

## PROFILE AND VARIANT

**FULDA GAP**

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Both writers are officers recently stationed in Europe and quite naturally have a high interest in games of the Fulda ilk. I've played *Gap* myself and found it to be an engrossing situation. It seems to start a little slowly but given a chance, it picks up momentum in one's mind and on the map. Perhaps this is because as the units bash at each other and suffer horrendous reductions via the Untried Unit Table, the situation "clarifies" as the euphemism would have it. —RAS

Designing a game to simulate conflicts that have not yet occurred presents a unique challenge in simulation because of the inevitable variety of opinions and lack of real data. SPI's Modern Quad Series covers such potential conflict areas as Yugoslavia and West Germany. The scope of these games is limited since the purpose of the quad style is to have easily played, short games. The only other NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict games were designed at the world war level of continental areas with game turns of weeks or months.

It remained for a simulation like *Fulda Gap* to present an operational scale game that would allow the player to develop a lengthy battle in the modern European theater. The game contains a combination of new approaches and ideas, some seen in other wargames and some totally new. The result is an understandable game with clearly defined rules allowing the wargamer to modify the game further within guidelines set by the designer.

**Physical Layout**

The game is set at operational level with a game turn equalling 24 hours. The land scale is 10 km/hex. The map is well done in three colors and has been coded in a manner allowing ready examination for best defense areas and/or attack routes. The map does have some slight inaccuracies. The designer seems to have used a large-scale map of West Germany that was made prior to 1970. The German government has continued to improve the *Autobahn* network each year. The bulk of the new construction is in the Koln-Bonn area of the map. This is important for the Soviet forces who are currently dependent on the east-west *Autobahn* through Frankfurt. Perhaps SPI will have updates for this game where the player can be told what hexes should be converted into *Autobahn* hexes.

Another problem with the map is the location of the Hahn airbase hex. There are several towns in West Germany named Hahn, and the game map location is where the largest such town can be found. The trouble is that Hahn Airbase is located at a much

smaller town in the vicinity of hex 0518. This relocation will have only a minor effect on victory conditions in the game.

The last error is in the reversal of two unit locations. The 2nd Brigade and 3rd Brigade of the 8th Infantry Division are reversed from their actual locations. This correction will have no effect on play, but it does make the map historically correct.

**Rules**

The rules of the game show many new and interesting approaches to old problems. The most pleasing to me was the section on chemical attacks. Chemical attacks are very difficult to translate into combat power, and they have probably been left out of wargames because of this difficulty. Instead of assigning a combat factor to the agent, the effects in *Fulda Gap* are handled by inclusion with the untried unit status (another gem to be discussed later). Thus instead of saying that the chemical attack equals one battery of howitzers firing high explosive, chemical effectiveness is dealt with in the parameters of unit training, readiness and morale.

The accelerated assault is covered better in *Fulda Gap* than in *NATO* by affecting the tactical unit rather than a supply unit located away from the combat.

The rules on supply and communication are the strong-points of the game. Instead of having the supply lines wander through any and all terrain, the player is shown the importance of the road network (especially *Autobahn*) to travel in the German countryside. Also, units that leave their supply lines are quickly affected in game terms instead of several turns later as in past games.

The effect of the supply and communication rules is to force the Warsaw Pact units along the main east-west *Autobahns*. Short off-road sweeps along the flanks of the main attack are possible, but they must be quickly relinked to the main supply routes. Otherwise the NATO player can isolate the units and eliminate them for victory points.

**System Effectiveness**

In comparing the game against the concept of a war in the European theater, several areas of the design are worth examining. The first area is the use of the untried unit ratings to set the combat power for the armies.

In earlier games where untried unit status was incorporated, the result was to take a known battle and introduce an element of uncertainty to the game so no two sessions would be played alike. In *Fulda Gap* the idea is that these armies have not been in conventional land combat in some time, so

no exact method to determine the combat effectiveness exists. The Untried Unit Table (UTU) represents a *relative* ranking of the armies by combat power.

The use of the UTU system also gives the game a larger potential than is first apparent. The wargamer can easily adjust the combat rating of each army within a set of limits.

