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## AFV Combat: Elements Of Intermediate Play

### Description



If you are reading this, I imagine you have been playing ASL for a while. You grasp how to move units across the board and how to attack with the various weapons available to you. You routinely check Chapter H. By now you're recognizing what is not working all that well and you're wondering where to go next. I certainly don't have all of those answers. If I did, this would probably be a much longer article and no one would speak about Pleva, McGrath, Pilling, etc.

This article will convey some intermediate concepts of armored warfare in ASL. I intend it as a companion to my article [A Discussion About \*Panzer Gegen Panzer\*](#). A basic understanding of these topics will improve your armor play but make no mistake, this is no panacea. You will still struggle with armor for a while after reading this. This information will take time to digest and work into your play. Only when it becomes second nature, will you truly recognize opportunities. But we all have to start somewhere.

### What I Won't Be Covering Here

In my Attacking In ASL article first appearing in [From the Cellar #12](#) and [reprinted](#) on my blog, I identified several roles for AFV in ASL. I have also written several articles discussing some mechanics of [AFV combat in ASL](#). I will not be covering those here. Perhaps someday I will pull all of that together into one overarching AFV article but that won't happen here. This article focuses on recognizing favorable opportunities for AFV vs. AFV combat and how some of the nationality nuances affect such combat.

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## Recognizing An Engagement Opportunity

In my article [A Discussion About Panzer Gegen Panzer](#), I defined an “Engagement” as “the moment I decide to destroy your tank”. I purposefully left this a little vague in the earlier article as it suited my purposes for that discussion. For this article however, that won’t work. When I play, I am already thinking about destroying your tanks at side selection. We need something more meaningful here.

An Opportunity is any situation that occurs where your units can maneuver and destroy an enemy tank. If your AFV has 33 MP’s, this could be more than one half a board distant. If instead they have 13, the range to target will be much closer. Planning a multiple unit engagement with layers of attackers focusing the same target takes planning across more than one turn. It is one of the more interesting challenges in ASL.

When identifying engagement targets, look for chances to eliminate enemy tanks with little or no risk to your own units. This won’t always be possible.

### What Makes For Easy Targets?

Identifying these favorable conditions and capitalizing on the opportunity is a big difference between new players and more advanced ones. Some common things to look for:



1. Enemy tanks lacking a To Kill Number (TK#) high enough to penetrate your best armor. In these cases, it is often worth it to just drive right up to the enemy AFV, Stop, and shoot it in Bounding First Fire (B1F). Closing to Point Blank range and going

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CE means you hit on an Original DR 8 (Case B +2, Case C +2, Case L -2) assuming no other To Hit (TH) DRM.

- Beware of Deliberate Immobilization (DI) attempts. This will be a Case G (+5) TH DRM coupled with a +2 Case J. If you move Point Blank, the shooter also gets a -2 Case L DRM for a hit on an original 7 when BU.
- Given that a DI shot needs to hit the Hull, only 12/36 (33%) shots achieve a hull hit on an Original 7TH. This compares to 21/36 (58%) chances to hit on a normal shot.
- CE tanks are vulnerable to HE from enemy tanks. Enemy tanks can attack with either VTT or ATT.
  - Resolve ATT per C1.55. If the AFV is not destroyed/Shocked/Stunned, the attack affects the vulnerable crew on the IFT with the original TK DR at  $\frac{1}{2}$  firepower. The +2 CE DRM applies.
  - VTT must first secure a hit using the TH process. If hit, the TK DR will apply to the AFV on both the C7.34 HE and Flame TK Table and the IFT as a Specific Collateral Attack. This results in a full firepower roll on the IFT with only a +2 CE DRM applied. Resolve the Specific Collateral Attack if the AFV is not destroyed/Shocked/Stunned by the shot.

2. A swarm of enemy units attacking an isolated tank can easily overwhelm its defensive fire options.

- This is often called “The Dance of Death” and I wrote about it [previously](#).
- Your aim is to soak up all of his Defensive Fire options by threatening his AFV with shots he cannot ignore, and then close for the *coup-de-gras* through a vulnerable aspect of his AFV.
  - If your opponent opts for Motion, see 3 below.
- You will likely lose a tank so be prepared for the loss.
  - If his first shot results in ROF you may have to call it off.

