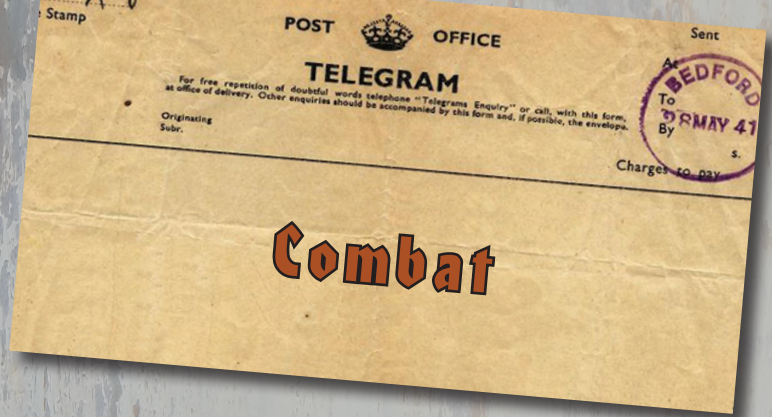


chapter

6



What and When is Combat?

Combat occurs during a tactical phase, after the active player announces that he has completed all tactical movement. If there are any contested squares, then combat must be resolved in each of them.

The active player chooses a contested square and both sides resolve combat for it, including any retreats. All units in the contested square must participate in the combat.

If the defenders are not shattered and do not retreat, then the attackers must retreat. In any event, the result is always that the square is no longer contested, and all retreating units are tipped.

The active player then chooses another contested square and this process is repeated until all combats are resolved and there are no more contested squares. Unless specified otherwise, the active player always picks the next square in which to resolve combat.

The Defender's Terrain

Combat happens "in" the defender's square. The terrain type of the defender's square is the only one used in the combat.

Why Can't I Shoot From One Square to Another?



Each square represents one kilometer. As the war progressed, most armies developed weapons with effective ranges considerably greater than 1 km. Nonetheless we assume that all combats are happening within an area roughly 1 km in size. There are several reasons for this.

There was always a large discrepancy between theoretical performance and actual use. The US army found that the huge majority of tank actions, for example, happened between 600 and 800 meters from the enemy. Anti-tank guns often had ranges far beyond that but terrain rarely allowed the crews to see much more than a kilometer, and it wasn't always a good idea to reveal one's position so early. Holding fire also conserved ammunition as it required far fewer shots to kill at closer ranges.

Our one kilometer square is therefore a useful approximation.



The Process of Combat Resolution

In each combat the active and passive players total the combat values of their participating units. If the attacker wishes to call for artillery support, he does so first. If the defender wishes to, he then does so.

Each side may then play one or more tactics. A player does so by spending an Op for each tactic he wishes to use in this combat. The two players make these decisions in secret (covering their command posts if necessary) and then reveal their tactics simultaneously.

Each side then rolls one die to determine which combat grid he applies. The grid indicates how many hits that player inflicted on his opponent's units.

Generally the two sides resolve combat simultaneously, but in some cases one side may resolve combat (i.e. apply his combat results) first, thus inflicting losses that might reduce the other side before he can apply combat results.

The defender might have the option to take some of his losses in the form of retreats. This is called **evasion**, and is described in the next chapter.

If the defender is still in the square after combat is resolved, then the attacking units must retreat. Otherwise the attackers have taken the square.

Thus ends the combat. If there are other contested squares the active player now chooses another one to resolve and this process is repeated.

Elements and Combat

Units from different elements, reporting to different commanders, often had difficulty coordinating, particularly on the attack. Unless specified otherwise by an event or tactic, your side is penalized in the combat if you have units from different elements.

Units that have no element and report to the same **parent** may fight with any friendly units from that same parent without penalty.

For example, the Germans have units of the 1st Fallschirmjäger regiment, Kampfgruppe A of the 15th Panzergrenadier division, and a battalion of Tiger tanks (corps reserves; no element) all in action against the enemy in this area.

Units of the Fallschirmjägers and the Tigers may fight in the same combat without penalty. Units of the 15th and the Tigers also have no penalty in the same combat. But units of the 1st and the 15th would incur a penalty if they participated in the same combat because they are two different elements.

Modifying the Combat Values

Each unit has a base combat value, which is shown in the highest unmarked box of its track. A unit with a split track uses the appropriate combat value for its role, defending or attacking. All the units of one side in a combat add their base combat values together for a **total combat value**.

