

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FIRESTORM-BAGRATION COMMANDER

Leading your troops to victory can be a daunting task for the Firestorm Commander. Using the checklist found in the Firestorm Campaign Handbook can be a real help to making your Battle Phase profitable to your General and your army. Keeping the General happy brings real dividends (*Keeps you out of Siberia or the Russian Front, oops, sorry your already on the Russian Front. Oh well, it can't get any worse can it.*)

Let's take a look at the Commander's checklist. (Get it out and follow along).

COMMANDER'S CHECKLIST

ORDER ONE – MANOEUVRE STEP

The Manoeuvre Step covers the Who, Where, What, and Why of your battle.

1. SELECT AN OPPONENT (PAGE 18) (THE WHO & THE WHAT)

- **Find an opposing Commander and challenge them to a game of *Flames Of War*.** This is Who you are going to fight. The What is your company that you have built to fight them. You can choose any army you want (Unless the Organizer places a restriction on types of armies) with the only constraint is that it is the same size as your opponents (to begin with). Sometimes the Organizer may put additional constraints on Army size (Like a min or max amount of points for their Campaign) but the basic rules allow for any size armies to participate in Firestorm. If your opponent only has 1000 points then they can still participate but you will have to field 1000 points against them.

2. ROLL FOR INITIATIVE (PAGE 18)

- **Both Commanders roll a die. The player with the highest roll wins the initiative. Soviet win ties.** This is the Where. Initiative signifies the tactical advantage in Firestorm. You can give it up willingly but I don't think your General would appreciate that. In other words, if you do not wish to take the initiative and don't want to select where the battle will take place, you can give the initiative to your opponent and let them pick where the battle occurs. I'm sure their General would be happy to accept.

Once you have initiative you should probably check out your General's Battle Plan. It might give you a hint as to where the best place to fight might be. It also will keep him much happier (Remember Siberia).

3. PLACE A BATTLE ARROW (PAGE 18)

- **Player with Initiative places a Battle Arrow pointing into the area they are attacking.** Although gaining the Initiative and placing your Battle Arrow are similar, they are not the same thing. You must gain initiative first and then you can place a Battle Arrow. Battle Arrows only identify where a battle will take place. They do not have any influence on how many battles will take place.

Once you have decided where you wish to fight you need to tell your General and the rest of the army where you will be fighting. You do this by placing a Battle Arrow on where your army is currently forming and where you are attempting to move it. Others can fight around you but placing your Battle Arrow locks in your battle in the grand scheme of things. No one else can fight between those two areas you selected until your battle is finished.

4. CHOOSE FIRESTORM TROOPS (PAGE 19)

- **Each player may add up to two Firestorm Troops from the areas being fought over to their *Flames of War* force.** Here's where you can alter the force structure of your army. If you selected an area that has Firestorm Troops to attack out of then you may supplement your army with additional support platoons. Your selected Firestorm Troops are treated as additional Divisional Support platoons and count as part of your army as an additional platoon for all game parameters.

Though they may be understrength platoons, they can add armour to an infantry army, provide additional platoons for keep your army fighting, or add additional fire support for your attack or defence. If you are playing an army from a different nationality than your selected Firestorm Troops then treat those Firestorm Troops as Allies for game purposes.

Firestorm Troops are also the only way to provide Air Support for your army during the campaign.

If you don't have the models of the Firestorm Troops you select (Cheap British or Americans not willing to purchase a few Soviet baubles). Then you can use the Proxy Marker to place on the Command vehicle of your fake Soviet tanks so your opponent can remember they are actually superior Soviet armoured vehicles.

5. CHECK FOR SUPPLY (PAGE 19)

- **Any area that is connected to a friendly Supply Depot by a continuous rail line through friendly-controlled areas is in supply.**
- **An Engineer Firestorm Troop is in supply if it is in an area adjacent to an area that is in supply. Any Firestorm Troops in an area adjacent to an Engineer Firestorm Troop that is in supply are also in supply.**
- **If their area is out of supply, the Commander rolls on the Out of Supply Table to determine the effect on their force.**

Supply is another consideration you must take when identifying where to fight. It is applied to your troops once you have decided where to fight and you have placed your Battle Arrow, locking in your battle areas. Supply effects are now immediately applied to your army. If they are in supply (based on the area where your troops are physically located before the battle) then all is fine. If however either you or your opponent is Out of Supply then the conduct of the battle is changed based upon the roll of the die by the person or persons out of supply.

Those who fight while being out of supply and win deserve special recognition, for holding out against the odds can turn the tide of the war.

Supply finishes the Manoeuvre Step. Here's your Why. You can now begin a *Flames of War* game against your opponent to determine the fate of the two areas you are now fighting over. The victor will claim both areas for their army while the vanquished will retreat in utter defeat. (There are of course some modifiers such as *Festerplatz* or cowering behind fixed defences that will negate the loss of a territory but that is covered in the Combat Step).

