

TRONSOFT GAMES

LINE OF DEPARTURE

Command a rifle company through a Third World War river crossing, squad by squad, under jamming.

Player's manual

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Every table in this manual is generated from the data files inside the package. If a weapon, a terrain type or a victory band appears here, it is in the game exactly as printed.

1. The situation

A squad-level wargame of a Third World War fought over two kilometres of the Ansbek valley. You command a rifle company: nine-man sections, a gun group, a missile team, carriers and a single tank, against a Continental Union force dug in on the far bank. Fire seldom kills at this scale — it suppresses — so every position is taken by pinning it with one team and walking onto it with another. Electronic warfare is the second enemy: jamming shortens your digital net until orders have to go by voice, and then by runner. Three linked actions, a branching campaign, fog of war, indirect fire, close air support and a command net you can watch degrade in real time.

The one thing to understand

Fire seldom kills at squad scale. It **suppresses**. A rifle section that engages a dug-in squad across four hundred metres of open ground will, most turns, kill nobody at all — but it will drive their heads down, and a man with his head down is not shooting at the section you are moving on the flank. Casualties in this game are largely the residue of suppression, and ground is taken by pinning a position with one team and walking onto it with another.

Everything else follows from that. It is why a machine gun sited where it can see is worth more than a squad that cannot, why a smoke round is often worth more than a high-explosive one, and why an assault that goes in before the defenders have stopped shooting comes back with half its strength.

The second enemy

The other thing trying to kill your company is the electromagnetic spectrum. Jamming takes 5 hexes off your digital net. Units beyond it fall back to voice, then to a runner — and a runner's order costs 3 command points and **arrives a turn late**. Shoot the enemy headquarters and their company stops behaving like a company. Lose yours and so does yours. The command-net panel down the right-hand side is worth watching as closely as the map.

2. The turn

A turn is 2 minutes of real time and runs through 6 phases in this order:

#	Phase	What happens
1	Command	Command points are counted, links to headquarters are worked out, initiative is rolled and reinforcements come up.
2	Activation	The sides alternate activations. A unit may move once and fire once, in either order.
3	Indirect	Queued mortar and battery missions land, with drift.
4	Supply	Supply is traced back to a source; units that cannot trace lose fire effect.
5	Recovery	Suppression decays, fatigue recovers, positions are improved, smoke thins.
6	Administrative	Objectives are settled, scenario events fire, the standing is scored.

Because a unit may both move and fire in a turn, fire and movement is possible and is the correct way to fight. A unit that has done both, or has passed, is shaded on the map and takes no further part until next turn.

Command points

Each order costs command points. You have 5 plus 2 for every command section still alive, less one while you are being jammed. Which means: the more of your headquarters the enemy shoots, the fewer things you can tell your company to do.

Link	Condition	Order cost	Delay
Digital net	Within 9 hexes of a headquarters, unjammed	1	none
Voice	Within 6 hexes	1	none
Degraded net	In range but jammed	2	none
Runner	Out of contact	3	1 turn
No headquarters	Every command section is gone	3	1 turn

3. Movement and ground

A hex is 52 metres across. Terrain, slope and weather all cost movement points; roads and tracks run **along** hexsides and are cheap; rivers and streams lie **across** them and are not.

A vehicle cannot cross a river except by a bridge. Infantry can wade, at four extra movement points, and arrive out of breath on a bank the enemy is watching. On the Ansbek there is exactly one bridge standing.

Terrain

Terrain	Foot	Tracked	Cover	Conceal	Blocks sight	Digging
Open ground	1.00	1.00	+0.00	0.05	—	1.0
Standing crop	1.25	1.00	+0.10	0.30	—	1.0
Scrub and hedgerow	1.50	1.75	+0.35	0.45	—	1.2
Village	1.50	2.00	+0.80	0.55	yes	1.6
Industrial works	1.75	2.50	+0.95	0.65	yes	1.7
Woods	2.00	3.00	+0.50	0.60	yes	1.4
Built-up ground	2.00	3.00	+1.10	0.70	yes	1.8
Close forest	3.00	6.00	+0.65	0.75	yes	1.5
Marsh	3.00	8.00	-0.20	0.25	—	0.2
Open water	99.00	99.00	-1.00	0.00	—	0.0

Cover is a protection factor, not a subtraction: a position's total cover reduces incoming casualties by $1/(1+\text{cover})$, so a good position always helps and no position is ever proof against fire. Suppression is reduced less than casualties are — a man in a trench is still made to keep his head down.