3. Enemy AFV in Motion are easy pickings.

- Their TH shot in Defensive Fire/Final Fire is at least +6 BEFORE doubling the lower die of the TH DR.
- Machine Gun (MG) firepower is halved when an AFV is in motion. This reduces the risk for CE crews.
- Try to place your AFV into position to gain Acquisition and in position to shoot the Motion AFV in Defensive First Fire.
  - Protect against [Motion Escapes](#).

4. Shocked/Stunned AFV are freebies. Kill these while they are helpless.

## Identifying Other Favorable Circumstances

What if you can not find chances with little or no risk? Finding these other targets of opportunity requires a deeper understanding of the rules. For this, look for places where your chances to eliminate the enemy AFV is at least as good as his chance to eliminate your AFV. This relies on your understanding of the game. It is a combination of your TH/TK numbers compared to his TH/TK numbers.

Original TH DR	Final TK #									
	TK 2	TK 3	TK 4	TK 5	TK 6	TK 7	TK 8	TK 9	TK 10	TK 11
2	0.001	0.002	0.005	0.008	0.012	0.016	0.020	0.023	0.025	0.027
3	0.002	0.007	0.014	0.023	0.035	0.049	0.060	0.069	0.076	0.081
4	0.005	0.014	0.028	0.046	0.069	0.097	0.120	0.139	0.153	0.162
5	0.008	0.023	0.046	0.077	0.116	0.162	0.201	0.231	0.255	0.270
6	0.012	0.035	0.069	0.116	0.174	0.243	0.301	0.347	0.382	0.405
7	0.016	0.049	0.097	0.162	0.243	0.340	0.421	0.486	0.535	0.567
8	0.020	0.060	0.120	0.201	0.301	0.421	0.522	0.602	0.662	0.702
9	0.023	0.069	0.139	0.231	0.347	0.486	0.602	0.694	0.764	0.810
10	0.025	0.076	0.153	0.255	0.382	0.535	0.662	0.764	0.840	0.891
11	0.027	0.081	0.162	0.270	0.405	0.567	0.702	0.810	0.891	0.945
12	0.028	0.083	0.167	0.278	0.417	0.583	0.722	0.833	0.917	0.972

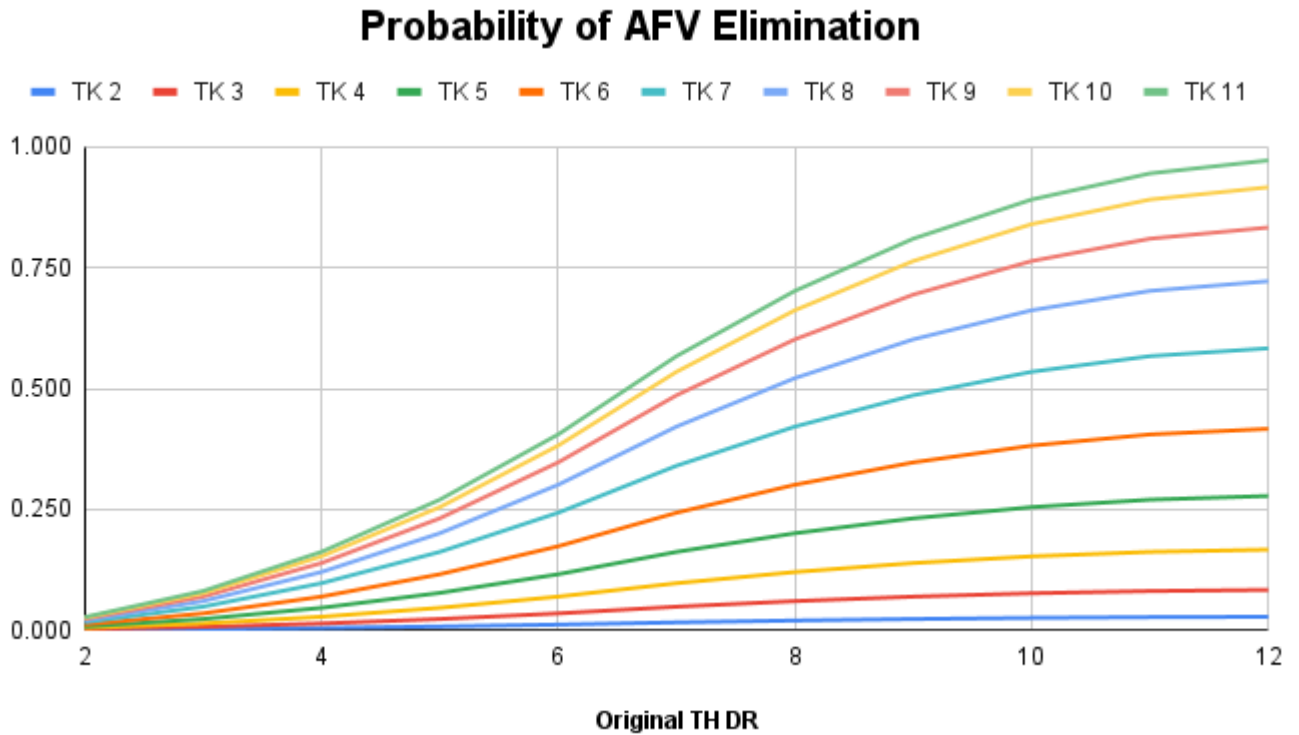
Refer to the chart. On the left edge is the Original DR needed to hit. To find the proper row, subtract the DRM for the upcoming shot from the Modified TH#. For instance, if you have a Modified TH# 10 with +3 DRM, you need an Original 7 TH DR and this is the row we need to examine.