As they determine their total combat values in a combat, each side must apply any modifiers to the values of their units. Modifying a unit's combat value generally means either halving it or doubling it.

Units' values can be modified due to tactics, terrain, traits, or other situations. *Each unit is modified individually* before units are all added together for that side's total combat value.

Vulnerable

A unit is judged to be vulnerable if it meets any of four criteria:

- it is an armor unit in some terrain other than open, **OR**
- it is attacking across a bridge, **OR**
- it is attacking while low on supply, **OR**
- it is tipped.

No matter how many of these criteria it meets the vulnerable penalty is only applied once: the unit's combat value is **halved**, rounding up any fraction.

Vulnerable
Armor in non-Open.
Attacking across a bridge.
Attacking while Low on Supply.
Unit is Tipped.
Combat Value Halved (round up)

Doubled

Tactics or events sometimes indicate that a unit's combat or barrage value is doubled in the combat.

Multiple Modifiers

A unit's value may only be doubled or halved once, each. If multiple conditions apply (such as a tipped armor unit, low on supply, fighting in the woods), nonetheless the unit is modified only once.

If a unit is *both* doubled and halved, no matter how many criteria it meets for each, then these two modifiers cancel each other and are both ignored.



Tactics

Tactics confer specific benefits in combat. Each tactic has a box on the command post that explains how it affects combat and how/when it can be applied.

Each side may play a number of tactics up to the number of units it has in the combat.

Types of Tactics

There are three types of tactics. **Defensive** tactics may be played by the passive side in a combat. **Offensive** tactics may be played by the active side. **General** tactics may be played by either side.

Selecting Tactics on the Command Post

After the players have calculated their combat values for a combat, they secretly decide whether or not to play any tactics for that combat. Conceal the command post temporarily if necessary.

For each tactic he wants to play in this combat, a player must take one Ops die from his file and place it on the box for that tactic. Place the die showing its "1" pip. The two players then reveal their tactics choices simultaneously and apply their effects.

After resolving the combat, turn those dice so that their "6" pips are showing.

This method helps to remind you of which tactics are being played for *this* combat, and which were played for other combats previously, if your command post has become crowded with several dice. Any dice showing "1" are in play in the current combat.

Restrictions on Tactics

Some tactics may not be played in certain kinds of terrain or weather. If a player uses a tactic erroneously and its benefit does not apply, he nonetheless leaves the Ops die on the box anyway. (That's his penalty for not reading more closely!) *For example, if he played Infiltration but then realized that the defender is in Open terrain, he does not get the benefit and wastes the Op and the tactic.*

Effect of Tactics

Some tactics negate the other side's tactics. For example, the *Recce* tactic permits one side to "shoot first" in the combat, but if both sides play *Recce*, they cancel each other out and combat is resolved simultaneously. The words "Negates..." appear in those boxes to remind you.

The *Withdraw* tactic negates the entire combat. The defender retreats, and the "resolution" of the combat is that there is no combat.

Calling for Artillery Support: Barrage

When he declares his attack the active player may also identify which artillery units he is calling upon for support, if any. Then the defender may do so. Neither side is ever required to call for artillery support.

When artillery units fire in support of a combat this is called **barrage**. They contribute their barrage values to the total combat value. For example, if the attacker has units in the combat with a total value of 9, plus two artillery units barraging with values of 2 and 3, then his total combat value will be 14.

Who May Barrage?

Each unit in the combat may call upon *one artillery unit from its same element*, to barrage. Alternatively, a unit in combat may call upon one artillery unit from its parent. Since you can never have more than three units in a combat, you may never barrage with more than three artillery units in a given combat.

For example, the Americans are attacking with two units from the 7th infantry regiment, which is an element of the 3rd infantry division (the parent). The US units could call for artillery support from artillery units that belong to the 7th regiment, or from heavy artillery that belongs to the parent (the division or corps reserve artillery).

If a combat involves units from different elements then artillery from different elements could be called for support. For example, if the Germans have a unit from the 3rd panzer division and a unit from the 278th infantry division, they could call upon artillery from both the 3rd and the 278th. Each unit in the combat may call for a barrage from only one artillery unit.