Weather

Weather	Visibility	Movement	Accuracy	Air	Notes
Clear	2400 m	×1.00	+0.00	yes	
Overcast	1600 m	×1.00	-0.05	yes	
Driving rain	900 m	×1.20	-0.15	no	Ground softens; tracked movement suffers most.
Thaw and mud	1400 m	×1.50	-0.05	yes	Wheels leave the road at their peril.
Snow	700 m	×1.40	-0.20	no	
Ground fog	350 m	×1.10	-0.30	no	Thermal sights see through it better than the naked eye.
Night	450 m	×1.25	-0.25	no	Thermal and image-intensifier sights carry the fight.

Postures

The posture a unit is in decides how fast it moves, how much of it is exposed, how well it shoots and how readily it fires on somebody who moves in front of it. Fire and movement is half speed and roughly twice the survival.

Posture	Speed	Cover	Fire	Reaction	Notes
Advance	100%	+0.00	-0.25	0.4	Ground covered quickly and nobody shooting straight.

Posture	Speed	Cover	Fire	Reaction	Notes
Fire and movement	55%	+0.25	-0.05	0.8	One team down and firing while the other moves. Half the speed, twice the survival.
Assault	80%	-0.25	+0.15	0.3	The last hundred metres. No cover and no going back.
Hold	0%	+0.30	+0.10	0.9	
Overwatch	0%	+0.20	+0.25	1.3	Holds its fire for a target worth shooting, and shoots first when it comes.
Dug in	0%	+0.75	+0.10	1.0	
Withdraw	110%	-0.15	-0.50	0.2	
Mounted	100%	-0.10	-0.80	0.2	Riding in the back of a vehicle. Fast, blind and all in one place.

4. Combat

Fire is resolved in the sequence the engine specification lays down: acquisition, line of sight, range, resolution, damage, morale, and any retreat or advance that follows. The same calculation serves the preview you are shown before you fire, the resolution itself and the machine's assessment, so what you are shown cannot disagree with what happens.

Suppression

Level	Effect
45 and above	Pinned. The unit cannot move at all. It may still fire, badly.
78 and above	Broken. The unit will not fight and falls back on its headquarters.
decay	Suppression falls by 9 a turn in command, and by only 4 out of it.

The drill

Find the position — scouts see furthest and are hardest to see. **Fix** it with fire: the gun group, the heavy weapons, a mortar mission, and smoke across whatever open ground you have to cross. **Finish** it with an assault from an adjacent hex, once the defenders have stopped shooting back. An assault against a position with less than 30 suppression is resolved at little better than half chance and will usually be thrown back.

Indirect fire

A mortar never sees what it is shooting at. It fires at ground an **observer** can see, so somewhere in your company there must be eyes on the target. The off-map battery takes 2 turns from the call to the first round and drifts a hex if the observer goes down in the meantime. Smoke lasts 3 turns and is frequently the more valuable round.

Armour

Against a vehicle, the round is compared with the plate. A round that cannot penetrate does nothing but rattle the crew; a round that can will usually kill. Rifle sections are not helpless against armour — they carry light anti-armour rockets — but their proper answer to a tank is the missile team, which sees further than it can be seen.

Weapons

Weapon	Class	Range m	Optimal m	Power	AP	Suppr.	
Assault rifles	small arms	400	180	1.0	0.0	1.6	
Squad automatic weapon	machine gun	700	350	1.4	0.0	3.2	
General-purpose machine gun	machine gun	1100	600	1.8	0.1	4.4	
Heavy machine gun	machine gun	1600	900	2.4	0.3	5.0	
Automatic grenade launcher	grenade launcher	1500	800	2.2	0.2	5.6	
Underslung grenade launchers	grenade launcher	350	200	1.3	0.1	2.6	
Designated marksman rifle	small arms	900	500	1.6	0.0	1.2	

