



## Combat! Normandy (mini) Playbook

By Ellis Simpson

### 1 Introduction

This playbook is to help you learn the rules for Combat!

There is one mini-Firefight which comes with a fully worked example of a game turn. An expanded complement of mini firefights will be included in the printed version of the Combat! Normandy Playbook, to be included as a pull-out insert in the Issue #1 of Combat! Diary magazine. The Firefights are not historical or balanced. What's more, the examples of play are not necessarily the best way to tackle the tactical problem. There are several reasons for this, not least is that part of the fun of playing the game is to find your own answers. Of course, you may get some clues by seeing how the examples turn out.

Once you have played through an example you may want to finish the Firefight off, try a few variations, or have a go at the official, historical Firefights provided in Combat!

Whatever you do, we hope you enjoy this game and that it gives you many hours of gaming pleasure.

### A word from Ellis:

Combat is one of those games that is very aptly named. Its focus is all about life at what John Ellis calls 'The Sharp End of War.' This is a game about individual soldiers at the sharp end. Your role is to try

and get the best out of them in these circumstances; see how they cope with assaulting a fortified machine gun position or infiltrating an enemy line or defending against tanks or making their way through an artillery barrage. Moreover, for each situation you will learn from your mistakes because, inevitably, things will go wrong. There will be 'errors of judgment' and the fates will play their part, too. Your cardboard heroes will die but you will have the luxury of being able to go back to the drawing board and trying again, just one more time.

As a game, the first thing to warn experienced players is that it is not Advanced Squad Leader<sup>®</sup>. The impulse game system turns any 'game tactics' on their head. Combat will repay study of real life tactics. So, be prepared for some shocks if you have an ASL<sup>®</sup> background. There is more to Combat than an exciting and realistic sequence of play. The graded morale results allow the cumulative effects of fire and combat to be portrayed without over burdening the player. And, of course, the challenge is for you to find the best way to keep your men in the best of condition and avoid all those nasty effects. The highly detailed units and their performance give you the best analysis available bar none. The highly detailed and much researched maps mean you are fighting real battles over real terrain. No game can truly simulate 100% of what it was like, but Combat! gets damn close. As a study aid it is outstanding and playing a game is one of the best ways to learn.

Thankfully, as a game it is also good fun: involving, surprising and exciting. You do get the best of all

worlds. Enjoy Combat and return for more when it moves on to new battlefields.

### **A word from designer Ray Tapio:**

On the subject of Platoons as the Fire & Movement Element in a squad-level game, in FM 7-8 Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad, Department of the Army December 1980. Section 2-33 (just an updated version of the material presented through the series of FMs dating back 40+ years) we find a good example of the kind of material which ended up ‘leaning’ me toward depicting the platoon as the basic fire and maneuver element. The challenge is for the gamer to picture a platoon, made up of its squad/HS/NCO sub-units and maximize the potential of the larger whole in terms of fire and maneuver in game terms. Here we are talking 1944 American and German troops, which have many similarities. As we move forward with the series, we’ll be able to depict other nationalities and their basis of fire and movement. I decided to eschew identifying specific members of a particular platoon (i.e., squads 1, 2 and 3 in 1st Platoon, although you may want to make a side note of this information for the purpose of ‘house’ rules depicting Platoon integrity—say a MML modifier in the event one or more of the squads of your platoon have been KIA’ed), or the various formations used, such as Platoon Line, Squads-on-Line or Platoon Line, Squads-in-Column, etc. Within the confines of the platoon fire and movement rules players will find themselves using these very formations without rules to learn forcing them into strict modes of fire and movement. An optional rule can always be adopted in the form of a side note for member squads for individual platoons as the ID numbers on each unit facilitate side-notes for any purpose.