The next area to bear examination is the section dealing with nuclear weapons. This is the one rule area in which I have really disagreed with the SPI presentation. When any two or more countries go to war, there is always some reason behind the war. If one excludes the extreme causes such as insanity of the leader(s), one is left with an understandable (although not logical) set covering:

1. One country requiring living space
2. To gain the natural resources of another area.
3. To gain the man-made resources of another area.
4. To eliminate a conflicting ideology.

While it can be argued that reason 4 would be the cause of a war in Europe, it is unlikely that the Soviets would overlook the advantages of reasons 2 and 3. This is why I question the penalty-free use of nuclear weapons as the game is currently written.

I will grant that the recent public discussions on nuclear warfare seem to indicate that there is increased likelihood of a nuclear conflict in terms of a large number of "tactical" nukes in European countries. Even the advent of neutron weaponry only decreases the size of the destroyed area; it does not eliminate destruction. Neither approach means that the countries involved will readily go to nuclear weaponry. If the Soviet commander has to "nuke" Frankfurt-am-Rhein to dislodge a NATO defender, the resulting damage to the city will negate any value to capturing it. Ultimately both sides will want to preserve the usefulness of the areas they hold, and the molten slag of a building is not useful to anybody. Finally there is the fact that most of that seemingly empty map area is really small towns and villages. For a majority of the German country there is very little difference in effect between a "tactical" and a "strategic" nuclear weapon.

The rule on artillery unit separation is an interesting inclusion in the game. First, I must admit that I fail to understand why this rule was written. Applying the rule has the NATO player alternating nationalities at division level on the map to keep artillery of the same country separated by more than six hexes. A game usually finds the NATO

forces arranged one W. German, one French, one U.S., one Belgian, one W. German, one French, etc. This creates an unrealistic situation as national integrity is broken, and in an actual war such practice would reduce the command and control capability of an Army.

The use of the chemical warfare rules will send the NATO player to examining the untried unit chart in the game to determine the "survivability" of the various forces in such an environment. Without going into a detailed analysis of the UTU table, I will present the data:

Nationality	Chance of unfavorable result compared to chemical-free combat
Soviet	0%
British	18%
W. German	24%
U.S.	28%
French	38%
Belgian	46%

The figures presented here are for the Tripwire or Advance Warning scenarios. In the D+7 scenario all NATO units have a 21% risk. Overall I feel that the technique of handling chemical warfare is the best seen to date.

#### Tactics: Conventional Forces

There is very little that can be added here to the excellent commentary provided in the game materials. The best thing for anyone to do is read the article "Broadfront Strategy" by Frederick Georgian in *MOVES*

30. The NATO forces should use their infantry for defense and save the armor units for attacks as much as possible. The Warsaw Pact units are slightly lower in quality than the NATO main forces (U.S. and W. German) and have to rely on their numerical superiority.

#### Tactics: Special Units

**Air:** When the see-saw air war of the game gives one side a superiority in airpower (albeit temporary), neither side really gains much. The Warsaw Pact player should go for using long range nuclear strikes against NATO forces. The NATO player should use the aircraft for ground support.

**Helicopters:** Here I disagree with the approach to handling these units outlined in the player's notes to the game. Rather than saving them as a large striking reserve force, the Warsaw Pact player should be using them to seize critical points ahead of advancing conventional ground forces. Critical points are bridges, multi-road junctions and *Autobahn* junctions. The Soviet player can use the airmobile units to reduce the Nike sites. The NATO player can use them to strike at an unguarded supply depot or cut-off an isolated unit from supply.

**Territorials:** The best use I have found for these units is to guard air bases and supply depots.

**Supply Depots (SDU):** Both sides have the same problem with these units: once emplaced they are difficult to move again while keeping units in supply. The best guidance is to keep the SDU in a mobile status on supply transports during the early turns when a side is automatically in supply.

The best site is on an *Autobahn* which is the axis of a main attack. The NATO player has less of a problem here because of the large number of SDUs and their original positioning.

**Supply Transports (STU):** As mentioned before, these are used to move the SDUs in the early portion of the game. When the automatic supply ends, these units should be kept in their mobile state and used to supply the flanks of the battle. This will slow down the flanking movements of an attack, but will preclude the attackers outrunning a fixed supply line.