Weapon	Class	Range m	Optimal m	Power	AP	Suppr.	
Disposable light anti-armour rockets	anti tank	300	150	2.0	4.5	2.0	
Medium anti-tank guided missiles	missile	2200	1400	3.0	9.5	3.0	
Rocket-propelled grenades	anti tank	450	200	2.2	5.5	2.8	
25 mm autocannon	autocannon	2000	1100	3.2	3.0	5.4	
30 mm autocannon	autocannon	2400	1300	3.6	3.6	5.8	
Coaxial machine gun	machine gun	900	500	1.5	0.0	3.6	
120 mm smoothbore	tank gun	3000	1800	4.2	12.0	6.5	
125 mm smoothbore	tank gun	2800	1700	4.4	11.5	6.5	
60 mm mortar	mortar	1800	1000	2.4	0.2	6.0	indirect
81 mm mortar	mortar	5000	2600	3.4	0.4	8.0	indirect
Mortar smoke	mortar	5000	2600	0.0	0.0	0.5	indirect smoke
155 mm battery, off map	artillery	24000	24000	6.0	1.2	14.0	indirect
Close air support cannon	aircraft	3000	2000	5.5	7.0	10.0	

5. The company

Both sides field the same kinds of thing under different names. Strength is in men; a vehicle's strength is its crew, and killing the vehicle kills them.

Class	Kind	Men	MP	Armour	Spot	Armament
Rifle squad	infantry	9	4	0.0	1.0	Assault rifles, Squad automatic weapon, Underslung grenade launchers, Disposable light anti-armour rockets
Motor rifle squad	infantry	8	4	0.0	0.9	Assault rifles, Squad automatic weapon, Underslung grenade launchers, Rocket-propelled grenades
Machine-gun team	team	4	3	0.0	1.1	General-purpose machine gun, Assault rifles
Heavy weapons team	team	5	2	0.0	1.1	Heavy machine gun, Automatic grenade launcher
Anti-tank guided-missile team	team	3	3	0.0	1.5	Medium anti-tank guided missiles, Assault rifles
Scout team	team	4	5	0.0	2.2	Assault rifles, Designated marksman rifle
Engineer squad	infantry	8	4	0.0	1.0	Assault rifles, Disposable light anti-armour rockets
Mortar section	gun	6	2	0.0	0.5	81 mm mortar, Mortar smoke
Light mortar detachment	gun	4	3	0.0	0.5	60 mm mortar, Mortar smoke
Command section	command	5	4	0.0	1.3	Assault rifles
Infantry fighting vehicle	vehicle	3	9	3.2	1.6	25 mm autocannon, Coaxial machine gun, Medium anti-tank guided missiles
Infantry combat vehicle	vehicle	3	9	2.9	1.4	30 mm autocannon, Coaxial machine gun
Main battle tank	vehicle	4	10	9.5	1.7	120 mm smoothbore, Coaxial machine gun, Heavy machine gun
Main battle tank	vehicle	3	10	8.8	1.4	125 mm smoothbore, Coaxial machine gun
Supply carrier	logistics	2	8	0.6	0.8	Assault rifles

Supply

Ammunition runs out. Below 25% of its load a unit fires at half effect; a unit that cannot trace a route back to a supply source loses a further 45%. Bring the echelon forward and use Resupply, which also returns a share of the walking wounded to the ranks.

6. The actions

Contact at Kreuzhof

Introductory · 18 turns from 16:40 · Overcast · Kreuzhof Crossroads (26 × 20) · par 29

Second Platoon has been pushed up the Kreuzhof road ahead of the company to find out what is holding the crossroads. Brigade wants the junction by last light. You have three rifle squads, a machine-gun team and the platoon commander. There is a mortar section behind you that will fire on anything you can see.

A reinforced Union outpost holds the hamlet: three squads, a machine gun and a mortar, dug in since dawn. You cannot walk onto that position: fire it flat first, then go in with the bayonet while their heads are down.

Side	Strength	Electronic warfare	Missions
Atlantic Alliance	7 units, 42 men	jamming 0%	3 fire, 0 air
Continental Union	6 units, 37 men	jamming 0%	1 fire, 0 air

Objectives: Kreuzhof crossroads (40), The north wood (10)

The Ansbek Crossing

Standard · 30 turns from 05:20 · Ground fog · The Ansbek Crossing (40 × 30) · par 32

B Company is to seize the Ansbek bridge and the Vierbrück works before the Union engineers can drop the span. Every vehicle on this map crosses at the bridge or does not cross at all; the infantry can wade, at a price, and arrive wet and out of breath on a bank the enemy is watching.