Next, identify the Final TK#. To do this, add any range, aspect modifiers to get the Modified TK# and then subtract the Armor Factor (AF) of the target to get the Final TK#. This is the column we have to use.

Example: Imagine a PzIV shooting at range 6 against a T34's front armor. The Base TH# is 10 with a +3 DRM. We are looking at the 7 row. The Modified TK# is 17 against an 11 AF resulting in the 6 column. Cross indexing, the PzIV has a 24.3% chance to eliminate/Shock/Immobilize the AFV. If you only want the chance of elimination, you would use the TK 5 column (remember, rolling **equal** to the Final TK# results in a Shock/Immobilization). This means the same shot has a 16.2% chance of out-right

eliminating the T34.

## Another Way



You don't have to have this table with you when playing. You just need to keep the curves in mind. If you are looking for a rule of thumb, notice how a 6TH/7TK and 7TH/6TK are both approximately a 25% chance to Shock/Immobilize the target. Also notice that high TH chances means your chance to survive regresses to an armor test: his TK# against your armor. As the Final TK# approaches 7 or more, the TH DRM effectively becomes your armor. If he can not hit, he does not get to test your armor.

## Anything Else?

If you can not put on your “DRM Armor”, there is one other possibility. Look for opportunities where your AFV attacks from Hull-Down positions against the enemy AFV. I will not do an in-depth analysis of how Hull-Down changes the odds. Instead, I will point you to Phil Palmer’s excellent article **(Not So) Free Parking** in [Journal 13](#). Phil provides several numerical comparisons between Hull-Down and not Hull-Down AFV. His analysis also puts a “DRM value” on Hull-Down which you can factor into the risk-based analysis I provided here. If you haven’t done so already, I recommend you give it a read.

## Nationality Distinctions



In this section, I will examine the nuances of playing with different nations in ASL. This examination includes factors I believe affect decision making. I will explain these differences, how they affect your options, and ultimately how you can use these distinctions to your advantage. Keep in mind these are my impressions. They are based on the rules and my experience which means opinions will vary. Use what I present here as a starting point and form your own opinions.

## General Observations

These are common attributes applicable to all nations in the game. Some are advantages, some are disadvantages. I will not mention these again from now on, but every nation faces these to some extent.



Some nations relied on Assault Guns and non-turreted tank destroyers. These AFV can destroy tanks but were not purpose built for this task. When changing VCA, a +3 Case A DRM applies. This can make these AFV a lot easier to approach but they may have good ROF so beware.

Several nations use Red TH# at various times during the war. At ranges  $\geq 7$ , Red TH # are a disadvantage of 1 pip on the die, 2 pips at ranges  $\geq 31$ . Similarly, small caliber Guns suffer decreased TH# at ranges  $\geq 13$ . Short barrel Guns (\*) suffer TH penalties beginning at range 13 while L and LL barrel Guns gain TH advantages.

Beware of great differences in MP. The side having greater movement will have a distinct advantage. They can pose a threat from greater distances. If the distance closes, they can easily move in for a shot and escape to a point you can not reach them. When they move in to engage, they can easily come from the side or rear forcing you into tough decisions.