On the subject of Mortar Observation Posts and NCO’s as FO’s. By the book, the ideal placement for a mortar is out of the LOS of the enemy, preferably on the reverse slope of a hill. Our game mechanic is liberal and assumes the laying of wire communications or the use of hand signals between the spotting unit and the mortar crew. In FM 6-135 Adjustment of Artillery Fire by the Combat Soldier, Department of the Army February 1969. Section 37 we are able to access a punch-list of the advantages and disadvantages of different positions for observers. Our design choice was to not penalize the mortar for being spotted by a unit other than its own crewmembers. The actual use of another unit to physically do the spotting is somewhat of an approximation anyway. We can assume one member of the actual mortar crew is aiding the effort in some manner, i.e., at one end of the phone or sight line receiving hand signals. Further, the referenced guide

is clearly written for, “the combat soldier who is not an artilleryman”. The job of serving as a spotter or replacement FO clearly falls within the combat infantryman’s list of tasks and we represent that in game terms by allowing any NCO to replace a fallen FO and place no penalties on a squad or half-squad for spotting for mortar fire.

On the subject of Artillery No Fire Zones and the extra delay incurred in getting down artillery near your own troops as embodied in the Danger Close rule (17.3.4). See FM 6-20-1 Field Artillery Tactics, Headquarters, Department of the Army July 1965. pg. 22, Sections 36-38. The No Fire Line is a line short of which no artillery unit may fire without prior clearance from the HQ that established it. The key term is as follows, “When fires employed by one force adversely influence the tactical operations of, or will have casualty- or damage-producing effects in, the zone...these fires must be approved by the commander who controls both forces.” The intent is to represent the delay incurred in getting permission for such fire from off-board forces controlling the battery. Some playtesters preferred we allow artillery fire to drop willy-nilly on top of our own ‘men’ but that approach was rejected as leading to an unrealistic lack of any consideration for nearby friendly troops.

On the subject of Controlled Fire Rates and FFE lethality by caliber. We consulted with our trusty Master Gunnery Sergeant James Thompson (254th Regiment) and had to make a design decision here. We decided to do it ‘by the book’ and apply artillery and mortar fire based on the lethal radius of each caliber of shell, with a lower percentage of FF being placed in the adjacent hexes based on that. The CSR modifier, represented by the dice roll needed to get the OK from the battery is the game mechanic used to represent the quantity of ammunition available, among other factors. A check of ibid. Section 3-29 led to the combination of firepower and ammunition quantity based on the Average Supply Rate (ASR) for mortar ammunition (extrapolating the same mechanic for batteries in direct support, i.e., local 75’s or 25 lbers. usually). By the book it states, “It is more combat effective to limit the number of mortar missions fired, firing enough rounds for each mission, than to ration rounds.” It is assumed in the execution of fires that the amount of fire that falls in a given hex (and adjacent hexes) is based on firing the ‘usual’ amount of ammunition for every FFE. The number of FFE’s that can fall during a given firefight is based on the amount of ammunition available to each battery.

## Firefight P2

- Lay out the map marked ‘The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne at Kellam’s Bridge: June 6-9 1944’
- The area of play is the same as P1. (It is restricted to the southeast corner of the map: the hexes numbered Y to HH, 8 to 13 inclusive.)
- Place one American squad in hex CC9.
- Place one American squad and NCO in hex CC10.
- Place one American squad in hex BB10.
- Place one American M2 mortar support weapon (with the weapon side showing face up) in hex GG12.
- Place one German **half** squad and an NCO in hex Z9.
- Place one German MG42 support weapon (with the weapon side showing face up) in hex AA9. This unit is on the upper level of the building. So, put an upper level marker under the unit.
- The American has the First Initiative.
- Place the initiative marker in the Game Turn 1 box.
- The Firefight lasts three turns.

The American side wins by being the only side to occupy hex AA9 at the end of the Firefight or by eliminating (removing from play) all German units. If neither of these things happen, the German player wins.

## Firefight P2 example of play

As you will remember from Firefight P1, each game turn follows the sequence of play. That tells us we begin with the command phase.

### Command Phase

Nothing much happens here – the quiet before the storm! - because there has been no action, there is no morale reduction. In addition, there are no half squads to be recombined.

The American side starts with the initiative.

Having made sure the initiative marker is on the American side, the command phase is over.