Sometimes a combat unit has no element. Such a unit can call for a barrage only from an artillery unit belonging to its parent. *Consider for example a company of tank destroyers attached to VII Corps headquarters. It may call for artillery support only from artillery units that also have no element, but the same VII Corps parent.*

Sometimes artillery units are themselves defenders in a combat. Like any other defender, they could call for artillery support from eligible artillery.

Eligible Artillery

To be eligible to barrage, an artillery unit must meet all of these criteria:

- It must not be tipped, **and**
- It must be within range of the square where the combat is occurring, **and**
- It may not be in an urban or woods square, **and**
- It may not be in a contested square.

Artillery Low Supply

Artillery units that are low on supply have a barrage value of 1.



Rockets

Rocket artillery units may **not** be called to support a *defender* in a combat. In other words, they may barrage only when their side is active.



Tip Artillery After a Barrage

All types of artillery units are tipped after they barrage. That means: they may neither move nor fire again in this turn, unless they are un-tipped.

Note that your units are normally un-tipped at the start of *your* turn. That means: if an artillery unit barrages in support of your attack, it may not barrage in support of your units in defense in the following (enemy's) turn.

Artillery and Terrain

Artillery units that are in urban or woods squares may not barrage in support of combats. They may, however, still defend themselves with their defensive combat value, if attacked in those squares.

One Side Shattered Before Barrage

If you call for artillery support but your enemy shoots first and shatters one or more of your units, or if an event like *Attack Broken Up* forces one of your units to retreat before combat resolution, then all of your supporting artillery still contributes its barrage values as long as at least one of your units remains in the combat.

But if none of your units remain before your side can shoot, then you don't roll to resolve combat at all. Your barraging artillery units are still tipped, but to no effect.

Reserve Artillery Tactic

The *Reserve Artillery* tactic represents off-table heavy batteries attached to the corps or army HQ, collectively referred to as "reserve artillery." Their range is such that they could reach any part of the table.

This tactic is limited to being used only in the first tactical phase of a turn. They provide the attacker with one shift up in the combat.

A player may use this tactic in addition to calling for artillery support.

Airpower

The *Airstrike* and *Carpet Bombing* tactics may be played only in clear weather. They may not be used in a combat occurring in woods.

These assets have no range and can be used for units of any/all elements or parents.

Combat Grids

After adding all the combat values of their units, plus any artillery support, each side should have a **total combat value**. Each player then rolls one die to determine which combat grid he will use to resolve the combat. The grid indicates how many **hits** he inflicts on his opponent.

Combat is normally resolved with both sides rolling and applying their grids simultaneously. However, if one side "shoots first" then that player rolls and applies any hits to the enemy first. The other side, now possibly with a reduced combat value, rolls and applies hits to the enemy.

Combat Grid

When he determines which grid to use, the player counts the number of **yellow boxes** that show a value equal to, or lower than, his total combat value. That number of yellow boxes is the number of hits he inflicts on the enemy.

For example, if your total combat value was 14 and you rolled a "5", you would inflict three hits on the enemy. That's because there are three yellow boxes on that grid with a value equal to or less than your combat value (the 3, 5, and 11 boxes).

Combat Grids					
40	40	40	36	30	26
40	36	31	26	22	18
33	28	25	21	17	14
26	23	19	15	11	8
16	14	11	9	5	4
12	9	7	5	3	1
0-11	0-8	0-6	0-4	0-2	0

Insufficient Combat Value (White Box)

If your combat value falls within the grid's white box, then you do not inflict any hits on the enemy.

For example, if your combat value was only 4, and you rolled "3," then you would not inflict any hits because the lowest yellow box on that grid is a 7.

Recce

One or both sides may play the *Recce* tactic. If both sides play it they cancel each other and are both ignored.

If only one side plays *Recce*, that side "shoots first" in the combat, meaning: it applies hits against the enemy before the enemy may do so. Those hits will reduce the enemy's combat values or might cause enemy units to retreat, thus reducing his strength before he can shoot back. It is even possible that the enemy might be shattered or retreat before he can inflict any damage.

Shifts

Some tactics or game situations give a player a shift or force a shift on his opponent, either up or down. This means: after you have consulted your combat grid and determined how many yellow boxes you may count, you shift up or down one box.

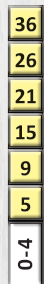
Shifts are cumulative. It is possible to shift more than one box on the grid. It is also possible to have both a shift up and a shift down, which cancel each other out.