Units with special ammunition have a chance to roll two TH DR. If they attempt for special ammunition and don't succeed, it is as if the shot never occurred and then may roll TH again. This advantage means units are more likely to hit than you would otherwise think. This is especially powerful when the Original DR need to hit is equal to the depletion number. Don't forget, this includes shoot HEAT and Infantry in B1F for two chances as well.

#### German

German AFV are the baseline. They use Black TH# and their AFV do not have Restricted Turrets so CE fire is allowed. Early war AFV have reasonable Special Ammo allowing multiple TH chances.

Playing against Russians can be a mixed bag. Early in the war, Russian armor is usually a challenge for German TK# frontally. In the middle of the war, German armor became a challenge for the Russians and German guns became more capable against Russian armor. Late in the war, both sides are level on capability but German armor can use Intensive Fire (IF) if needed where Russians usually cannot.

### Italian



Early war Italian tanks tend towards Restricted and Restricted One-Man turrets. This will impose an Extra +1 BU DRM on any TH DR. The Italians also use Red TH#. Almost no Italian AFV have special ammo and when they do, it is often for HE or HEAT. Some even have depletable AP. Their armor is often very weak and their MA can be lackluster. Italians usually oppose the British in DTO scenarios where their lack of “L” MA will put them at a disadvantage at long range.

### Axis-Minor

Refer to German notes when using German AFV. Axis Minors using indigenously produced AFV use RED TH#. Like their German allies, Axis-Minor AFV are a mix of fast and slow turrets. Early war AFV often have Restricted and Restricted One Man turrets. When firing the MA, these AFV will also be BU for an additional +1 DRM when fired. Still, some of these early war AFV are very capable for the time.

### Japanese

Early war Japanese tanks have Restricted and Restricted One man turrets. As development progressed, they stopped being Restricted but remained slow. Japanese tanks are radioless and use Red TH#. Being radioless has a significant impact on their movement given they usually have limited MPs available. Even when unopposed,



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Japanese armor can feel limited on the battlefield. They have low firepower MGs and their small caliber MA lacks HE punch. They also feel less capable when facing off against American armor.

When a Japanese Armor leader whose crew is neither Stunned nor Recalled is forced to Abandon its AFV, it may immediately become an Infantry leader of the next lower quality. See G1.411 for details.

### **Russian**

Early war Russian AFV are Radioless. This makes Motion attempts harder and slows AFV movement. Through the middle of the war, Russian tanks usually had Restricted and Restricted One Man turrets. As the war progressed, Russian AFV gained radios and lost the Restricted nature of their turrets.

Russians use Red TH# unless using Lend Lease AFV, and even then, American Lend Lease AFV use Red TH# early in the war. Early war "Land Battleship" tanks have lots of MA and Secondary Armament but barely any armor. They can be formidable to approach but easily eliminated when in LOS. Some early BT-type tanks have a lot of MP and can move far across the board in one MPh.



Some Russian AFV kept Special Ammunition throughout the war. Late war AFV with large caliber guns cannot IF. This makes them more vulnerable to swarm attacks and can make them take more incoming shots than they take. Still, if they hit, they have great TK# and can challenge most German and Axis-Minor armor they face.

### **British**

British AFV have many capabilities much like American tanks. Smoke mortars, Smoke dispensers, special ammunition, and others are available. Some British tanks have slow

turrets but no Restricted turrets. Firing while CE is ALWAYS an option for British AFV. What can be surprising is the lack of HE in some common British AFV. This makes those AFV far less of a threat to opposing Infantry.

British use Black TH# unless using early war Lend Lease American AFV. In DTO scenarios many British AFV have "L"-type MA giving them a range advantage over some opposing AFV.



In most cases, the MA won't challenge a German behemoth frontally, but have the MP and toys making it possible to challenge them. German MA is almost always capable of penetrating British AF (and their Lend Lease Vehicles). Taking on the big cats frontally doesn't go well for them. Still, they are well rounded, capable AFV. They have the MG, HE round, and tools making them very credible threats to enemy Infantry. Against Italians in DTO scenarios, they are likely to be nearly invulnerable. Against anything but a long barrel MkIV 75, they will be on equal footing.

#### French

Early war French AFV are usually radioless and have Restricted or Restricted One Man Turrets. Coupled with low MP, French AFV seem to struggle to move. French AFV pitted against early war Germans usually have an AF advantage. German tanks will struggle to threaten these early war tanks. These early war tanks have strong, all around armor making the only credible threat a shot through the rear aspect.