### Fire and Movement Phase

The American player wants to fire or move rather than pass but he is not sure how to crack the German defenses. Reckoning that the machine gun is the biggest enemy threat, he declares platoon fire from the squad in BB10, the squad and the NCO in CC10.

- He can use platoon fire because, although the units are not in the same hex, they are adjacent and there is an NCO.
- The American player checks the line of sight. There is no obstacle between CC10 and AA9. There is an obstacle between BB10 and AA9 – the black bar between hexes AA9 and AA10 also blocks line of sight through its corner spines – but only at level 0. The target unit is at +2, the upper level of the building, so the line of sight is clear.
- The range is 2 hexes.
- Looking on the Gunfire Table (the one on the PAC with the All American symbol) the American player sees that at a range of 2 each squad has 65 factors, each BAR has 21 factors.
- The American player decides to have the squad in BB10 fire (but not its BAR) and the squad in CC10 fire (but not its BAR). The total is 130 factors.
- The American player declares that his NCO will direct the fire.
- On the Firepower Factors Table the American player finds the far right column, marked 126 150+.

- Before rolling the dice, the American player checks the die roll modifiers.

The German machine gun unit is in a building, +25

The American NCO is directing the platoon fire, -5

There is a net modifier of +20

- The American player rolls the dice getting a 68. With a +20 modifier the final total is 88 and cross referring the die roll on the column gives a result of 'M+10'. The German machine gun unit must take a morale check and add 10.
- Before the morale check the American player puts a Fire 1 marker on the squads in BB10 and CC10 and a Fire 2 marker on the NCO.
- The German unit takes its morale check. The TQ (from the German PAC) is 45. There is a modifier of +10 for the building. Its modified morale level is 55.
- The German player rolls a 52 and adding the +10 modifier from the combat result ends up with 62. This is 7 more than the machine gun unit's morale level so it is pinned down. A pinned down marker is put on the unit and the American impulse is finished.

Note the machine gun unit does not get a +5 modifier for the adjacent half squad and a +10 for the adjacent NCO. This is because the machine gun unit is on the upper floor and it can only benefit from any units on the lower floor of the same hex it is in.

The German player is thinking that his machine gun unit doesn't have long to live unless he gets lucky. Should he reinforce AA9 or fire the machine gun unit? He decides to fire.

- The machine gun unit fires on the American squad in hex CC9.

The German player figures that he will fire on this target because it has yet to fire this turn.

- The German player checks the line of sight. The line runs above the level 1 hill in BB9 and through the military crest hexside of CC9. There is a clear line of sight.
- The range is 2 hexes.
- Looking on the Gunfire Table (the one on the PAC with the German cross) the German player sees that at a range of 2 his machine

gun unit has 101 fire factors. Because it is pinned down, the unit fires with only 50 factors. (101 halved and rounded down.)

- On the Firepower Factors Table the German player finds the right column, the one marked 41-50.
- Before rolling the dice, the German player checks the die roll modifiers.  
There are no modifiers. The American squad is not a higher target because it is also on level 2. The military crest may affect line of sight but does not change the actual level of the hex.
- The German player rolls the dice getting a 53 and cross referring that on the 41-50 column is '-', no effect. He missed!
- The German player puts a Fire 2 marker on the machine gun unit. (It keeps its pinned down marker!)

Note that if the German machine gun unit had not been pinned, it would have been able to place machine gun firepower marker in the target hex. These firepower factors would attack any other unit moving into the target hex.

This ends the German impulse.

The American player, having had a lucky escape from the machine gun fire, feels like pushing luck. In his next impulse he is going to move the squad in hex CC9.

- The American player declares that the squad in CC9 will use assault movement. It has 4 movement points.
- It moves to BB9. This costs 1 movement point.

Moving uphill costs more; moving downhill has no effect.

At this point the German player would like to use defensive fire against the moving American squad. However, the units in Z9 cannot fire because they do not have a clear line of sight. The black bar between AA9 and AA10 blocks it.

What about the machine gun unit in hex AA9 that is pinned and marked as Fire 2?