If you must apply both up- and down-shifts, then apply the shifts up first, then the down shifts. You may never shift above the highest yellow box (six hits), nor below the white box (no hits).

For example, using the grid at right: say that your combat value was "8" and you have one shift up and one shift down. You'd start with one yellow box, shift up, then shift down, and thus end by scoring one hit on the enemy.

Or imagine that your total combat value was "22" and you got three shifts up. You can't shift above the maximum number of boxes, so you inflict six hits on the enemy.

Or imagine that your combat value was "3." That puts you in the white box (no hits), but if you receive a shift up, now you score one hit.



Terrain Shifts

If the defender has **any infantry unit(s)**, the attacker applies one shift down if the combat is occurring in a square with urban, mountain, or bocage terrain. In any other terrain, or if the defender doesn't have any infantry units, then this penalty is not applied to the attacker.

Infantry Support

If at least one attacking unit has the *infantry support* trait, the attackers do not apply the terrain shift down penalty for attacking enemy infantry in an urban, mountain, or bocage square. The trait does not benefit a defender.



An armor unit with the infantry support trait is not vulnerable when fighting in terrain other than open.

"Tank Shock"

If a combat occurs in open terrain, **and** one side has at least one armor unit but the other side has none, then the side without armor suffers a shift down for "tank shock."

Element and Flank Shifts

Either side applies a shift down if it has units from more than one element in the combat.

The attacking side applies one shift up if he flanks the defender.

Summary of Combat Shifts	
	Flanking the enemy.
	Multiple elements involved.
	Attacking vs. INF in urban, mtn, bocage.
	Tank Shock.

Tank Battles

If a combat features at least one armor unit on **both** sides, then it is called a **tank battle**, regardless of what other unit types might be involved.

Leading Unit

In a tank battle each side picks one armor unit as its leading unit. The attacker must announce his pick first.

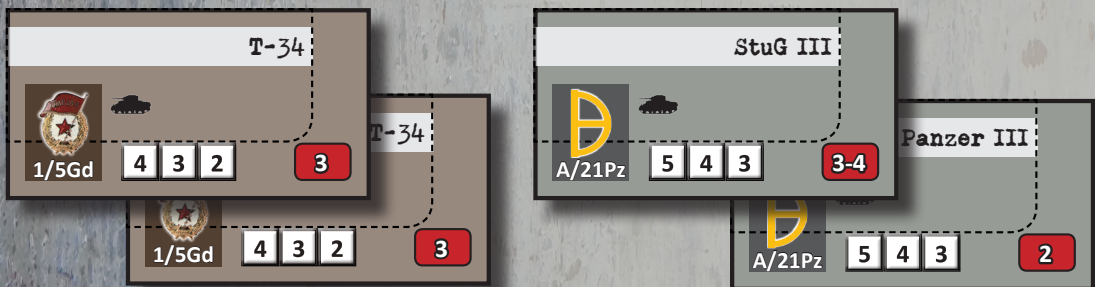
The leading armor unit must have at least as many boxes remaining on its track, as any other armor unit on that side. *For example, if you have a fresh tank and a worn tank unit, you may not lead with the worn unit.*

The players then compare the armor values of their leading units. Remember that some armor units have a split value; you use the first number only when attacking, and the second number only when defending.

Armor Advantage

If one side's leading unit has a higher armor value than the other side's, he has an **armor advantage**. If the two sides' leading units have the same armor value, then neither has an advantage.

In a tank battle, the side with the armor advantage scores one "extra" hit on the enemy's leading armor unit, before any other hits are applied to the enemy. He does this **only if he scored any hits** in the combat. If his result on the combat grid shows no hits to the enemy, then he doesn't inflict the extra armor advantage hit either.



A Tank Battle in 1943

Two Soviet T-34s attack a German StuG and Panzer III. The combat values are 8 vs. 10, and now the players compare their highest armor values. The T-34s are (3). The Panzer III is a (2) but the StuG is a (4) on defense, so the Germans have the armor advantage.

If the Germans were attacking, their highest armor value would be a (3) and thus neither side would have the armor advantage... unless for some reason the German player chose his Panzer IIIs to lead the attack, in which case the Soviets would have the advantage.