The Union hold the far bank with a motor rifle platoon, a gun in the works and armour that has not yet shown itself. Their jammers are up: your digital net reaches half as far as it should and orders often have to go by voice or by runner. Point 224 sees the whole crossing — whoever holds it decides who lives on the open ground below.

Side	Strength	Electronic warfare	Missions
Atlantic Alliance	15 units, 83 men	jamming 15%	6 fire, 2 air
Continental Union	12 units, 63 men	jamming 55%	5 fire, 1 air

Objectives: The Ansbek bridge (45), Vierbrück works (35), Point 224 (25), Halten (20)

Counter-attack at Halten

Hard · 24 turns from 11:05 · Driving rain · The Ansbek Crossing (40 × 30) · par 10

The crossing was taken in the night and the Union want it back before the relief column arrives. B Company is down to about four men in five, its armour is still coming forward, and it is dug in around Halten and the bridge. Hold both until the clock runs out.

They will come at the bridge with armour and at Halten with infantry, and their guns are already registered on both. Your own jammers are up, which is the only reason their attack will arrive in pieces rather than all at once.

Side	Strength	Electronic warfare	Missions
Atlantic Alliance	15 units, 83 men	jamming 50%	5 fire, 1 air
Continental Union	18 units, 98 men	jamming 20%	6 fire, 2 air

Objectives: The Ansbek bridge (45), Halten (40), Point 224 (15)

The campaign

The Ansbek Corridor. Three actions on the same two kilometres of river over one long day, fought by the same company.

Node	Action	On a win	On a loss
First contact	contact-at-kreuzhof	crossing	crossing
The crossing	the-ansbek-crossing	counter	lost
The counter-attack	counter-attack-at-halten	held	lost
The corridor is open	counter-attack-at-halten	victory	victory
The corridor is closed	the-ansbek-crossing	defeat	defeat

7. Scoring and the opposition

Your standing is the objectives you hold, plus the casualties you inflict at 0.55 a man, minus your own at 0.75 a man. Losses count against you rather more than they count for you, which is deliberate: a company that takes the bridge and ceases to exist has not taken the bridge for very long.

Result	Standing	What it means
Decisive victory	60 and above	The corridor is yours and the cost was bearable. The relief column will come through on schedule.
Victory	35 and above	You hold what matters. Brigade will not ask what it cost until the morning.
Marginal victory	15 and above	Ground gained, but a company's worth of men bought it.
Indecisive	-5 and above	Both sides are dug in where they started and both are burying men.
Defeat	-35 and above	You are off the objective and the road is open behind you.
Disaster	below -35	The company has ceased to exist as a fighting formation.

The opposition

The machine commander plans in three layers: what the side is trying to do, which formation gets which piece of ground, and how the individual squad fights. It reads the same fogged picture you do — it fights its own belief, including the parts of it that are wrong — and it draws from its own random stream, so watching it think cannot change your dice.

Profile	Aggression	Caution	Concentration	Notes
Methodical	1.00	1.00	1.00	Finds the position, fixes it, works round it. The steadiest of the four.
Driving	1.35	0.70	1.30	Everything at one point and keep going. On ground with a clock on it this is usually the right answer, and it takes the most objectives.
Deliberate	0.75	1.30	0.90	Scouts first, shoots the position flat, then walks onto it. Buys information with time, and time is the one thing an assault crossing does not have.
Elastic	0.90	1.15	0.70	Gives ground to keep the force, then takes it back. Best when there is no clock.
Difficulty	Skill	Command points	Fire missions	Notes
Cadet	0.55	×0.80	×0.60	Opens fire too early and is empty when it matters.
Veteran	0.80	×1.00	×1.00	Holds its fire for a target worth shooting.
Staff officer	1.00	×1.15	×1.25	Sees the ground, concentrates, and does not waste a mission. Nothing is hidden from you that is not hidden from it.

Saving

The game saves after every completed activation, yours and the enemy's. The save records the position of the random stream, so resuming continues the same game rather than a similar one. It is cleared when an action ends. A browser that refuses storage will still play the game through; it simply cannot resume it.

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