It can fire using desperation fire. As the situation is desperate, that is exactly what the German player does.

The American impulse and movement of its squad is interrupted while the German player resolves the desperation fire.

- The range is 1 hex.
- The machine gun unit has 101 fire factors reduced to 50 for being pinned down. It is reduced again to 25 for the desperation fire.
- On the Firepower Factors Table the German player finds the right column, the one marked 21-30.
- Before rolling the dice, the German player checks the die roll modifiers.

The modifiers are -10 for target moving, -10 for the target moving in the open and -5 for plunging fire because the machine gun is firing at a target at a lower level. Final modifier is -25.

- The German player rolls the dice and gets 51 and with the modifier of -25 the final total is 26. Cross referring this on the 21-30 column the result is '-', no effect. The American player seems to be getting things his way.

WHAT IF the American unit was not using assault movement? Would there be any difference?

If the American unit was using cautious movement it would have 6 movement points. However, it would not be able to fire while moving. As a target, there would still be a -10 modifier for moving.

If the American unit was running it would have 8 movement points. Again, it would not be able to fire while moving. As a target, there would be a -20 modifier for moving so long as the fire against it came in the same impulse. In other words, if the unit completed its move and then, later in the same turn, it was fired on, the modifier to be applied would be -10.

Before the American impulse can continue, the German machine gun unit has to worry about the effects of desperation fire on itself. The unit has to take a morale check +10 with the same die roll.

- The German unit takes its morale check. The TQ (from the German PAC) is 45. There is a +10 for the building and -5 for being pinned. Its modified morale level is 50.
- The roll used (which has to be the same as it rolled on the firepower factors table) is 51 and adding the +10 the final total is 61. This is 11

more than the pinned down machine gun unit's morale level so it is disrupted. The pinned down marker is removed and replaced with a disrupted marker (normally the other side of the pinned down marker).

Note that the charts have a -10 modifier to morale level for desperation fire. Ignore this and instead use the +10 modifier for the morale checks (that is an added 10 to the die roll) as set out in the rules.

The American player definitely seems to be getting things his way.

The American impulse continues. The squad has used 1 movement point.

- It uses its next movement point in assault firing on the machine gun unit in AA9.

It may assault fire at any time in its movement (because it is using assault movement) by using 1 movement point.

- The line of sight is clear.
- The range is 1 hex.
- The squad has 71 fire factors halved to 35 because it is using assault fire.

Note that the squad cannot use its BAR for assault fire.

- On the Firepower Factors Table the American player finds the right column, the one marked 31-40.
- Before rolling the dice, the American player checks the die roll modifiers.

The modifiers are +25 for the target in a building and +5 for the height advantage. Final modifier is +30.

- The American player rolls the dice and gets a 7 and adding the +30 modifier the final total is 37. On the 31-40 column of the firepower factors table this gives a result of 'M'. The German unit must take a morale check.
- The German unit takes its morale check. The TQ (from the German PAC) is 45. There is a +10 for the building and -10 for being disrupted. Its modified morale level is 45.
- The German player rolls a 39 and breathes a small sigh of relief. The unit passes the morale test.

The American impulse continues. The squad has used 2 movement points. The American player now moves it again.

The squad wants to enter hex AA9. This costs 2 movement points. However, because the hex is enemy occupied, the squad must first pass a task check.

A task check is done exactly the same way as a morale check. The main difference is the end result. Failing a task check means the unit does not succeed in its task; its morale is not effected.

- The American player takes the task check. The TQ (from the American PAC) is 55. The modifiers are +5 for the squad in CC10, +5 for the squad in BB10 and +10 for the NCO in CC10. Its modified morale level is 75.
- The American player rolls a 73 and the unit passes its task check.
- The American squad enters hex AA9.

The American squad is under the German unit stack because it is on the ground floor.

The American impulse is not over yet because the German units in hex Z9 can use defensive fire.

- The German half squad in Z9 fires at a range of 1 against the assault moving American squad in hex AA9.