ORDER TWO – COMBAT STEP

The Combat Step covers the How and When of your Battle.

1. IDENTIFY THEIR MISSION (PAGE 21) (THE HOW)

- **Choose the mission with your opponent or use the Terrain Missions Table.**

The mission for your battle can be determined in any number of ways. As the rules say pick your own fight. Or if you can't decide use a mission table. There are a lot of different possibilities for an enthusiastic, clever and or historical Organizer. You can match missions to the terrain and build some tables to match the different terrain types. You can introduce the two new missions from Firestorm Bagration into the mix or have all across-river attacks use the River Crossing mission (Tough call as this is a very nasty and bloody battle though quite indicative of the Eastern Front). Forcing city fights could also be an option, but again tough fights in close quarters.

There is also something here to remember and that is the *Festerplatz* rule. This is the only one that affects that actual battle in that the German player can cover in his trenches and decide that they wish to defend in the mission with fortifications. It won't save him but it might make him think they can stem the Soviet onslaught. And even if he wins he will not leave the safety of his trenches and you will retain the area you attacked from.

Also remember if the battle occurs in a city the Soviet Air Force cannot help but neither can the *Luftwaffe*.

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2. PLAY FLAMES OF WAR BATTLE (PAGE 22) (HERE'S THE WHEN AND IT IS NOW).

- **Play the mission you have selected as a *Flames Of War* battle. Don't forget your Firestorm Troops.** Firestorm Troops are optional but they can be decisive in a given battle. A good selection can provide the needed edge to tilt the battle in your favour. But choose well, for future battles may not go your way and the troops you chose could be cut off even if you win your battle because you hoarded the Firestorm Troops for yourself and let another Commander fight alone.

A Firestorm Campaign gives you the unique experience of operational command. Though responsible for winning your battle you must also be aware of how your action affect the rest of your army. You might be able to lead your spearhead to victory but if you fellow Commanders do not do their part then you may find yourself cut off and out of supply. Firestorm is a team game where all Commanders are responsible for fighting together for the ultimate victory.

There may also be times when you will be faced with fighting the enemy Out of Supply and with no Firestorm Troops. It is here that your mettle as a Commander will be forged. A victory against heavy odds (or even a close defeat) will bring glory, awe, and honour from not only your General but from your fellow Commander's as well.

ORDER THREE – AFTER ACTION STEP (No job is done till the paperwork is complete).

You need to clean up your battle area on the map for the next Commander who wishes to use the areas you fought in or the troops that remain there.

1. ROLL TO DESTROY (PAGE 23)

- **For each Firestorm Troop used in the battle consult the Roll To Destroy Table to see if it is destroyed.**

When a Firestorm Troop is destroyed it does not return to the Campaign until the Reinforcement Step in the Strategic Phase of the next Campaign Turn. Place any destroyed Firestorm Troops in the Reinforcement Pool of its respective side.

2. RETREAT DEFEATED TROOPS (PAGE 23)

- **The defeated Commander must retreat all remaining Firestorm Troops from the area.**

Two key points to remember here.

1. You can retreat a Firestorm Troop to any friendly controlled area adjacent to the battle areas involved in the battle. You could retreat one Firestorm Troop to one friendly area and the other Firestorm Troop to another friendly area.
2. If you cannot retreat your Firestorm Troops to a friendly area or they were destroyed while being surrounded they are prizes of war and are permanently removed from the Campaign. They will bestow victory points upon the side that captures them. Beware of fighting completely surrounded, it could permanently cripple your army chances of victory.

3. ADVANCE VICTORIOUS TROOPS (PAGE 23)

- **The victorious Commander may move up to four Firestorm Troops into the area starting with the Firestorm Troops used in the battle.**

This allows you to continue your offensive from the battle area you have just taken. If there is enough time for another battle to occur, that Commander could use the troops you just moved forward to press the offensive even deeper into enemy territory.

The first troops that can be brought forward must be any remaining Firestorm Troops from the last battle. The third and fourth troop can come from any adjacent friendly controlled area, not necessarily the one you advanced forward from. Of course, if you lost one or more of your Firestorm Troops in the last battle then you could move Firestorm Troops from any adjacent friendly area into your newly conquered area.

One last comment before we rap up your first day on the front. A Campaign Turn lasts as long as the Organizer designs it. It may be just a two-hour session whereby you only get one chance to battle, or it could be two or three two-hour session in a week whereby you can battle a number of times during that Campaign Turn. A Campaign Turn could also be say six hours long where you could possibly get three games in during one session, fighting battle after battle in one day for the Motherland. In any case you may not be done fighting just because you won one battle. Talk to your General and let him know how things are going at the front.

Surviving that first day in battle will go a long way to insure a favourable outcome at your next promotion board. Following orders and fighting for the overall victory may sometimes give you the short end of the stick but rest assured, a good General will remember you when those dachas on the Baltic are being distributed.