#### General Comments

In the final analysis, *Fulda Gap* is an excellent game with its variety of situations and fast moving pace. A couple of variations that I have played are:

1. *In NATO Disintegration:* withdraw only the French Forces; the Belgian Army remains.
2. *Tripwire/Advance Warning:* allow French forces to be committed only after a Soviet unit penetrates into Zone 1, 2, or 3 (as used in the D+7 scenario).
3. *Any scenario:* the U.S. forces landed at Rhein-Main Airbase are assumed to be involved in a war somewhere else (Hypothesis is that European war triggered by one in Mideast region).

I hope all who play this game enjoy it as much as I have. It is nice to have a quick game that can be played enjoyably in a few hours.

### FULDA GAP: Variant

Players of *Fulda Gap's* Tripwire Scenario may wish to use the actual garrison locations of NATO troops for their initial setup. These are provided below, with a few additions and changes to the unit counter mix and combat strengths to reflect current organization.

#### WG III Corps

- 3 Corps Arty Cmd 7-2 (1012) Neuwied
- 3 Corps Avn Cmd 3-1 (2223) Rhine-Main

#### WG 2nd Jager Div (now panzer grenadier)

- 4 PG Bde 5-7 (4802) Gottingen
- 5 PG Bde 5-7 (3013) Homburg
- 6 Pz Bde 6-4 (3309) Neustadt Marburg

#### WG 5th Panzer Div

- 13 PG Bde 5-7 (2414) Wetzlar
- 14 Pz Bde 6-4 (1312) Koblenz
- 15 Pz Bde 6-4 (1012) Koblenz

#### WG 12th Panzer Div

- 34th Pz Bde 6-4 (now forming; enter at 3834 on phase 2 of turn 1)
- 35 PG Bde 5-7 (3923) Hammelburg
- 36 Pz Bde 6-4 (off map at Bad Mergenheim; enter as 34th Bde does)

#### US V Corps

- 11th Avn Bn 3-1 (2223) Rhein-Main
- 41st Arty Gp 7-2 (2025) Darmstadt
- 42nd Arty Gp 7-2 (2614) Giessen

#### 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment

- 1st Sqdn 2-2 (3918) Fulda
- 2nd Sqdn 2-2 (4225) Bad Kissingen
- 3rd Sqdn 2-2 (4113) Bad Hersfeld

#### 3rd Armored Div

- 1st Bde 6-2 (2517) Kirchgoens, Butzbach
- 2nd Bde 6-2 (2922) Gelnhausen
- 3rd Bde 4-6 (2618) Friedburg

#### 8th Infantry Div (Mech)

- 1st Bde 6-2 (1622) Mainz
- 2nd Bde 4-6 (0326) Baumholder
- 3rd Bde 4-6 (1831) Mannheim
- Bde '76 4-6 (1820) Wiesbaden

#### US VII Corps (part)

- 72nd Arty Gp 7-2 (2926) Aschaffenburg

#### 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment (part)

- 2nd Sqdn 2-2 (5133) Bamberg

#### 3rd Infantry Div (Mech)

- 1st Bde 6-2 (4329) Schweinfurt
- 2nd Bde 4-6 (4033) Kitzingen
- 3rd Bde 4-6 (2826) Aschaffenburg

#### 1st Armored Div (part)

- 3rd Bde 4-6 (5133) Bamberg

**Notes:** British, Belgian, and German HSK & airborne units remain as in the game. US forces in Bamberg (2/2 ACR & 3/1 AD) should be withdrawn off the south edge of

the board on turn 1 by the NATO player if they are not engaged by Soviet units, as they would be committed with the rest of VII Corps to the south of the Gap area. Similarly, the rest of the US 1st Armored Division should not enter the game at all.

From personal observation, I would suggest the following alternative UTU ratings:

- B - British forces
- C - West German regular forces
- D - Soviet units (excluding 50th Div)
- E - US forces
- F - French 1st Div
- G - Polish forces
- H - East German forces
- I - Belgian forces
- J - West German HSK units
- K - French 4th, 7th, and 8th Divs
- L - Soviet 50th Div

As an alternative scenario variant, remove Polish and French forces from the game, as well as the US 1st Armored Div. This will yield a 2 to 1 ratio of Pact divisions over NATO, the ideal our planners say they can manage (see Lawrence and Record, *U.S. Force Structure in NATO*, Brookings, 1974).