The German player may fire with the half squad or the inherent squad machine gun or both. If he fires with the half squad now he can fire the inherent squad machine gun in a later impulse or the other way around

- The half squad has 45 firepower factors and the inherent squad machine gun has 31 firepower factors. The German player wants to fire both at this time so the total is 76.
- The NCO directs the fire.
- On the Firepower Factors Table the German player finds the right column, the one marked 71-80.
- Before rolling the dice, the German player checks the die roll modifiers.

The target squad is moving -10, it is in a building +25 and the NCO is directing fire -5 for a final modifier of +10.

- The German player rolls the dice getting a 2 and adds 10 for a final result of 12. Cross

referring that on the 71-80 column is 'C/M+20'. The American squad suffers casualties so is flipped over to its half squad side. In addition, the half squad side has to take a morale check with a +20 modifier.

The American luck may be running out.

- The German player puts a Fire 2 marker on the half squad and NCO.
- The American player takes the morale check. The TQ (from the American PAC) is 50. The modifiers are +10 for being in a building and -5 for being adjacent to the enemy half squad in hex Z9. Its modified morale level is 55.

Note that the Morale Support Table gives a -5 modifier for having an enemy 'squad' within morale support range. This modifier applies if there is a squad or half squad. It does not apply if there is an enemy support weapon.

- The American player rolls, would you believe it, 100! (a 0 on each die is read as 100) The American unit has gained a courage result. This means it is no longer troubled by any morale check results.
- The American player puts a Silver Star marker on the half squad.
- He also puts an Assault Fired marker on top of it.  
(The American unit has used all 4 movement points. It does not have the necessary points (2) to climb the staircase. It must stay on the ground floor.)

Because the friendly and enemy units are in the same hex but **not** the same level, no close combat marker is placed.

At last, the American impulse has finished. Play passes to the German player for an impulse but he has no units remaining so he passes. The American player gets another impulse.

The American squad in hex BB10 is marked Fire 1. It has already fired its squad weapons but not its BAR.

- The American unit in BB10 fires its BAR into hex Z9.
- There are no obstacles and the line of sight is clear.
- The range is 2 hexes.

- The BAR has 21 fire factors. On the Firepower Factors Table the American player finds the right column, the one marked 21-30.

- Before rolling the dice, the American player checks the die roll modifiers.

The only modifier is because the target squad is in a building +25.

Note again that ordinary squad or inherent machine gun or BAR fire does not get the modifier for firing at a lower target. Only machine gun support weapons get that modifier.

- The American player rolls the dice getting a 37 and adds 25 for a final result of 62. Cross referring that on the 21-30 column is '-', no effect.

WHAT IF the German units were not in a building, there were no modifiers and the American player rolled a 4? The result would be 'C/M'. One unit suffers **casualties** (see below) and any remaining units take a morale check. Which unit, the NCO or the squad, suffers the casualties? To find that out one player (it does not matter which one) rolls a die for each. Whichever one rolls highest suffers the casualties. If there is a tie, both suffer the casualty result.

For example, if the NCO rolls 7 and the half squad rolls 0 (read as 10), the half squad suffers the casualties. The half squad is eliminated and the surviving NCO takes a morale check.

For example, if the NCO rolls 9 and the half squad rolls 6, the NCO is wounded. The wounded NCO (shown by flipping the NCO counter over to his wounded side) and the half squad take a morale check.

For example, if the NCO and the half squad roll the same number, the half squad is eliminated, the NCO is wounded and the wounded NCO takes a morale check.

### Casualties

The effect of a 'C' result (casualties) depends on the unit.

- A squad becomes a half squad
- A half squad is eliminated
- A support weapon is eliminated
- A gun is eliminated
- An NCO is wounded

- An already wounded NCO is eliminated

- The Fire 1 marker on the American squad is flipped to its Fire 2 side.

Another American impulse is finished. Play passes to the German player for an impulse but he still has no units remaining so he passes. The American player gets another impulse.

- The American player declares that his mortar support weapon unit in hex GG12 will move using cautious movement.

