

# BATTLEFIELD WALKAROUND (v1.6):

## ONSLAUGHT TO ORSHA

### The Death of Army Group Center

By Fernando Sola 6-Feb-09

#### 1. Locale.

The Minsk-Moscow Highway, Belorussia, 23 June 1944: The 16th Guards Rifle Division was one of three heavily reinforced infantry divisions that were to create holes in the German lines and allow tank forces of the 2nd Guards Tank Corps of the 5th Tank Army to make rapid and deep penetrations along the Moscow-Minsk Highway. The zone of the 16th was south of the highway, and along the Smolensk-Minsk Railroad. They were reinforced with the following units: 148th Tank Regiment (PT mineroller tanks), 63rd Guards Heavy Tank Regiment (KVs), 517th Tank Regiment (FT tanks), elements of several Self-Propelled Artillery Regiments, 2nd Guards Assault Engineer-Sapper Brigade, as well as numerous towed artillery units. The Soviet forces trained as a combined arms team prior to the attack, and were well prepared. In most sectors of Army Group Center, the Germans had relatively thin lines, and most armor and heavy artillery was stripped to defend expected areas of attack. The area of the highway had seen much heavy fighting in the winter of 1943-44, and the Germans expected an attack to come in this direction. When German intelligence detected the buildup of artillery and armored forces, as well as the movement of ammunition, their reaction was to ensure forces in this area retained significant combat strength. The 78th Sturm Division, already the most powerful 'infantry' division in Army Group Center, maintained its structure which included the 189th Assault Gun Battalion (StuG), a Heavy Tank Destroyer Battalion (PzJgIII/IVs), 5th Nebelwerfer Battalion (120mm Mortars), and Army Antiaircraft Battalion 293 (mix of 88s/20s). These forces defended from probably the most dense network of mines, trenches, and bunkers in Army Group Center, including special rotating bunkers housing machine-guns.

#### 2. Land Forms.

The Onslaught to Orsha map depicts the Minsk-Smolensk railroad, south of the Minsk-Moscow highway. The landscape is typical Belorussian, mostly flat and open, dotted with orchards and occasional grainfields. D46 Level +0, CC2 Level +10, D49 Level -10.

#### 3. Terrain features.

Woods (U51); Swamp (C4); Brush (D4); Orchard (H3); Crops (M5); Shellholes (J2); Wooden buildings (Z15); Ravine (N12), (F5/G6) are Partial Hillocks

##### 3.1 Brush-Shellholes.

Hex C9 is a Brush-Shellholes hex. Treat Brush-Shellholes hexes as Shellholes hexes with the additions that Brush-Shellholes hexes are Level +5 Obscuring terrain that affects the entire hex and cost of entry is 3MP for all units.

##### 3.2 Orchard-Shellholes.

Hex H2 Orchard-Shellholes hexes are Level +10 Obscuring terrain (do not create Blind hexes for different level fire) for same level and different level LOS that crosses any part of the hex, ie entire hex. Personnel entry costs 3 MP, Fully tracked AFVs 3 MPs, all other vehicles 6 MPs. All vehicles roll on the IM table after entering.

##### 3.3 Crops-Shellholes.

Hex L7 is a Crops-Shellholes hex. Treat Crops-Shellholes hexes as Shellholes hexes with the additions that Crops-Shellholes hexes are Level +5 Obscuring terrain and cost of entry is 3MP for all units.

##### 3.4 Raised Railroad

The railroad that runs across hexrow P represents slightly elevated Railroad tracks. Railroad hexes are Level +5 and treated like a FULL Hillock for LOS and cover effects. Entering from a non railroad hex or exiting from a railroad hex to a non

railroad hex is 1+COT, Movement is allowed along the raised railroad except when entering hexes P8, P15, P26 and P48. Entering such hexes moving along the raised railroad cost 2 MP for all units. ALL vehicles must make a roll on the Immobilization Table after entering these hexes.

**3.5 Fortified Building Location** – All buildings on the Oto map are Fortified.

- provides additional +1/1L to the normal terrain modifier.
- Enemy units cannot enter a Fortified location that is already occupied by non broken/surrendered Friendly units, even by Infiltration.

- a Fortified location can be captured and controlled by an enemy unit normally, if empty.

