nature of limited resources. Do the best you can to recover from setbacks. Having some idea of how you might react will go a long way towards making a correct decision when you’re under pressure.

While you must account for your enemy’s disposition, don’t allow him to dictate the terms of the engagement. You’re the Attacker. You move and shoot first. This gives you the initiative. Don’t give it away by allowing your opponent to set the conditions or pacing.



You decide where and when the engagement takes place.

Bite Off One Piece At A Time

Examine the defensive setup to see if there are some isolated elements that can be destroyed. Use MGs and AFVs to control the Defender's ability to reinforce laterally and bring the weight of the attack down on a small portion of the defense (the Schwerpunkt principle). This can rupture the position wide open and put the Defender on the back foot. Destroy this piece and then look for the next piece. Don't lose sight of the VC. It does no good to destroy a piece of the Defender's OB and still be no closer to fulfilling the VC.

A well-planned attack will play to the strengths, and minimize the weaknesses, of your units. It will attempt to capitalize on the enemy's weaknesses and setup flaws. It will capitalize on the terrain to create favorable DRMs for attacking units.

A well-planned attack identifies places where its units are likely to break and anticipates where those units will rout to. As such, a leader will be available whose role is to get to that expected Rally Location and be ready to Rally them. A well-planned attack will recognize the need to sustain the weight and impetus behind the effort by shuffling units back into the attack. If your attacks seem to lose initiative and deplete over time, this is the most likely reason.

Plan to Break and How to Sustain Your Attack. Fail to do so and you will probably lose.

Armored Fighting Vehicles in ASL

AFVs are worthy of special consideration in ASL. They are the "Swiss Army Chainsaw" of ASL. They have a multitude of options from which to choose every time they act. Give careful consideration to simply firing the MA in Prep Fire. The ability to move and fire in the MPh is unmatched in ASL and Bounding First Fire TH/TK attempts are likely far more effective than you realize. You should work the math out. It may surprise you.

AFVs which don't fire the MGs and get ROF with the MA in Bounding First Fire may opt to Bounding Fire the MA again in the AFPh. Don't overlook the chance to get Acquisition on a hard target in the AFPh, especially against Infantry units in high TEM terrain.

An AFV's mobility and invulnerability to Small Arms fire makes them an ideal candidate



for cutting rout paths, taking skulk positions under fire, and impeding your opponent's ability to move. Tanks need to be supported by Infantry. Ideally, they are supported by some other AT asset such as another AFV, LATW, or Gun. Isolated AFVs are easy targets. An isolated AFV in Motion is already dead if your opponent can reach it.

Tanks can provide cover to help your Infantry in the attack. Even if they don't have a Smoke Dispenser, AFVs can try for a Vehicular Smoke Grenade. We can use AFVs for Armored Assault to provide cover for advancing Infantry. AFVs are Hindrance if they aren't in Motion and haven't moved yet, giving still another reason to weigh the sequence in which you move your pieces. An AFV can impose Target Selection Limits freeing your Infantry to close on the target.

It's not all roses for AFVs, however. They don't break. Dead AFVs don't rally. The temptation to do something with an AFV can blind you to the idea that the AFV is already where it needs to be and simply doing nothing is the right thing to do. As my friend Guy Chenney says, "Tanks don't rout!" Use yours carefully, but don't let the thought of loss paralyze you.

You can find a whole series of articles covering [The Basics of AFV Combat in ASL](#) on my blog. There is a lot of information packed into those articles.

Roles Of AFVs As I See Them

Dave Ramsey said in an email exchange that the roles of AFVs in complex situations baffle him. To be fair, I think they sometimes get the better of me, but I will try to convey my approach to how I use them in my games.

Provide Cover: An AFV in any role can provide cover. Fire which passes through its Location is subject to a +1 Hindrance DRM. They can fire Ordnance Smoke, Smoke Dispensers, or place a Vehicular Smoke Grenade. AFVs can be used for Armored Assault.

Cutting Rout Paths: Is there a way to coerce a group of enemy units to Surrender or eliminated them for failure to rout? Of course, you must weigh the risk/reward of such a move, but a chance to eliminate a broken 9 -2 or 10 -3 is almost always worth it. Look for these opportunities.

Interdicting Lateral Reinforcements / Skulking Locations: If you can sort out the Defender's movement plan, attacking AFVs can disrupt this flow of enemy units. If there



are natural Skulk opportunities, seek to take these under fire from AFVs. The mobility of an AFV makes it well suited to line up these shots.

Combat Taxi: Whether as Riders or Passengers, AFVs can rapidly bring Infantry into the assault. Riders are vulnerable, but sometimes a necessity. This can sometimes “steal a turn” from the Defender. A turn saved early is usually more valuable later when you’re under pressure to accomplish the VC.

Support The Assault: I assign these AFVs to my assault group and they move with the assault, trying to capture their assigned objective. These AFVs provide cover as needed, to include the RtPh. This RtPh cover can be the difference between Surrendering and Routing. These AFVs provide MG support and an MA punch to drive off enemy Infantry. When properly supported by friendly Infantry, tanks leading the assault can be a real thorn in the Defender’s side. Sleaze Freeze is a common tactic among these AFVs.

Maneuver Group: AFVs in this role are seeking to slip through the Defender’s main line of resistance to get into their tactical space. Once there, these units can make lateral reinforcement and routing a nightmare. Properly used, these units can compel the Defender to fall back or stand and die. Such use comes with risk, however. These AFVs are not likely to have a lot of friendly support. As I said earlier, isolated AFVs are easy targets. If you do this, make sure you know The Basics of AFV Combat in ASL, particularly the Dance of Death. These units are a threat, being where they are only if they are alive when you need them to be. Know how to keep them alive. Armored Cars or other high MP vehicles are excellent in this role.

Infantry in ASL

There is no doubt Infantry capabilities are limited relative to their armored brethren. They lack the ability to use Bounding First Fire. Infantry doesn’t have the mobility of AFVs. They are subject to Small Arms attacks. Risks on the battlefield are everywhere, but Infantry has some important advantages not available to AFVs.

Infantry can rally and get back into the action. Infantry is necessary to take and hold ground. Taking this ground is most likely a requirement to fulfill VC. Sure, an AFV can Control a Location as long as it occupies the Location, but to keep a Location after leaving it, Infantry must enter (or Mop Up in the case of Buildings) the Location.



Like my series on AFVs, I have a growing collection of articles covering [The Basics of Infantry Combat](#) in ASL as well. The series currently examines Infantry versus AFV combat, including a second series topic covering [Defending Against Sleaze Freeze](#).

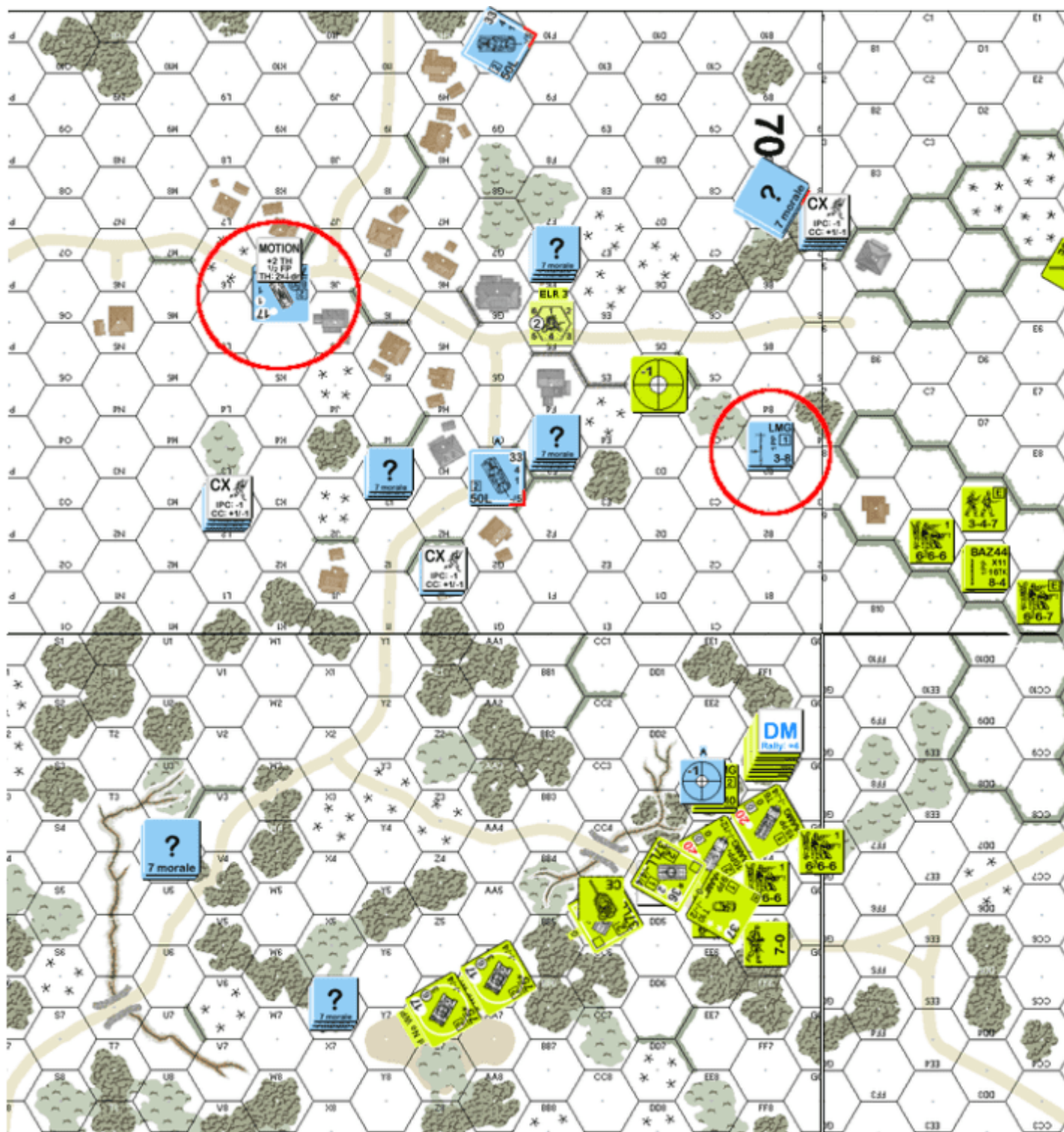
Finally, this article covers Snipers in a general way. It is possible to go deeper into the mechanics of Snipers and how to minimize the impact Snipers have. Such a discussion is outside the scope of this article. If you want a deeper article on the topic, I suggest Mark Nixon's *Hyper Sniper: A SANE look at this threat in ASL*. It can be found in [The General, Volume 31, Number 2](#).