Superior German movement and tactical flexibility will challenge this AFV. Penalties to Motion attempts while moving in platoons, being forced to shoot BU, and slow turrets are significant penalties, particularly in Gun Duels.

French MA can penetrate German armor but it won't be a guarantee. The penetration values are not high compared to German armor. French AFV use Red TH# while French

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Guns use Black TH#.

#### Chinese (Red/GMD, non-Korean War)

Chinese AFV are a hodgepodge of AFV from other nations. They have American, British, German, Russian, and even Italian AFV. Their early war AFV are radioless. Coupled with few MPs, Chinese AFV struggle to get around the board, particularly in 2MP+ terrain.

Early war AFV feature Restricted and Restricted One man turrets. These force the MA to shoot when BU. The Chinese use Red TH# even when using American and German AFV which would otherwise use Black TH#. Also notice many Chinese AFV have red B11 (**B11**). This means **all** weapons malfunction on an Original DR 11.

Finally, the Chinese do not have an Infantry unit with 8 morale. According to D5.1 Inherent Crews check morale with the same morale as the nation's best unbroken elite unit. For the Chinese, this means their crews have a morale of 7.

#### Allied-Minors



Allied-Minors use Red TH# unless using American or British AFV. Even American AFV use Red TH# early in the war. Consult the vehicle note to make sure you get this correct. Besides that, Allied minors have a mix of AFV produced by both indigenous and foreign factories. Given the number of nations, it is hard to find a common flavor of play with these forces.

#### American

Like most American Forces in ASL, American AFV are all over the place. They use Red TH# early in the war but change to Black TH# in the middle. The early M4 with the small 75mm gun performs poorly against German armor and it lacks many of the additional capabilities enjoyed by other tanks. On the other hand, the M3A1, M5A1, and M24 Chaffee can be absolute terrors with their mobility. The M24 particularly can be a nasty surprise

with its white ROF background.



Starting in 1944, American use Black TH# and their AFV became more capable. More AFV have the white ROF background, their Guns—and corresponding TK#—become bigger, they have smoke mortars and smoke dispensers. They have access to special ammo, including HEAT and White Phosphorus. If willing to risk CE, many of their vehicles have 4FP AAMG. These things combine to make American tanks very flexible vehicles representing a significant threat to enemy Infantry. When massed (or on near equal terms on TH/TK odds), they can also be a significant worry for enemy armor. An armor leader with a gyro stabilizer can be a VERY potent tank killer in any tank.

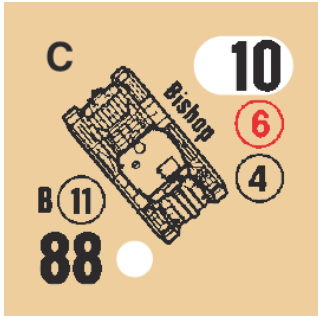
Offsetting this, American crews only have a morale of 7 making exposed crews vulnerable to Stun/Recall. It is almost never a bad option to shoot at an exposed American Crew. Armor leaders offset this weakness when present.

#### **Korean War**

KW nations are using Russian and American AFV and all that implies. North Korea and Communist Chinese forces use Red TH#. American, South Korean and KMC forces use Red TH# early in the KW but use Black TH# as the war progressed. Commonwealth and United Nations forces use Black TH# throughout the war.

KW tanks are usually very capable, particularly American made AFV. Be sure to read the vehicle notes for your AFV to make sure you get everything you can out of these. I have not played a lot of KW scenarios so I would have to do this too.

## Where To From Here?



So how do we progress from Intermediate to high-level ASL play? This is a much tougher question to answer for me. I am still on my journey. As of this point, I think the tools presented here are enough to get there; it comes down to consistent application. I also think quicker and more reliable recognition of opportunities that come up during the game is key.

Application of the tools means more shots at a reduced risk. When it isn't possible to avoid risk, it means not taking more risk than you are inflicting on your opponent. Earlier recognition of opportunities leads to better positioning of your AFV to take those engagements which favor you. Sometimes, this may mean sitting right where you are and waiting for the enemy to put his fish in the barrel. This will rarely happen as the attacker so identify the risk/reward and tilt the odds in your favor as much as you can. At least this is my current thinking. But you know me, if I come up with something else, I will probably let you know. - jim