- The unit has 6 movement points.

- It spends 2 movement points to flip over to its personnel side (the side with the picture of the soldiers as opposed to the side with the pictures of the weapon). It **MUST** do this before it moves. It has 4 movement points remaining.

Note that unless a Firefight specifies, you may set up support weapons on their personnel side or their weapon side at the start. If you are planning on moving them, you may want to start them on their personnel side to save spending those 2 movement points.

- The American player moves his mortar unit to FF12, costing 1 movement point. It has 3 movement points remaining.

- The American player moves his mortar unit to EE12, costing 3 movement points (1 for the clear terrain and plus 2 for the bocage) and stops there, personnel side up.

He needs 2 movement points to flip to the weapon side but has none left. He needed 3 movement points to go from FF12 to EE12. Therefore, instead of moving he could have stayed in FF12 and flipped over to the weapon side at a cost of 2. That would leave 1 movement point, which could not be used and would be wasted. However, on the weapon side the mortar unit could fire in its next impulse. It could not fire in the turn it moved in because it would not get another impulse. Moreover, just to complete the picture, note the mortar unit cannot do desperation fire. Lastly, remember the mortar unit has a minimum range of 2 hexes – it cannot fire on units in the adjacent hex. Putting mortar units in the front line has to be done with care.

- The American player puts a moved marker on

the mortar unit.

Now, play passes back to the German player. However, he has no more units to give an impulse to and he must pass. Play passes back to the American player. Again, he is in the same position and must pass, too. The fire and movement phase is finished because both players have passed one after the other.

**WHAT IF** the American mortar unit started the impulse, weapon side up, in hex CC11? Could it fire?

Normally, a mortar unit can fire on a target unit it can see or a target unit that an adjacent unit can spot for it.

In hex CC11 the mortar unit cannot see hex Z9 (because of the hill hex in BB10) or hex AA9 (because of the hill hexes BB10 and BB9).

The adjacent units in hexes BB10 or CC10 could spot for the mortar unit if they were not already marked Fire 2. Because they are marked they cannot spot for the mortar unit. Therefore, the mortar could not fire.

**WHAT IF** the mortar unit was in CC11 and the unit in BB10 was not Fire 2 (or even Fire 1) marked? Let's see how the mortar unit fires on hex Z9.

- The American player checks the range because a mortar unit has a minimum range of 2; the range is 3 so that is fine.
- Looking at the American PAC the player sees there is a 75% chance of hitting the target hex..

When firing a mortar (or a gun or any unit that rolls a percentage to hit an infantry target, the terrain modifiers are used as modifiers on the die roll. For example, here the unit in Z9 is in a building. So, there is a +25 modifier to the die roll.

- A roll of 01-50 hits, 51 and over misses.
- If he rolls, say, 48 he has hit and 34 firepower factors (the number in the FF column of the gunfire table) are applied to the target hex. The American player would roll on the 31-40 column with no modifiers. The modifier, for the terrain, would already have been taken into account in the to hit die roll.

### Melee Phase

There is no melee to resolve. The units are not on the same level of the hex; that is why there is no close combat marker.

**WHAT IF** the units in hex AA9 were on the same level. Well, there would be a close combat marker on the hex and there would be a melee to resolve.

- The American side, a half squad, has a close combat value of 2.
- The German side, a disrupted support weapon, has a close combat value of 1.

Attack is voluntary. The results are applied at the same time.

- Both sides attack.
- The American player attacks at 2:1 and rolls a 67. No effect.
- The German player attacks at 1:2 and rolls a 6 eliminating the American half squad!

Note the Silver Star marker on the American unit does not protect it from close combat results.

**WHAT IF** the American player had rolled a 40 instead of a 67? That result would have been a 'C' inflicting casualties on the German machine gun unit. Both the machine gun unit and the American half squad would be eliminated.

### Conclusion of the turn

The players remove the fire and movement markers from the units. It is worth highlighting that morale markers, like the disrupted marker, stay.

The initiative marker is moved on to turn two.

Our example of play ends here...