Applying Hits

Defender Applies Losses First

Even when combat is resolved simultaneously, the defender applies his hits first. This means: he must decide which of his units will take the hits, and whether any of them will retreat.

Each hit applied to a unit causes it to mark-off (lose) one step. If a unit loses its last or only step, it is shattered.

Tank Battles

In a tank battle, the side with the armor advantage — if he scored any hits at all — first scores one "extra" hit on the enemy's leading armor unit before the enemy applies any of the hits he suffers due to the combat result on the grid.

Spreading the Hits Evenly

If the enemy scored hits on you in the combat, you must apply them according to the following rules:

- If the enemy scored an extra hit on you because of his armor advantage, apply that first to your leading armor unit. If that shatters the unit, remove it. Then:
- A unit that is still fresh must take a hit before a unit that is worn.
- A player may not take a second step loss on a unit until all his units in the combat have taken one. He may not take a third step loss on a unit until all his units in the combat have taken two.

Artillery units that contribute their barrage to a combat do not take any hits in that combat. They can still be attacked in a square, like any other combat unit, and take losses in combat that way.



The Leading Armor Unit

The "extra" hit on the leading armor unit is still a hit; it means that you then place other hits on other units before you would place another hit on your leading unit. Since fresh units can't be spared from hits, eventually you will be forced to place hits on all units; it is virtually impossible to preserve fresh units for very long.

Prepared Positions

Rommel assumes that nearly all units have dug-in and are using the terrain whenever possible. "Prepared Positions" in the game represent man-made obstacles and improvements. They might have been hastily built or might have taken several days or even weeks to construct.

Unless otherwise specified, the basic rules limit a player to no more than **three** prepared position markers in a given square, regardless of the number of units in that square. They can be placed in any kind of terrain except soft ground.

Placing Prepared Positions

If a player has prepared positions in a given scenario, he must place them during his setup, visible to the enemy, even if his units are concealed during setup. If the scenario does not specify exactly which squares they are to be placed in (such as in a fictional game), he may place them in any squares in which he sets up one or more units.



Effect of Prepared Positions

Prepared positions are represented by markers. An attractive solution is to create sandbags, barbed wire, pillboxes, etc. The marker(s) apply to the entire square, no matter how many units are in it, no matter from which directions it is attacked.

When a player *defends* in a square with prepared positions, and the enemy scores hits on him in the combat, the first hit is scored against one prepared position marker. That marker "absorbs" the hit and is removed. The remaining hits are then applied against the defending units normally, even if other prepared positions remain.

If the defender has multiple prepared position markers in a square, only one hit is absorbed by them (i.e. only one marker is removed) per combat. Eventually, with repeated enemy attacks, all prepared position markers will probably be removed.

For example, the Germans are defending a square with three prepared position markers. The Soviets attack and score three hits. The first hit removes a marker. The remaining two hits are now applied to the Germans. The square now has only two prepared position markers remaining for future combats there.

Taking Positions

If combat results in the attacker taking a square with prepared position markers remaining, the active player removes all of the markers immediately. The prepared positions are destroyed.



The Philosophy of the Combat System

At the scale of *Rommel*, units of different types are interacting in a number of unpredictable ways. We cannot separate unit-vs-unit encounters, nor would we want to. During playtesting we considered literally dozens of combat resolution models but finally decided that a single "combat value," as generic as that might look, was necessary in order to depict combined-arms teams in a variety of terrain types without going mad.

That might be frustrating if you're accustomed to playing skirmish games in which it matters a great deal that the infantry's AT weapons can't penetrate the frontal armor of an enemy tank at a specific range, or that the *Ausführung G* added an extra 10mm of armor in 1942....

In the basic rules I deliberately limited the interplay of units to infantry, artillery, and "true" tanks. Those tank destroyers that were so lightly armored as to be effectively just motorized anti-tank guns (such as the SU-76, the Marder and Nashorn, and the Archer) have been saved for the advanced game. But we must assume that "down there" in that kilometer of contested ground, your men are using all means at their disposal. The infantry have AT guns, mortars and other heavy weapons suitable for whatever period you're playing.

A key assumption in *Rommel* is that all units are rated vis-a-vis their opponents in that same period. Armor values are "reset" in each period of the war so that a "3" is typical or normal for that period, whereas a "1" is badly obsolete and a "5" is notably advanced or superior.