[**Editor's Note:** Since this article appeared I wrote a complete article on the Roles of [Infantry Leaders in ASL](#).]

Example 1: The Setup

Pictured is the beginning of American turn 3 in AP 100 Coal In Their Stocking. I was playing the Americans. The VC comprises Building Control for the Americans and EVP/Building Control for the Germans. A very real threat for the Americans here is the AFVs getting free and exiting the north (right) edge. The Americans must also take buildings soon as their VC compiles points for Building Control over time. So what has the German given the Americans?

Notice the isolated and in Motion SPW 250/8 (circled in red). Also note it is facing to the southwest (top left) corner of the map. The AFV is really vulnerable to attack. In the center, a 4-6-8/LMG combo Pinned in the previous turn and is in a brush hex without TEM. With two halftracks (ht) and plenty of Infantry around, this should be an easy target to eliminate and break for failure to rout. Let's see how I fared with this.



During the MPh, I moved a half squad (HS) into the woods Location drawing fire from the 4-6-8/LMG. My opponent rolled a 1,1 which covered to the 8 column, but still eliminated the HS. With his unit now marked Final Fired, I overran (OVR) the German squad twice with hts. Neither OVR broke the German squad. In the AFPh, the two 6-6-6 squads in B8



took an eight even IFT attack and broke the German squad. In the RtPh, the German squad had to rout but had no legal rout options, so it was eliminated for failure to rout (FTR). Notice how the position of the two hts make this possible and how much harder this would have been for Infantry to achieve the same result.

This attack removed one piece of the German OB holding the center of the map and exploited a break achieved when the German squad pinned the previous turn.

Toby Pilling's Infantry Philosophy (And How My Philosophy On Attack Is Similar)

In his article A Player's Guide to A Self Defence, Toby talks about deploying his Infantry into platoons sized elements of 3 to 4 squads each. After this, he assigns leaders into each of these platoons. Platoons without leaders are broken up into platoons with leaders and form a reserve. He then assigns SW and missions to each of these platoons. I recommend you read Toby's article as it is a masterful work. Still, keep in mind Toby is talking about defending so his mind set is completely different.

Having said that, I do something similar on the attack. I start with the mission, identifying objectives and creating battle groups necessary to achieve each of those objectives. I assign the best morale units to the assault group—a maneuver element I expect to achieve the objective. If I have units with Assault Fire, they definitely go in the assault group. I assign lesser quality units to the “wings” of the attack as support groups. They are there to inhibit lateral reinforcement. If needed, lower-quality units can reinforce the attack should it be necessary. If available, I place units with Self-Rally capability into these support groups.

I then assign leaders, putting my best leaders with the assault groups. If leadership is limited, I keep them in the rear to Rally broken units and keep the attack going. If leadership is plentiful, the best leaders will be out front leading the attack while others will be on Rally duty. Sometimes, support groups will not get leaders. I try to keep a leader in support groups with key SWs, but this isn't always possible. If I have crews to man these SWs, they are a natural fit given their Self-Rally Capability.

Next, I assign SWs to each of the groups. I expect my assault group to be moving so they will not have any 4/5 PP SWs assigned. Otherwise, I will put a lot of LMGs, Flamethrowers, DCs, and some LATW in the assault group. Units in the “wings” get the heavier SWs and



some of the LATW. I expect these units to move during the game, but long-range weapons are better suited to their mission. They need to support the attack and cut off lateral reinforcement as the attack progresses. Since the wing elements won't see much AFV support, they need some LATW to have a fighting chance against enemy armor.

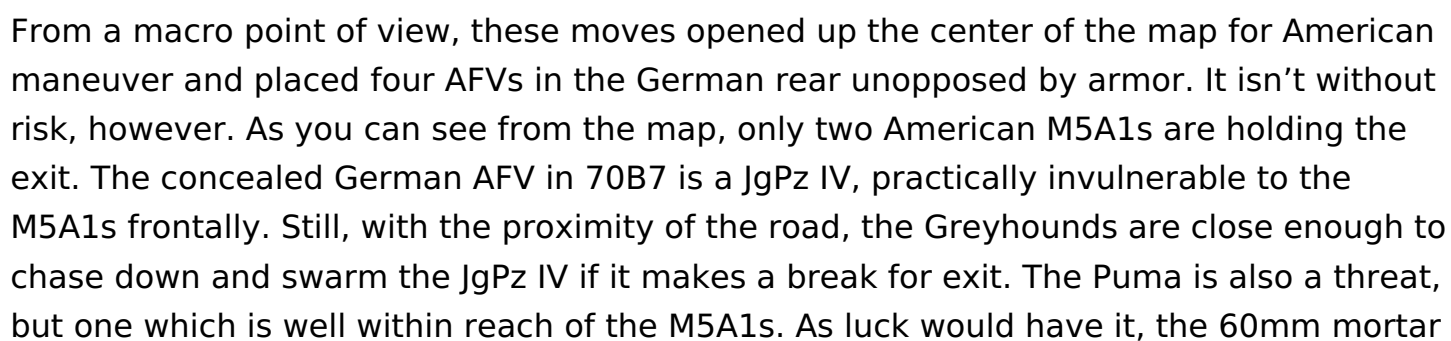
Finally, I assign any AFVs to each of these groups, favoring support of the assault group. Given everything an AFV does, I expect them to move so they are a natural fit for the assault group. I keep the AFVs in close contact with the assault group and cluster LATW around my AFVs. This allows the Infantry to keep enemy Infantry at bay while also presenting a threat to enemy AFVs. The AFVs provide a mobile pillbox to support the attack, cover as Hindrance or Armored Assault, SMOKE, and an MA punch if needed. If it comes to it, AFVs can also "sleaze freeze" a key position allowing Infantry to close on the Location and reduce it through fire.

[**Editor's Note:** Since this appeared in FTC 12 I published an article on [Defenses in ASL](#). This piece covered role-based defensive thinking which is applicable to the offense as well.]

Example 2: Taking What Is Given, One Bite At A Time

This image represents the AFV battle at the end of the turn. The Germans revealed a CX 4-6-7/LMG combo in L2 when the first Greyhound moved N1 to N4. The German unit opted for the 6+3 shot rather than attempting a panzerfaust shot. Even had the squad succeeded on its panzerfaust check dr, the Basic TH# at 3 hexes is a 6. There is a +2 DRM for Case J, a +1 DRM for Case P, and +1 DRM for being CX. Unfortunately for the German player, the result was no effect.

The 4-6-7 cowered and was marked Final Fired. The rest of the AFVs stream forward. One Greyhound took a Bounding First Fire shot and missed. The rest opt to shoot in AFPh to gain Acquisition. In the AFPh, every AAMG first shot at the 4-6-7 for a 2/4 flat shot. The German squad shook off the only morale check it took from the hail of bullets. The M8 HMC in L1 cracks a shot with the MA and rolls a 1,2 TH and finally breaks the squad. Every other gun acquired the hapless SPW 250/8. They eliminate the SPW 250/8 in the next German MPh. Sadly, the broken German unit could rout away.





eliminated one Puma in the next German Player Turn as well.