**3.6 Culverts (M23)** - Culverts cannot be destroyed.

- Units in a Culvert are placed under a +10 LOS marker.
- Units in a culvert have LOS only to adjacent Ravine hexes
- can only be fired on from adjacent Ravine hexes, Stationary cover
- Stacking in a culvert is 3 SPs max inc. L/M weapons, cannot be over stacked, ie Max 3SP (total, both sides) during any Melee in the culvert hex
- Entry and movement costs 2 MP per hex to enter and move along, exit 1MP+COT (ie 3MPs and the unit will be DOWN in the Ravine)

#### 4. Scenario Rules.

##### 4.1 Plotted Off-Board Artillery.

Russian artillery may be provided as "plotted", a form of off-board artillery that does not require an FO, via SSR. For each FFE provided to the Russians in a scenario via PLOT the Russian player may record a target hex prior to all set up. When recording a Plot hex, one game turn per plotted FFE is also recorded. The FFE must be placed in the recorded hex during the Indirect Fire Segment of that turn, as the FIRST friendly impulse used (Exception: Unless called off or the battery is delayed or cancelled). Accuracy is then rolled for normally (NOT if the FFE is placed in a Registration hex).

##### 4.1.1 Duration of Plotted Fire.

Plotted FFEs are not treated in the same manner as normal FFEs. A Plotted FFE only comes down during the turn it is placed. There is no further action needed on the part of the Russian for this to take place and a plotted FFE may never be corrected. Plotted FFEs always apply firepower into adjacent hexes like any FFE but are removed during the End of Turn Segment.

##### 4.1.2 Cancellation, Delay and Calling Off Plotted Fire.

Just prior to placing a plotted FFE on map a roll is made on the PLOTTED FIRE TABLE to determine if it is cancelled or delayed. If cancelled, the FFE is not available for use in the scenario. If delayed, another roll is made on the table following the listed number of turns, provided on the table. Also, up to but no later than the turn before an FFE for Plotted Fire scheduled to be placed on map the Russian player may use an impulse during the Indirect Fire Segment to attempt to call it off (i.e., remove the FFE permanently). Only ONE impulse per segment may be used to attempt to call off the plotted FFE.

##### 4.2 Sappers.

When specified by SSR, some units may be designated as sappers. Sappers apply a +1 DRM when forcing a minefield (i.e., a total of +0 DRM would be applied when forcing a Hidden Minefield).

##### 4.3 Mine Roller Tanks (PT Tanks).

##### 4.3.1 Movement.

PT Tanks change their VCA at a cost of 2 MP. A PT tank cannot enter woods/building/rubble hexes or make Overrun attacks. The minimum cost of a PT tanks moving ALONG a road is 1 MP. A PT tank may not attempt to enter any type of Water Obstacle/stream, including a Ford. PT tanks cannot tow other AFVs, but can be towed.

### 4.3.2 Immobilization Checks.

A PT tank trying to cross a wall/hedge hexside must roll on the Immobilization Table before crossing it. A PT tank must also roll on the Immobilization Table when climbing to an hex at least +10 levels higher (except when moving along a paved road). PT tanks suffer a +1 DRM on the Immobilization Table.

### 4.3.3 Minefield Clearance.

A PT tank trying to clear a minefield can only use Assault Movement to enter a minefield. If using Cross-Country movement, treat the PT tank as a normal AFV. After entering a minefield, the PT tank uses the remainder of its MP in the minefield hex. Mark the PT tank with a Continuous Movement Marker. If the MP expended in the minefield (not including entering the hex minefield) are  $\geq$  than the MP expended by the PT tank to reach the hex, apply a +4 DRM when forcing the minefield. If the MP expended in the minefield are  $<$  than the MP expended by the PT tank to reach the hex, apply a +2 DRM when forcing the minefield. If the PT tank has no MP remaining to expend in the minefield hex, apply a +0 DRM when forcing the minefield.

When forcing a minefield, if rolling a 1 make another DR. Another 1 results in an **automatic attack** on the PT tank (see 4.3.3.1). If the second DR is not a 1, then use the original 1 and apply DRMs normally. If a minefield forcing attempt is not successful and an automatic attack has not occurred, the PT tank must remain in the hex and must try to force the minefield on the next turn, spending all the MP doing so. An unsuccessful forcing attempt not resulting in an automatic attack does not affect the PT tank.