It was generally the case that tanks had weapons and armor of relatively the same generation. For example, most tanks armed with a 75mm gun were armored to assume an enemy with a 75mm gun. In those instances where that was not the case, we use a split armor value. It was also generally the case that infantry AT weapons progressed to keep pace with the development of armor in the same period. Yes, the Tiger was a frightening tank when it first appeared, but within a couple of months the British began to deploy 17-pdr guns that could defeat it. The massive late-war tanks had to fear enemy infantry now armed with weapons like the Panzerfaust, PIAT, and Bazooka.

In other words, we assume a sort of base-line balance in each period, and then make rules to cover the exceptions. That is why the game applies shifts in combat for the side with an armor advantage. You may have noticed that it behooves you to spread out your best tanks, since you don't profit from massing them. One "badass" tank in a stack is sufficient to get the armor advantage. That is also deliberate, and encourages you to do what was historically done with the best new kit.

Complete Example of Combat

Combat in the mountains.

The defenders have one prepared position.



PREPARED POSITION

Infantry

14 Gds

4 3 2

StuG III

3-4

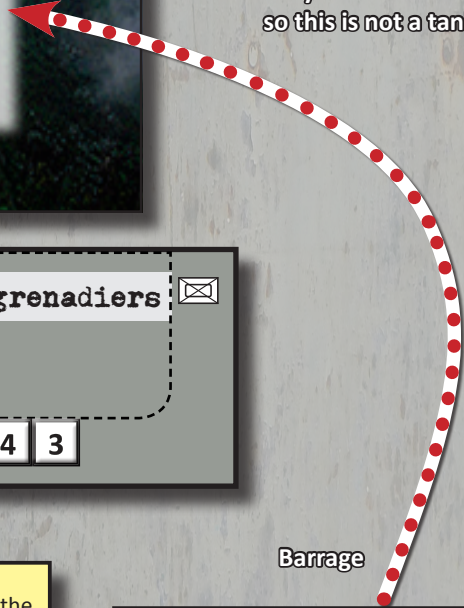
3 4

B/320D

The StuG is already worn.

The Germans are *flanking* the Soviets.

Only one side has armor, so this is not a tank battle.



Panzergranadiers

A/17 Pz

5 4 3

Doubled for *Infiltration*.

Panzergranadiers

A/17 Pz

5 4 3

Things look grim for this lone unit of infantry from the 14th Guards Rifle division. Although they have a prepared position in the mountains, the Germans are attacking with two companies of veteran panzergranadiers from the 17th Panzer division, a company of StuGs from the 320th infantry division, and are supported by a barrage from the Wespes of 17th Panzer. To make matters worse, the Germans are flanking the Soviets.

Barrage

Wespe

17 Pz

12 3 0-2



Complete Example of Combat, continued

As the attackers, the Germans choose tactics first. Because they have three units in the combat, they could choose up to three. They play *Recce* and *Infiltration*. The Soviets have only one unit and may thus play only one tactic. They choose *Defense in Depth*. Both sides reveal their tactics.



Recce

Infiltration



Defense in Depth

The Germans are flanking the Soviets and will therefore get one shift up. *Infiltration* permits them to double the combat value of one of their infantry units, so they double one of their Panzergrenadiers to 10. The StuG, which is worn and has a value of 4, is vulnerable in the mountains and thus halved, so its combat value is only 2.

Total German combat value is 10+5+2+3 = 20.

Because of their unchallenged *Recce*, the Germans shoot first. They roll a "5" and the combat grid shows that they do four hits. Their flank attack shifts them up to five. But...

The Germans are shifted down one for the Soviet *Defense in Depth* and down another for the mountainous terrain. They shift down again for attacking with units from multiple elements (17th Panzer and 320th infantry). So the Germans inflict only two hits, one of which is absorbed by the prepared position (which then disappears). The Soviets take one hit.

With only two steps remaining, the Soviet side's combat value is a mere 3. He rolls a "3" but that grid starts with a "7" and thus he scores no hits on the Germans. But the Soviets are still holding and thus the German units must retreat and are tipped. The German artillery is also tipped.



One shift up...



...three shifts down.



This seemingly-hopeless combat illustrates the importance of tactics, terrain, and prepared positions and the difficulty of attacking with multiple elements. The Soviets probably won't survive another assault, but they made the Germans pay a price in Ops, both the Op used to invoke the phase and the two tactics.