Other Random Considerations in the Pre-Game

- Pillbox Control is a chore. A broken unit cannot be forced to rout from one and can deny an enemy entry into it. Units inside and outside can engage in CC. If you need Control of the Pillbox, you need to plan on how to get inside. If it isn't empty, getting inside can take a second turn. Plan accordingly.
- Just like Pillboxes, Fortified Building Locations can be a chore to enter and Control. An unpinned, Good Order, armed enemy squad (or its equivalent) is enough to deny any number of friendly units from entering the Location. An AFV entering the Location may breach these positions—not just in bypass—or a DC can be placed to Breach. Of course, an attack which breaks or pins units in the Fortified Location will also make entry possible. If Fortified Locations are in the game, you must account for this in your planning.
- Understand how to count Casualty Victory Points (CVP). Sometimes these will count as true CVP. Other times, these may count as Exit VP (EVP) awarded as CVP. Sometimes a scenario SSR will dictate a different method of counting. Don't forget that Prisoners and captured enemy equipment are normally worth double unless negated by VC/SSR. Again, discuss this with your opponent as the game goes along to ensure you both have the same idea of what the CVP/EVP currently are.
- Multi-level buildings take time to capture. Units can break and rout upstairs denying Control for a turn or more, so be sure to account for the vertical distance needed to travel as part of your planning. If the only way up is via Stairwells, this presents an even greater challenge.
- Also, keep in mind that “Building Control” and “Building Location Control” are two different things. It is possible to Control the Building and not Control all the Locations within that Building. You can either enter every Location in that Building or Mop it up to gain Control of each Location in a Building.
- “Building Hex Control” is different again. It is possible to Control a building but not the hex the unit is in if an enemy armed vehicle is in bypass there (A26.11).
 - If your enemy has HIP units, Mopping Up a Building will put them on board and make sure you discover them while you can still deal with them. A HIP unit bypassed in an upper level Location has resulted in many lost games.
 - Don't forget the Rooftop Locations. Rooftops are Concealment Terrain for Setup purpose and units may HIP there. Such units will remain HIP as long as there are

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- no enemy units in LOS and at the same or higher level.
- Rooftop units can't deny Building Control or Building Location Control, but they can deny Hex Control and easily regain Control if not discovered.
 - You can't Mop Up if you have declared No Quarter.
 - For Building Location Control, Infantry must enter every Location in a building to gain Control.
 - Finding HIP units in upper-level Locations (bug hunt) becomes very challenging.
 - Kick your enemy when he is down. If you can reasonably put his units back under DM, do so. Of course, weigh the risk of being broken yourself if you remain exposed to enemy fire.
 - Weigh this against the possibility of HOB or SAN. If that broken unit is a Location to cause you havoc as a Berserk unit—or worse yet—a Rallied unit with a shiny new hero, consider the risk value proposition. This is hard to convey, but you should learn it with practice.
 - If you can maneuver to eliminate enemies for failure to rout, you should ALMOST always do this, particularly if you have a HS/Crew/Hero lying around.
 - Try to minimize the impact of the enemy SAN. This doesn't mean to pass up on low odds shots. You should take some of those low odd shots.
 - A well placed HS in lower TEM can soak up a Sniper Attack for more valuable units. So can a Dummy unit. Remember, Snipers only move on "spokes". Look at the position of the SAN counter, envision how it moves, and plan accordingly
 - Take shots nearer the SAN first, especially if they are important to your goal. If the SAN activates, at least those important shots have already been taken and you won't miss out on them.
 - Don't let a SAN worry you too much. Even a high SAN number shouldn't overly concern you.
 - Even if you roll his SAN, he still has to roll a 1 or 2 to activate it (33%).
 - Even if it activates, 50% of its attacks will only pin MMCs, Wound SMCs, and little stun AFVs.
 - You are going to get punished in unexpected ways by a SAN, you just can't let something neither side has control over blunt your attack
 - Some people recommend not taking a shot if the SAN is higher than the DR you need to achieve a NMC (e.g. don't take a 2 +2 shot if his SAN is 4 or higher). I disagree with this as the chance of a SAN hurting you is 1/3 of the chance you achieve a result. Instead, I look at the position of the SAN and asks if the risk of the worst possible thing happening is worth the elimination of the unit being
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targeted (e.g. don't risk your 9-2 to shoot a broken Conscript half squad).

- SMOKE. If you have it, use it. Even if you think you're using it enough, chances are you aren't.
 - This includes Infantry with Smoke Grenades. There is no harm in using remaining MFs trying for Smoke Grenades "just because".
 - Don't forget WP Smoke Grenades if you're playing the Americans (or 1944+ British, Elite Japanese Squads at any date, or G.M.D. 5-3-7 squads). Getting them is pretty random, but dropping a WP grenade into an enemy unit's Location can come as a nasty surprise for your opponent.
- Know your Atypical LOS situations.
 - You can gain more FFMO/FFNAM shots than you think.
 - Going uphill, vertex aiming points, road hexsides in a Woods-Road hex.
- Take notes on rules you learn or situations that come up.
- Don't slow the game, but don't rely on your memory.
- Doing so will help you learn and get better at the game.
- More games are won by cracking your opponent's Personal Morale (PMC) than any other method.
 - This includes you. You must be resilient in the face of pressure.
 - Keeping a calm demeanor lessens the impact of good/ bad DRs.
 - This doesn't mean you should attack his PMC through commentary. The game will do that all on its own. Don't be a bad sport.
 - I wish I could practice what I preach here Those who can do, those who can't write about it in blogs.

During Game: Things To Consider While Playing

So far, we have spoken mostly about planning our attack. A plan is important. Failure to plan will go a long way towards ensuring your loss, but planning isn't enough. Attackers must react to what happens during play. Sometimes, this means slowing the attack and sometimes this means pressing the advantage. This next section covers adapting the plan to the local conditions on the map.



As this article progresses, keep in mind the turn-based nature of ASL. Keep upcoming turns in mind. Failure to do so will cause a disjointed and diffused attack. I will try to point some of this out as I go through the game phases, but this discussion might jar thereader, seemingly coming from out of context. Better jarring here than jarring on the ASL battlefield.

Rally Phase

This phase becomes increasingly important as the game progresses. At the beginning of each Player Turn, we know the carnage from the previous Player Turn. It is here we must pick up the wreckage and feed units back into the attack.

Still, it isn't enough to consider the Rally Phase just when you flip the turn counter over. As the Attacker, begin planning the next Rally Phase in your MPh. The Attacker decides the point of attack and should know where units are likely to break. Knowing this, the Attacker should have some idea about how and where units will rout. The Attacker needs to identify and move "Rally leaders" to these Locations in the MPh. This is why "Rally leaders" often move last. If you often find your units trying to Self-Rally, this is likely because you are not planning routs early enough or moving all your leaders without knowing where broken units will rout to. Failure to plan also leads to attacks losing momentum or being disjointed.

When planning rout paths, ensure Rally Locations are out of the Defender's LOS. Keeping units under DM will be a Defender's priority. Doing so will slow the attack. Having multiple units taking Morale Checks while broken presents an opportunity hard to ignore.

Reassessing The Attack

Another benefit of seeing the carnage is the chance to reassess the avenue of approach being taken. Perhaps it is time to shift the axis of approach based on some local condition. If the Defender has taken excessive casualties, it may be time to reinforce the attack there. Perhaps consolidating local gains and recovering is in order if the attack has suffered excessive casualties. If the Defender is expected to counter-attack, perhaps it's time to consider how to receive this attack. See the example below.

The Attacker must account for reinforcements in his planning, it is here the Attacker decides where to employ them. Seeing the casualties on both sides, the Attacker can enter his forces where they will have the greatest impact. Knowing where the Defender's