#### 4.3.3.1 Mine automatic attack.

When rolling 1,1 on a minefield forcing attempt, the PT tank receives an automatic mine attack. If any AT mines are present in the hex, then the PT tank is destroyed. If only AP mines are in the hex, the roller of the PT tank becomes permanently damaged, and has no other effect on the PT tank. When the mine roller of a PT tank is damaged all rules concerning PT tanks still apply, except that Minefield Clearance is not allowed.

### 4.3.4 Accompanying Infantry.

Infantry using Platoon Movement with a PT tank entering an AP minefield is attacked by the mines, but at  $\frac{1}{2}$  firepower if the minefield forcing attempt is not successful.

### 4.3.5 Fire Effects.

The BMG of a PT tank may not fire at targets +10 or more levels lower than the PT tank current location. MA and CMG apply a +1/1L HPT/DRM when firing at targets +10 or more levels lower than the PT tank.

When a PT tanks is attacked using the HPT, if the hit aspect is the Front VCA and the final result is M-Kill, roll a die. If the DR is 1-5, the mine roller becomes permanently damaged, if the DR is 6-0 the PT tank becomes M-Killed normally.

### 4.3.6 AFV Data Cards.

Use the standard T-34/76c and KV-1 m.42 AFV Data Cards.

### 4.4 Air Support.

#### 4.4.1 PTAB Ammunition.

When specified by SSR, Russian planes may attack using PTAB Ammunition. After resolving a normal bomb attack, make a final DR to determine the effects of the PTAB ammo. Attack each vehicle/unit in the hex using the following chart. Use deck armor factors for vehicles being attacked (12.16.823).

#### PTAB Effects Chart

##### DR Hit Effect

1-3 Direct Hit Use Pen #10

4-6 Hit Use Pen #8

7-0 Near Miss Use Pen #2

vs. infantry/non AFV Use 10 GF

Apply the following modifiers to the attack of PTAB Ammo.

### PTAB Attack Modifiers Chart

DRM Terrain

+3 Woods

+2 Orchards

+1 Rock-Strewn/Shellholes\*

+4 Trench/Foxhole

+0 Open Ground

\*NA to AFVs

All other terrain has its normal cover doubled (i.e. Stone Building 6L/+6 HPT). All modifiers are cumulative (i.e. Orchard-Shellholes terrain +3).

### 4.4.2 Air Support.

In order to represent the common armament loads of Russian and German close support aircraft, new weapon options are used in the game.

#### 4.4.2.1 Il-2 Sturmovik.

There are three armament configurations for the Il-2 Sturmovik:

A: 2x100LB bombs (2 ROF) + 132ID Rockets + 5 GF mg

B: PTAB bomblets + 132ID Rockets + 5 GF mg

C: 37mm cannons (2 ROF) + 2x100LB bombs + 132ID Rockets + 5 GF mg

Each configuration may carry all, some or none of the listed armament, as specified by SSRs. Each 100LB bomb attacks on the 24GF column. The 132ID Rockets use the same rules as 127ID Rockets. The PTAB Ammunition attack as per 4.41 above.

#### 4.4.2.2 German attack planes.

There are three different German attack planes available.

Ju 87D Stuka: 1x500LB bomb + 4x50LB bombs

Ju 87G Stuka-Kanone: 37mm cannons (3 ROF)

FW 190: 2x100LB bomb +10 GF mg

### 4.5 Flakvierling 38.

The Flakvierling 38 has a ROF of 4 and may use Semi Automatic Fire at a value of 20GF.

### 4.6 Armored Turrets.

Armored Turrets (5 Casualty Points) represent a MG armored cupola placed on the ground. There are two positions in hexes with armored turrets. On top, where a unit occupy the other terrain in the hex, and inside, where a Crew/2SP personnel are protected by the turret armor, this crew cannot leave the Turret. The 2SP Stacking limit for inside position cannot be exceeded. Use the ATS on the Table Armored Turret Data Card for Armored Turrets. Use standard turret counters to represent Armored Turrets.

### 4.7 Self Rally Capability.

In some scenarios, some squads have self rally capability. When so stated, these squads may attempt to rally without a leader present. These units cannot rally other units.

Historical notes by Heat of Battle.

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