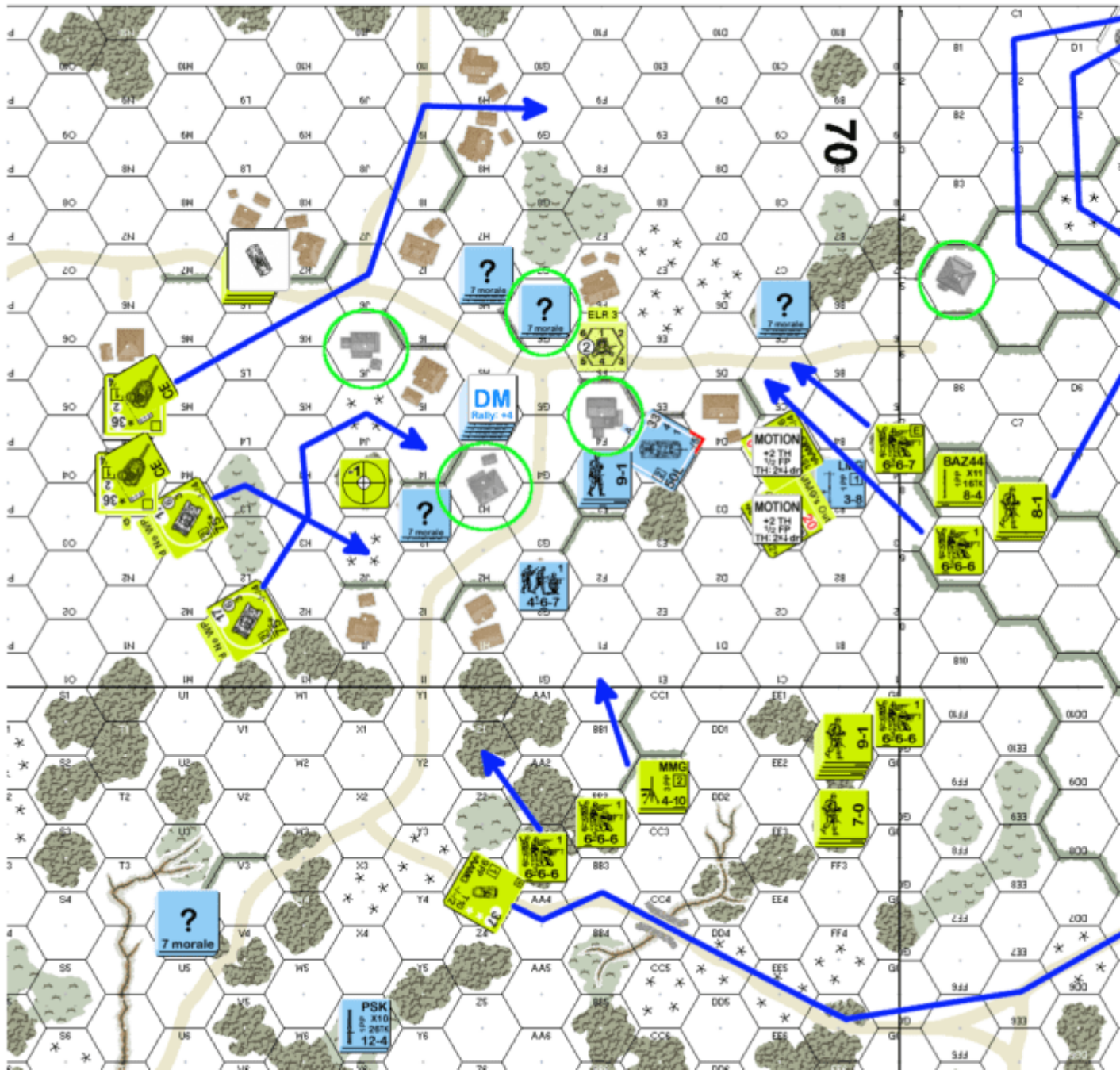


reinforcements may come from, perhaps the Attacker can move to interdict their entry and slow the defensive help. Remember, the Attacker has the initiative. The Attacker decides when and where the conflict takes place. The Attacker must use this to his advantage. Reassess your plan and change it as needed to ensure this continues to be the case. Change your plans to cut off lateral reinforcements as needed. Shift the focus of the attack if necessary. Take what the Defender gives you, but do so at a time of your choosing. Don't let the Defender distract you from your objectives.

Example 3: AP100, Reassessing The Attack

In this example, it is the beginning of the American Turn 4 in AP100 Coal In Their Stocking. The Americans win at game end by amassing more Victory Points than the Germans. The Americans gain 2 VP for each Stone Building they Control (circled in green) at the end of each Game Turn. Similarly, the Germans gain 3 VP for each Stone Building they Control at game end AND they gain EVP. At this point, the Americans are gaining NO VP. Additionally, the Germans are threatening to exit units off the north (right) edge of the map.

What can the Americans do to win?





As the American player, my plan was to take the B4 Building this turn. That would give me 6 VP at game end. I am easily in position to capture F4 and G6 by game end. That would give me 10 accumulated VPs. Assuming the Germans held on to the two remaining Buildings, the Germans would have 6 VP and the Americans easily win. This makes stopping the JgPz IV crucial to the American chances here. The JgPz IV is 7 VP if it gets off the map, meaning I would have to take one more building to win if it exits.

The blue arrows represent my thinking as I was playing the game. First, the units attempting to exit have to be cut off or eliminated. I started with the 60mm mortar attacking the JgPz IV in Prep Fire to no avail. The odds weren't great, but if I could eliminate, Immobilize, or Shock the TD, it would free up other units to move on to other objectives in the MPh.

In the MPh, I moved the Jeep first. I did this in case it would entice the JgPz IV to shoot. If it shoots, it cannot subsequently make a Motion attempt (unless it kept ROF) or use a Smoke Dispenser. My opponent did not fire. This put a 2-FP MG in place to cut off the Concealed MMC's exit. I don't know it at this point, but that is a single half squad (1 EVP) there.

I next opted to move one of the M5A1s. My reasoning for this is twofold: if the first one can eliminate the JgPz IV, the other is free to attack into the village. Second, if I cannot eliminate the JgPz IV with the first M5A1, I may need to bring the M8 Greyhounds on the N hexrow over to make sure I have enough chances to kill the JgPz IV.

As it turned out, the first M5A1 moved to the rear of the JgPz IV. My opponent declared a shot on the Stop MP and I declared a Gun Duel. I won the Gun Duel and shot first, failing to eliminate the TD. The return shot broke the JgPz IV's MA. The second M5A1 closed to take a flank shot and eliminated the JgPz IV. With its remaining MPs, the second M5A1 moved to support the Jeep against the concealed unit. This concealed unit was broken in the German MPh and could be easily rounded up by the Jeep.

The two halftracks moved next. They each "sleaze froze" units in the defense, particularly the 9-1/HMG combo in F3 and the (soon to be revealed) half squad/Panzerschreck combo in C6. Of note, as the ht moved to freeze the 9-1/HMG combo, I moved via the Puma's hex and placed a Vehicular Smoke Grenade in its hex. Because of this, I easily captured the B4 and the F4 buildings.



The now freed M8 Greyhounds moved to the F8 area to get encircling shots and cause routing problems for the German Infantry. One of the M8 HMCs moved to I4. Doing this set up the broken unit there for a failure to rout at the risk of a Panzerfaust shot from a leader. This same M8 took a Bounding Fire shot in the AFPh to eliminate the remaining Puma with a HEAT round.

In CC, the 9-1 eliminated the freezing ht, but did so as a Burning Wreck. With the additional +3 DRM, the 9 -1/HMG combo could not break my unit in F4 in his Player Turn. When the 9-1 advanced into F4 for CC, neither side was hurt but I gained 2 VP for Controlling the Location. At this point, I had 4 VP. I was going to gain another 4 VP by controlling B4, meaning I would have at least 8 VP at game end. I had 8 squads bearing down on H3 and G6. Capturing either would mean the most he could have at game end was 6 VP. In addition, I had nearly all of my AFVs and no CVP cap. Knowing I could “freeze my way to victory”, my opponent conceded at the end of his turn 4.

My attack was aggressive, but not reckless. I only lost one half squad through the first 4 turns. When my units broke, I had a leader in position to rally the troops back into the fray.

Of further note, reading the Vehicle Notes was important here. The American M3 MMG ht includes a full 6-6-6 squad as a Passenger. This unit isn't on the card. Furthermore, the Passenger can unload and take two dismantled MMGs as it disembarks. I took advantage of this to upgrade my firepower. This also meant the 6-6-6 Passenger could now break, rout, and rally rather than risk a Crew Survival DR.

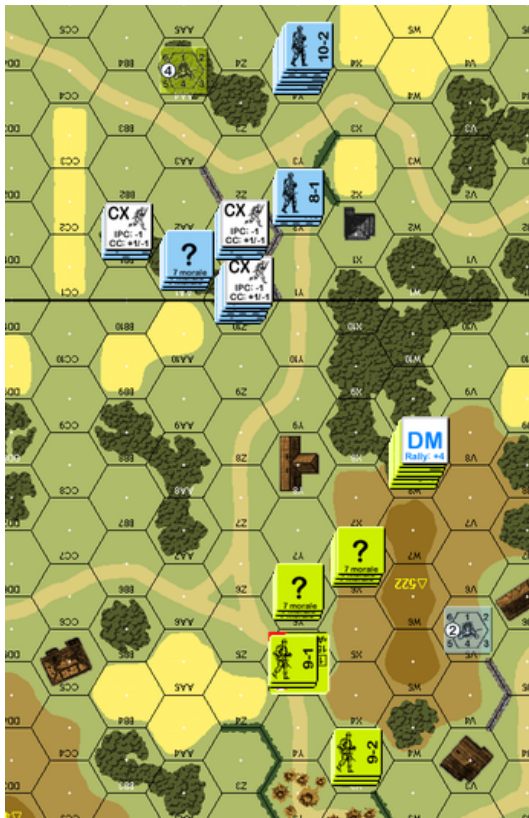
Do Not Forget The Defender's Player Turn

When planning for the upcoming turn, don't forget the Defender gets a say too. The Defender may opt to shoot your units. If this happens, where will your broken units go? Having a leader there to police up and feed these units back into the attack will be a key part of a successful attack.

Also, as the Attacker, planning on how to bring skulking positions under fire is the key to stopping your opponent from skulking. Being able to do this will often encourage the Defender to fall back. If you can interdict this repositioning, breaking units in Defensive First Fire and Defensive Fire is a powerful way to unhinge a defense. Units broken through Defensive Fire will attempt to Rally in your Player Turn under DM. This penalty will make it improbable these units will come back. Furthermore, the movement of broken units is not

completely under the control of the Defender. Attacking these units in the AFPh or moving ADJACENT to them in the APh will make them DM again. Better yet, aggressive movement might just make it possible to eliminate those units for failure to rout.

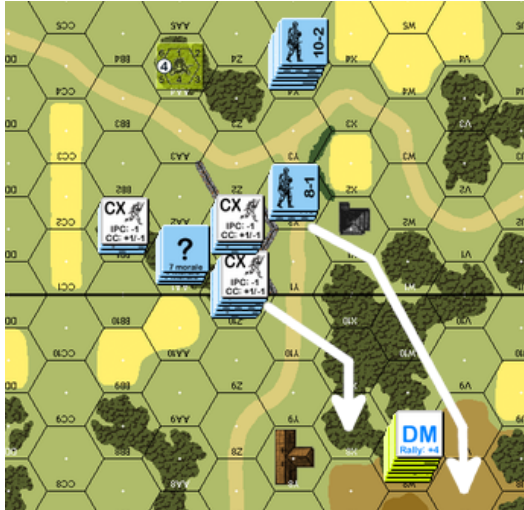
Example: Planning for the Upcoming Turn



Pictured is a portion of the board from a VASL game I watched. In it, the German player is on the attack. In his Defensive Fire, the German 10-2 stack broke some American units, which subsequently routed to W8.

In the German Player Turn, the units in W8 failed to Rally. The German player elected not to fire any of his units. It is now the German player's MPh. How can we safely eliminate the units in W8?

Here we see a plan of movement which accomplishes just that. The 8-1 stack in Y2 declares Double Time. It moves in Bypass of X1 and W1, through the Woods in W10, Bypasses W9, pays 2 MFs to get into V8 and ends its MPh in V7. At no time will this move come under fire from the Americans.



The units in Z1/Z10 (board seam) are CX. Fortunately, there is an 8-1 leader there. They lose CX at the beginning of their MPh and follow the path for 5 MFs. Now the American unit has no rout path available which does not move adjacent to a KEU.

Even though the units in V7 are CX (and unable to Interdict), the broken units in W8 would first attempt to Surrender. If the German play elects to not take Prisoners, eliminate the broken units for failure to rout.

Other Random Considerations For Rally Phase

- Deploy as needed.
 - Two half squads can carry more portage points than one full squad.
 - IJA half squads don't stripe and can recombine later.
 - They break in one step, whilst full squads take three steps to break.
 - When recombined at the destination, they return to Full-Strength squads.
 - Speaking of recombining, consider recombining half squads where needed.
 - Gain CC value.
 - Gain more fire opportunities—full squads can shoot inherent firepower

and SW where a HS cannot.

- Can do this in either player's RPh. This action requires a leader.
- Recover things you can.
 - Especially enemy CVP items which are doubled at game end in CVP games.
 - Especially enemy items which must be destroyed/eliminated/not possessed by game end.
- Don't forget to repair.
 - Be careful repairing AFV main armaments.
 - Tanks are so much more than just the Gun.
 - Losing everything else an AFV can do even without a MA can be devastating.
- Transfer SW and items as needed.
 - Take SW from CX units and give them to non-CX units to avoid the +1 DRM.
 - Give SW to units capable of using them without penalty (e.g. transfer a DC from a non-elite unit to an elite unit).
 - This is one of two times you can transfer/Abandon Prisoners.
 - You may deploy units not normally able to deploy when handling Prisoners.
 - Abuse this if you need to, especially with Russian Troops.
 - Note, transfer of Prisoners does not count against other Rally Phase options for units giving or receiving Prisoners.
- Don't forget to roll Shock/Unknown recovery dr.

Prep Fire

The PFPh is a hard topic to tackle. No other phase is as confounding as the PFPh. Many people will tell you to shoot. Top players will tell you if you're shooting you're losing and then shoot some of their troops themselves.

There are only a few rules set in concrete. Flip or remove any of your own SMOKE counters currently in play at the beginning of the phase. Make sure you account for the reduced/removed Hindrance DRM in your RPh planning. Next, should you choose, place Ordnance SMOKE first. After that, OBA SMOKE followed by OBA if available. Beyond those, the rest of the phase is a series of tradeoffs.

Any unit which Prep Fires or Opportunity Fires cannot move in the upcoming MPh. These units also lose any concealment they may have had. As the Attacker, movement is likely a requirement to win. Your movement should include a plan to stop the Defender from laterally reinforcing his defense to blunt your attack. Fire lanes in your upcoming



Defensive First Fire are good for this.

Weigh all of this against the need to move. Breaking enemy units at the point of attack is likely to free up movement opportunities for other units. Sometimes, it may be better to Opportunity Fire units in order to bring the full weight of your firepower to bear in the AFPh after your movement has induced the Defender to drop concealment. Also note, units which Opportunity Fire can avoid the Case C3 DRM for firing LATW under Desperation. Of course, the unit will have to survive Defensive Fire to take advantage, so this isn't without its downsides.

After all of this, the best that can be said about Prep Firing is that it is a learning process. Keep in mind the time remaining to accomplish your mission. If you have plenty of time, there are more chances to Prep Fire. If time is running short, lean towards movement. Still, there may be some key defensive positions needing neutralization to free up movement options. Sometimes, this means firing in Prep Fire. Sometimes, AFVs can deal with them in Bounding Fire or other ways (e.g. "Sleaze Freeze").

Try to keep in mind the order in which you fire shots. Some orders are better than others. Shots closer to the enemy Sniper counter are best taken first lest an active SAN break or pin these units first. Early shots that break or pin a unit can free other units to move more aggressively forward. Encirclement has to be done sequentially and can be an exception to taking big shots first: a low-FP shot first followed by a higher-FP shot that completes the encirclement has a better chance of breaking the target.

Unfortunately, all of this is something learned by playing, so pay attention to the way you order your attacks and ask yourself if you could have done better.

Other Random Considerations For Prep Fire Phase

- Don't forget "mop up".
- Don't forget Entrenchment DRs (but also don't forget these can generate a SAN).
- Designate new spotters, when otherwise allowed to.
- Limber/un-limber Guns and mark the Crew TI.

Movement Phase

American General George S. Patton Jr. once said, "A good plan executed violently now is better than a perfect plan next week." The same holds true for ASL. When in doubt, attack aggressively and keep your opponent under pressure. Don't confuse aggression with



recklessness, however. Sometimes, there is a very fine line between the two.

AFVs In The Movement Phase-More Powerful Than You Think

I have written a whole series of articles covering the [Basics of AFV Combat](#) in ASL, so I will not repeat all of that material here. I recommend you read them and try to think about AFVs in an attacking context. Still, I will repeat some points made in those articles.

AFVs are the most powerful pieces in ASL. Their ability to move, place Smoke, shoot, and provide cover for assaulting Infantry is unmatched in the game. Even when eliminated, their wrecks can continue to provide some cover to your remaining units. As I have said in other articles, don't be afraid to lose AFVs as long as their elimination leads to victory. There are some special risks you must know as the Attacker and account for them in your plans.

AFVs in bypass are vulnerable to being shot in the side. Be aware of this and try to limit the Defender's opportunities to take side-shots. Still, bypassing in the right place can provide shots and opportunities your opponent didn't expect.

Understanding Gun Duels can be the difference between a functioning AFV and a Burning Wreck. Even for Gun Duels you can't win, declaring a Gun Duel ensures your AFV gets the next shot if it survives.

Know the Dance of Death. Unless your AFV is nearly invulnerable to all enemy fire, taking on an enemy AFV one versus one is rarely a good idea. Knowing how the enemy AFV might defend, what its options are, and how you can create the best odds for success is often key to taking out an enemy AFV. Placing Smoke or dropping a Rider in an enemy AFV's Location inflicts target selection limits on it and reduces the enemy tanks options.

Hull-Down positions significantly reduce the risk to your AFVs. Don't forget to roll for pre-game Hull-Down maneuvers if your AFVs qualify, even if you plan on moving them anyway.

Beware of DI shots. Not all mission kills result in the AFV's elimination.

Aggressive play recognizes the risk and does the best it can to reduce the risks. Dashing, Smoke, and Sleaze Freeze are all examples of risk mitigation. Moving with half squads first to draw fire and limit Subsequent First Fire options can also reduce the risk for follow



on movements. Use the terrain to reduce the risk further. TEM and Hindrances can eliminate or reduce negative DRMs. The proper use of Smoke is a must. Staying out of LOS behind cover or in Blind hexes eliminates the risk altogether.

As the Attacker, movement is a must. The attack must progress against a ticking clock. When in doubt, move. If your units have Assault Fire, they should almost always be moving rather than firing. If they get adjacent to enemy Locations, they almost always have more firepower after movement than before. Don't underestimate the value of multi-hex fire groups in the AFPh, particularly if your units have Assault Fire.

During your Movement Phase, keep in mind the Defender's upcoming turn. Which units are likely to skulk? Is the enemy likely to fall back to a second line of defense? Maneuver to place his skulk Locations under fire or interdict his escape path. Try to force your opponent to make hard decisions under pressure.

As the Attacker, expect some of your units are going to break on the attack. Even while we make best efforts to reduce risk, good DRs happen. Something is going to break. As the Attacker, you must identify which leaders are "Rally Machines." It will be the role of these leaders to lag behind the attack and round up broken units so they can be fed back into the attack.

As your units break, take a movement to figure out where that unit is going to rout to. Can it rout? If it can't rout, does it need some type of cover to avoid Interdiction? Sometimes it is necessary to create some form of cover to even make routing possible. As the Attacker, account for these things. Once we identify the rout destination, you know you must move the "Rally Machine" there before turn's end. As you continue to move, try to move in such a way that anything breaking will rout to the same Location or have more "Rally Machines" identified to move to those other rout destinations. The key to a relentless attack is cycling units back into the attack as quickly as possible.

I have alluded to how important the order of movement can be, but I haven't addressed it directly yet. There are no hard and fast rules to offer in this, but there are some things to consider:

- Move "Rally Machines" only when it is safe to, often last.
- Carefully consider when to move AFVs.
 - Do they need to provide cover for the assault?
 - Do they need to provide cover for routing?
 - Can they get into position to interdict skulking or withdrawal paths?

- Can they take a Bounding First Fire shot in lieu of a Prep Fire shot?
- Move low value units to draw fire and limit Subsequent First Fire options.
- “Sleaze Freeze” units move earlier to free up subsequent movement (but be aware of CC Reaction Fire, especially if there’s a leader there).
- If the Defender holds his fire, continue to build a firegroup shots with low value units for the AFPh.
- **BEWARE MOVING INFANTRY INTO LOCATIONS THEY CAN’T ROUT FROM IF THEY BREAK.**
 - This can be hard to see when you first learn ASL.
 - To avoid this, always ask, “where does this unit rout to if it breaks?”

Lastly, when moving, don’t overlook opportunities to take VC Locations “on the march”. You make these captures when there are no enemy units to oppose the particular VC you’re achieving. Such captures are far easier than having to capture them when opposed by enemy forces and can slow the clock’s progress (you remember the clock ticking in the back of your mind, right?).

Deployment To Increase Movement (CX/Transfer Games)

A4 MF/PP CHART												
Unit(s)*	IPC†	0pp	1pp	2pp	3pp	4pp	5pp	6pp	7pp	8pp	9pp	10pp
SMC	[1]	6	6	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
CX SMC	[0]	8/7	7/6	6/5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
SMC w/SMC	[2]	6	6	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
MMC	[3]	4	4	4	4	3	2	1	0	0	0	0
CX MMC	[2]	6/5	6/5	6/5	5/4	4/3	3/2	2/1	1/0	0	0	0
MMC w/Hero	[4]	4	4	4	4	4	3	2	1	0	0	0
CX MMC w/Hero	[3]	6/5	6/5	6/5	6/5	5/4	4/3	3/2	2/1	1/0	0	0
MMC w/Leader	[4]	6	6	6	6	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
CX MMC w/Leader	[3]	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/5	5/4	4/3	3/2	2/1	1/0
CX MMC w/CX Leader	[2]	8/7	8/7	8/7	7/6	6/5	5/4	4/3	3/2	2/1	1/0	0

* First listed unit possesses *all* PP.
† [#] is combined IPC (SMC + MMC)
Cross-referenced # is MF for that stack.
First number represents MF if designated unit(s) declare(s) Double Time at *beginning* of that unit(s) move;
Second number if Double Time declared *during* that unit(s) move.
Subtract one MF from all cases for Inexperienced penalties (A19.31).

By deploying the squad into two half squads you open up chances for increased movement. The first half squad possessing the 5PP weapon Double Times. The leader



carries one PP leaving 4PP for the HS. Looking at the 4PP column, we see a CX'd half squad carrying 4 PP has 6 MFs. In the APh, the CX unit transfers the 5PP SW to the non-CX'd unit which can fire the SW without CX penalties.

In the next Attacking Player turn, the first unit loses its CX, the unit possessing the 5 PP SW declares Double Time, and the unit possessing the 5 PP SW has 6 MFs again.

Other Random Considerations For The Movement Phase

- Berserk units move first.
 - I try to stack Berserk units on top so the orange counter is visible.
 - The red berserk counters available from some TPP are really helpful here too.
- Know how to limit enemy fire opportunities.
 - Even if they can see it, they can't shoot it if units restrict their fire.
 - This is key to freeing up other units to maneuver.
- Cut rout paths.
 - Failure to rout is the greatest killer in ASL.
- Don't be afraid to take some risks-Risk an Original DR 4 (This is from Bob Bendis).
- Don't fear HIP.
- Covering fire-A.K.A. Opportunity Fire.
- Have a plan to overcome or bypass Obstacles.
 - Go around them?
 - Breach them?
- Reinforce success.
 - Why keep banging your head against a wall.
 - Just make sure the exploitation can lead to victory.
- Don't be overly afraid of Residual FP.
 - But have a plan when you break.
 - Don't forget you get the TEM versus RFP when by passing terrain.
 - Do respect minus DRMs.
 - Move into Residual FP one unit at a time.
- Consider the various ways for reconnaissance.
 - Bump scouting.
 - Search.
 - Drawing fire.
- Recover SW.



- May attempt to clear Flame.
- Declare Clearance attempts here.
 - Resolved in CCPh.
 - Make sure you look up the rules if you plan on clearing Obstacles.
- Declare Search and resolve as part of MPh.
 - Casualties from searching occur here too.
- Infantry Smoke can be used to cover an AFV's retreat too!
 - Use Infantry movement to place Smoke Grenades between the firer and the target AFV.
 - Every grenade placed is a +2 DRM in the MPh; three grenades block LOS.

Defensive Fire Phase (in your opponent's Player Turn):

As I said above, the key to a good Defensive Fire Phase as the Attacker is to plan for it during the previous MPh. A good Attacker will seek to limit or eliminate the Defender's ability to reinforce laterally. To do this, the Attacker must anticipate how the Defender might move his units around and try to interdict that movement.

A good Attacker will try to limit the Defender's ability to skulk. This entails envisioning where the Defender's units might skulk to and then maneuvering to bring those locations under fire, especially if they are open ground. There are at least two benefits to cutting off skulking opportunities:

- If the Defender can't skulk, he will either withdraw to a new line or fire from where his units are.
 - Your superior numbers at the point of attack should count more if he elects to fire.
- If the Defender withdraws, his path to the next line will probably include the position he was seeking to skulk into.

In either case, these outcomes are a product of a well executed MPh.

Thinking About Defensive Fire - Defensive Fire In Place Of Prep Fire

Bob Bendis—a top American ASL player—once told me to think of my Attacking Defensive Fire Phase as Prep Fire for my upcoming turn. At first, this advice puzzled me. After thinking about it, I saw just how right he was. Systemically, the Attacker gets a Defensive



Fire Phase followed by a Prep Fire Phase. Anything broken or pinned as part of the Defensive Fire Phase is not likely to Rally in the upcoming Rally Phase as it will be under DM. Even if it is rallied, it is not likely to be in the best position to stop forward movement on this turn. Furthermore, such units are not likely to be in a strong position for the upcoming Defending player's turn and will have to move to improve their position.

The more I thought about it and the more I played ASL, the more I came to see how powerful this line of thinking is. I now fired a lot less in Prep Fire and favored maneuver. My attacks became more aggressive. I worked harder to get into position to stop skulking. My opponent's withdrawals frequently came under attack as I thought ahead. I was taking more shots in the Advancing Fire Phase.

Just like units broken in Defensive Fire, units broken in the AFPh are likely not going to be in strong positions or properly deployed to face an attack in your next MPh. If you don't understand why, think about it some. At the end of your turn, such units will rout. They will rout to get out of LOS so they can't be put under DM. In the Defender's turn, they are not likely to recover because of DM. This means they can't move or advance and may still be in big stacks. In your Player Turn, they will probably recover. Those units won't be concealed or in a position to interdict your upcoming movement. These units will have to move in the Defender's next turn and aggressive movement can cut off his escape path and allow you to overwhelm this weakened position through fire and maneuver.

Seriously, if you take only one thing from this whole article, I beg you to sit down and think about this concept and how it can alter the way you approach the game. Thanks for the insight, Bob.

If the Defender has broken units in LOS, prioritize them if there is a leader with them or a leader who can Advance back to them in the APh. It makes no sense to DM those units and let them freely rout to a leader when they can't Self-Rally in your upcoming turn. You can easily handle these units through maneuver and putting them into a Surrender or failure to rout situation.

Unlike Prep Fire, shooting will not limit your unit's ability to move. Take as many shots as you can. As I noted above, don't let the SAN number slow you down too much.

Other Random Considerations For The Defensive Fire Phase

-



Encircle if you can.

- Double MFs to leave the Location, and may cause the units to become CXed.
- Lowers morale by one.
- +1 DRM to fire out therefrom.
- Locations are Encircled, not units.
 - If your units Advance into an Encircled Location, they become Encircled once covered with a Melee counter no matter who did the Encircling.
 - Encircled units Adjacent to a KEU don't rout, they Surrender.
- Don't forget upper level Encirclement.
- Don't forget Snap Shots.
 - A 2 flat Snap Shot is better than a 4 +2 shot at the destination.
 - It's cheesy and some tournaments ban it, but a wall doesn't block LOS to its own Location so you can Snap Shot a unit falling back behind a wall.
 - This can be powerful if the Defender seeks to skulk behind a wall.
- The Defender may designate new Spotters for mortars, if otherwise eligible.
- Make Clearance DRs in the Defensive Fire Phase.
 - There are some exceptions.
 - Make sure you read or know the Clearance rules if you plan on clearing an Obstacle.
- Disassemble or reassemble SW if you plan on moving in the MPh.
 - This is especially true for 5PP SW.
 - Alternatively, you can deploy a possessing squad and play CX/transfer games.

Advancing Fire Phase:

Just as with Defensive Fire, an effective AFPh is determined by the Attacker's MPh. Through maneuver, seek to apply pressure on key points of the defense holding you back from victory. Where possible, seek to Encircle key enemy positions. Almost as important, seek to be in position to Interdict broken units in "must-rout" situations. Keep in mind units with positive DRMs (CX, Hindrance, etc.) cannot Interdict. Also, do not fire on units which will Surrender or be eliminated for failure to rout. Why give them a chance to return with a Heat of Battle DR?

Do not fire on broken units adjacent to Concealed attacking units. Concealed units do not place the broken units under DM. Nor do they allow them to rout away. Given the favorable ambush modifiers and defending as broken units in CC, the Attacker is likely to eliminate the broken units and be able to Infiltrate. Even if Melee forms, Melee will compel the broken units to Withdraw in the Defender's Player Turn. Even if the broken unit



somehow survives Withdrawal, it won't be able to rally and attacking units will be free to fire and maneuver as needed in the next Attacking Player Turn.

It is important to understand how Assault Fire works. It plays a significant role in some attacking formations. To qualify for Assault Fire, the shot must be within Normal Range. The worst an Assault Fire shot can be is 2. No matter how small the fractional firepower remaining is, it will round up to 1 and add 1 more for a final 2 fire power shot. Assault Fire from adjacent Locations will usually add 1 to the printed firepower. Multi-hex fire groups of Assault Fire-capable units can get to quite large columns, so plan your shots accordingly.

Unlike Prep Fire, any unit firing in AFPh can still Advance in the Advance Phase. There is little, to no, reason not to fire if the shot has even a marginal chance of success. Take important shots first to prevent a SAN from ruining those shots. Remember, take Encircling shots in sequence and use the largest firepower shot you can to complete the Encirclement.

You may fire White Phosphorus from Ordnance Weapons in the AFPh. It must still be the FIRST shot taken as part of the AFPh and it places Dispersed WP. Such WP can still generate a morale check if placed in a unit's Location. Even Dispersed, it creates Hindrances which might provide cover for routing units that might otherwise Surrender. You remembered to move a "Rally Machine" to support the broken units, right?

Other Random Considerations For The Advancing Fire Phase

- Don't forget Flame and Blaze spreading.
- SMOKE flips again if Gusts are in effect this Player Turn.
- SMOKE Drifts downwind.
 - This happens before AFPh shots take place.
 - Drifting SMOKE uses "grey" counters.
- Crews may Limber and Unlimber Guns as required.
- If Case J theoretically applied to a Stopped AFV or Wreck, it doesn't count as a Hindrance until AFTER the AFPh.

Rout Phase:

As has been suggested so many times in this article, success in the Rout Phase comes down to properly executing the MPh. As forces maneuver into harm's way, the Attacker must pay attention to where those troops are going to rout to. Knowing where broken



units are bound for, there should be a leader there for the broken unit to rout to. The rout phase should not come as a surprise. If you find your units mostly conducting Self-Rally attempts or leaders scrambling all over to Rally units back into the attack, start examining how you execute your attacks and how your leaders are moving. Many players see a leader and think it should lead the attack from the front and then wonder why their attack lost its momentum. If your attack has left behind a string of still-broken units, perhaps it's time to reassess how you use leaders.

Pay particular attention to units moving next to enemy units when on the attack. If these units do not have a rout path free from Interdiction, they are in danger of surrendering. These units should move either first, so the attacker can create cover for them to rout away if needed, or last after drawing off as much firepower as you can to increase the survivability of these units. If you find yourself losing units for failure to rout as the attacker, you need to improve this portion of your game. The Attacker should be causing failure to rout, not losing units to failure to rout.

Other Random Considerations For The Rout Phase

- The Attacker isn't likely to Voluntarily Break in his Player Turn.
 - It can be a sneaky way to "double move" by routing forward.
- Disrupted units Surrender to ADJACENT, Good Order Cavalry/Infantry.
- Eliminate units remaining in a Blaze Location.
- This is a good time to Voluntarily Break if you need to.
- Surrendering units subject to Interrogation if Interrogation is in play.
- **Just because a unit is broken, doesn't mean it can't be useful.**
 - Enemy units can't enter a broken unit's Location unless the broken unit is Disrupted.
 - This can deny terrain to enemy units.
 - Broken units can deny rout paths.
 - Units can't rout towards KEU, even if it is broken.
 - The Phasing player routs first so this can be taken advantage of.
 - Broken units can still inflict DM on enemy broken units.
 - Units can't rout towards a KEU, but if the broken unit begins the RPh out of LOS...
 - Also a good candidate for Voluntary Breaking.

Advance Phase:



At this point, all the movement is done. Routing is sorted out. What remains are small micro-adjustments to the line. Any Good Order, un-Pinned unit of the phasing player may move up to one Location. There are some situations which will Counter Exhaust (CX) the unit so pay careful attention, also Berserk units cannot advance.

As a part of this phase, SW/Guns/Prisoners may be transferred between units. The transfers will inherit the Concealment status of its new possessors. Units accepting Prisoners may deploy even if not otherwise allowed to deploy.

Deciding to enter or avoid Close Combat is the most fateful decision made in this phase. When deciding, consider Ambush drms, CC DRMs, and CC attack odds. Where possible, don't enter into CC unless at least one of these favors your side, preferably all three.

As noted in the AFPh section, advancing Concealed units into CC with broken units can be very profitable. Don't hesitate to do this.

If you want to do an in-depth study of CC odds, I recommend Bruno Nitrosso's article *THE CLOSE COMBAT SIMULATOR – What To Expect When You're ... Close Combating!* in [ASL Journal 10](#). *The Fine Art of Bushwhackin'* by Dave Ollie in [ASL Journal 4](#) is a great article on covering the odds of Ambushing in CC.

Other Random Considerations For The Advance Phase

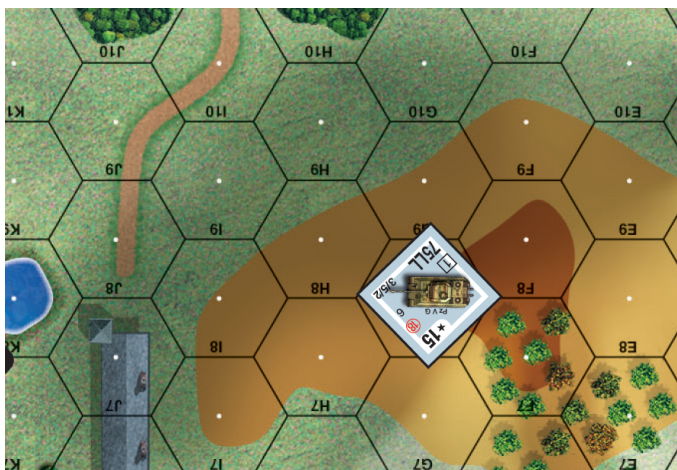
- Hindrances and other positive DRM allow units to Advance into otherwise open ground and remain Concealed.
- Transfer SW/Guns/Prisoners as needed.
- Japanese MMC Adjacent to an AFV may attempt Tank-Hunter-Hero creation.
- Don't forget about the Defender's skulking options.
 - It's too late to think about them in Defensive First Fire.
- If you think the Defender will fall back to his next defensive line, try to put those paths under fire.
 - Remember the power of breaking units in Defensive Fire.
- Don't forget to cut off or impede laterally reinforcing units.
 - As the attacker, you've worked hard to this point to achieve local force superiority. Don't let the Defender even the odds back out.

Maskirovka by Toby Pilling

In Russian, Maskirovka literally means ‘masking’, and was mostly used after the Battle of Kursk to disguise the axis of attack of grand Soviet offensives – often very successfully.

When defending in ASL we have a plethora of tools, like HIP and concealment, to mask our set up. When attacking though, in our tactical game, it is much harder to evoke the fog of war. There is one stratagem though that readers may find useful and I have used it to great effect in the past: misleading your opponent through your initial offboard dispositions.

Commonly, players set up their forces offboard exactly where they intend their forces to enter. This usually makes sense because it maximises the potential movement of those assets onto the board and towards their objective. However, doing so provides intelligence to their opponents of their likely entry points. There are occasions where, particularly if a unit intends to only advance on board or move a couple of hexes, that it can be wiser to obscure their intended destination hex by having them set up offboard a number of hexes away from it – during their movement phase, they move offboard towards their entry hex before entering. Undertaking this stratagem is a good habit to get into, as all deception is useful to employ against opponents – planting seeds of doubt in their minds has a psychological effect that can degrade their play.

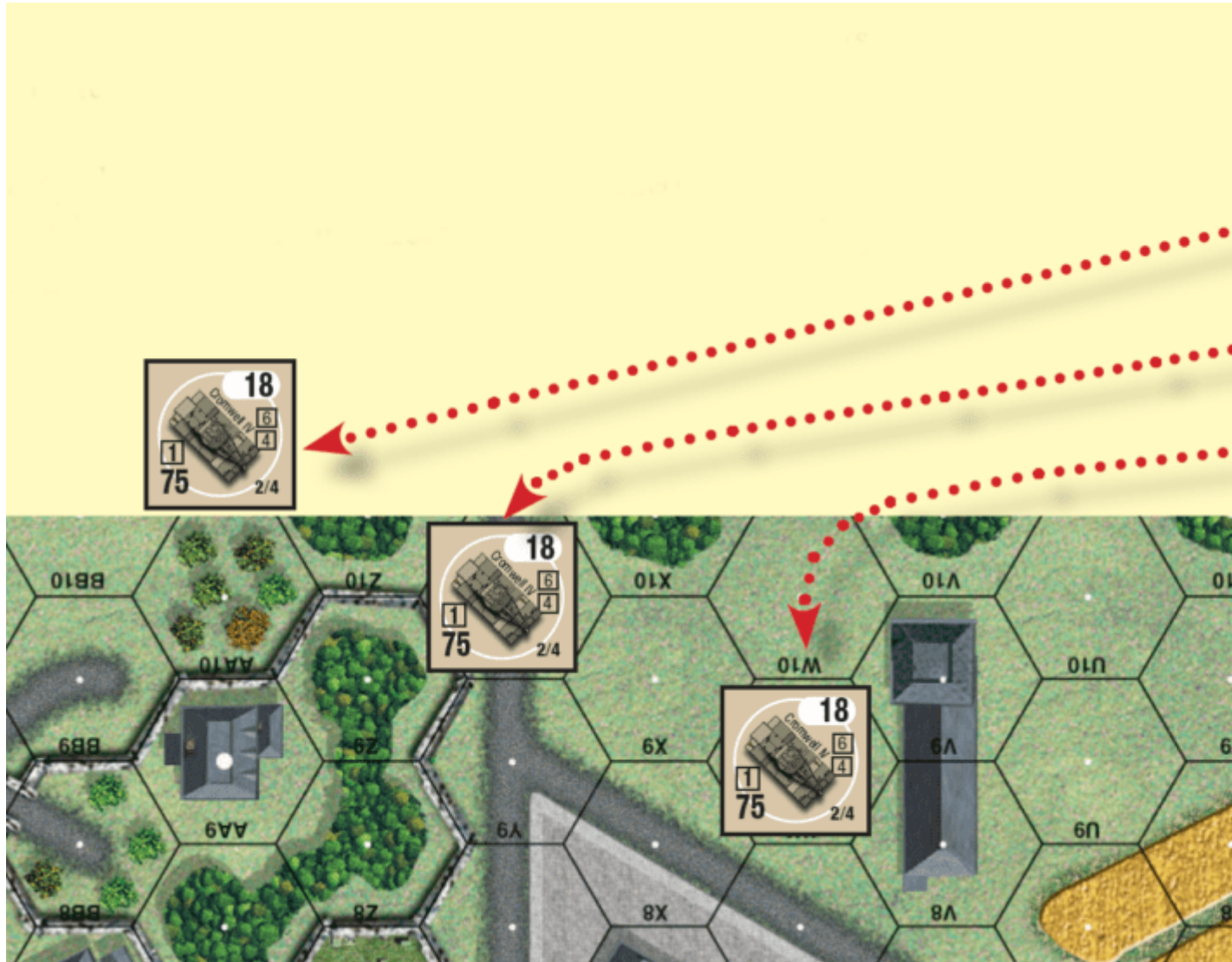




The specific example though I will use to illustrate the use of this tactic is one I utilised in a couple of tournament games and each time it worked. It was in the Schwerpunktscenario 'Taurus Pursuant' SP75 and involves only the AFVs that enter on turn one, where I've chosen the east board edge.

A no-brainer set up for the German Panther in this scenario is in hex G8. Basically, my aim is to get the Humber Scout Car up on hill hex in E7 on turn one, so it needs to enter on Q10. The reason it wants to get to that location is because the free 1PP it is secretly carrying inside (as per the vehicle notes) is a PIAT and the crew intend to disembark from the vehicle on turn 2 and advance into E7 (hopefully concealed) to blast the Panther.

The rest of the Cromwells that enter that turn just want to hunker down safely in blind hexes of buildings of the village, probably entering on or north of hexrow Y. However, if they set up just off those hexes, offboard, and the Scout Car enters Q10, it is extremely likely that the Panther will take a shot at it at some point, as the German player will commonly surmise that the Cromwells are not in a position to outflank him on their turn of entry.



My ploy then, was to set up the three Cromwells behind the Scout Car off Q10, lined up along the road and all CE, not even concealed. If asked: 'I haven't bothered concealing them - you'll see them soon enough'.

As the Scout Car makes it move, the Panther neglects to fire, waiting until juicier targets reveal themselves. Of course, when the Cromwells turn to move comes, they all move off board up to their intended hexes on or north of hexrow Y, and creep into blind hexes, awaiting their turn to unleash hell.

There aren't many ways to increase the fog of war the defender suffers from - this is one.

Close Combat:



Close Combat is a fickle mistress. It gambles everything on a single throw of the dice (even more so if the CC is HtH). Should you decide to venture into CC, do what you can to make sure the Ambush drms and CC odds are as much in your favor as you can. AFVs “Sleaze Freezing” a position adds a +2 Ambush drm. If Buttoned Up, they add another +1 Ambush drm. Worse yet, if you cannot get Ambush (and you most likely won’t), the CC is Sequential with the non-AFV player going first. Should the Defender opt to attack the AFV, your units count as covering Infantry. If the Defender opts to attack your Infantry, a lucky DR could wipe them all out before they get a chance to attack. Even if your AFV subsequently eliminates the Defender, the Defender would likely keep Control, or regain Control when the AFV moves away.

If the Attacker achieves Ambush, give careful consideration to leaving without attacking. If Infiltration allows the Attacker to fulfill some VC, then Infiltration is likely the best choice. Otherwise, the unit can remain and attack. If the Attacker eliminates the enemy, it can Infiltrate after the attack. If the Attacker cannot eliminate the enemy, the unit can Infiltrate if it survives the Defender’s attack.

Don’t rule out CC. If there are no other options and time is running short, it may be the best possible play. Just know you can do EVERYTHING correctly and still come out worse for wear. A lucky or unlucky DR can completely wreck everything.

CC Cruelty - Examples From Play

I was at Winter Offensive one year watching Bill Cirillo play. I don’t recall who his opponent was or what they were playing. What I do recall is Bill was winning the scenario on the last turn and his opponent opted to Advance into CC. Bill could afford to lose 2 CVP and still win the game and had a full squad in CC. In CC, Bill’s opponent rolled a 1,2 to eliminate Bill’s squad. Bill attacked back and rolled a 1,1 for Leader Creation. The subsequent dr created an 8-0-AKA 1 CVP. Sadly, the 1,2 was low enough to eliminate the original squad and the new 8-0 even with recalculated odds. The 8-0 came into existence only long enough for Bill to lose on the last DR. From a risk perspective, the proper play for Bill was not to attack back. He and I both know that now. I dare say he didn’t then. I know I didn’t.

[**Editor’s Note:** Since his article was originally published, several readers have pointed out this next example is wrong. Not only is CC a cruel mistress, not knowing the rules is

even crueler Per A10.2, there is no LLMC/LLTC when in CC.] I once entered CC with a BU, Shocked AFV. My units included a 9-2 and 5-4-8 squad. I attacked with a CCV of 6 and a -4 DRM (Immobilized, no Manned Usable MG, -2 leader). I rolled a 6,6 on my attack, resulting in Crew Small Arms. Even though the AFV had no usable CCV, my units suffered Casualty Reduction. Random Selection selected the 9-2 and eliminated the leader on the Wound Severity dr. The 5-4-8 subsequently broke on the 2MC. The AFV drove off in its Player Turn. CC is cruel. There are no guarantees on a single throw of the dice.

What Happened To The Post-Game Discussion?

I mentioned in paragraph three how I broke this article into three sections: Pre-Game, In-Game, and Post-Game. The article covers Pre- and In-Game but never discusses the Post-Game section. I must admit, I missed this artifact in editing. In the original concept for the article, there was a section on Post-Game but it had little to do with Attacking in ASL and everything to do with **learning** ASL.

During the editing process, reviewers repeatedly said the learning part did not seem to fit. I kept reworking it trying to make it fit but ultimately, I listened to the feedback and pulled that section from this article. I did save it however and worked it into a separate article about [getting better at ASL](#). Sorry I missed the reference in the LFT article but for those wondering what I was going to discuss, now you know.

Conclusion





Attacking in ASL is the most difficult task. When properly designed, a scenario will put pressure on the Attacker to make correct and timely decisions. A correct decision made in the wrong time or place is really just another bad decision. Getting all of this right when the pressure is on to fabricate a victory is difficult. Remember, the Defender can just sit there and laze his way to victory. Sadly, as the Attacker, you cannot.

Still, within this burden lies the nuggets for victory. The Attacker decides when and where the attack takes place and can bring the full weight of his OB onto a very narrow front, overwhelming the Defender's ability to hold back the onslaught. Properly orchestrated, the Attacker can also prevent the Defender from laterally reinforcing the point of attack, keeping him from ever entering the game. For all the pressure the scenario designer places on you, you can repay the Defender tenfold if you devise a proper plan.

It is in this planning that I hope this article has helped. As I said at the top, I doubt many will consider this the definitive "How to Attack in ASL" article. There are many who are far more qualified to do this than I am, and I hope they add to this discussion. All I can do is the best I can, and hope that some players find this remotely useful. ASL is a tough game to learn. It is a tougher game to learn how to attack properly. I hope this flattens the learning curve. – Jim