

NATO DIVISION COMMANDER

Command and control in the Fulda Gap · battalion scale · 1
mile per hex · 8 hours per turn

Rules of Play and Player's Manual

Tronsoft Games edition · Version 1.3.0 · 2026-10-03
After the 1980 design by James F. Dunnigan (SPI)

1. INTRODUCTION

This is a game about the division commander's real problem: not how strong a battalion is, but whether it can be told what to do in time. Every order costs staff work, every headquarters has a reach, and most of the enemy is invisible until someone bumps into it. The board is the Fulda Gap of the late Cold War; the forces are a U.S. armoured cavalry regiment and armoured division of V Corps against the motor-rifle and tank divisions of the Soviet 8th Guards Army.

You play one side against the computer. In the **Controller game** you see only what your own units observe, as in the refereed double-blind play the original was built around; the **Competition game** shows every unit on the map.

2. THE MAP AND THE SCREEN

The map is 44 hexes by 32, one mile across each hex. NATO's supply edge is the west edge; the Warsaw Pact enters from the inner German border on the east edge. Towns ringed in colour are objectives: the ring and the small disc show the current owner and the disc carries the victory points.

Terrain	Entry cost (MP)	Defence	Conceals defenders
Clear	1	×1.0	no
Woods	2	×1.5	yes
Rough	2	×1.6	yes
Town	1	×1.8	yes
City	1	×2.2	yes
River	4	×1.0	no

Moving along a road from one road hex to the next costs ½ MP in TRAVEL mode and 1 MP otherwise, whatever the terrain. Bridges carry roads across rivers.

The **information sidebar** (left) holds the situation, the selected unit, the Staff Board, objectives and score, and the message log. The **controls sidebar** (right) holds the phase track, End Phase, the orders for the selected unit, the Staff Estimate slip, map overlays and the game buttons. The version number stands beside the title.

3. UNITS

Counters show the unit's name, its NATO-style symbol and echelon, and attack-defence-movement (or fire and range for artillery, command radius for headquarters). The squares down the left are steps; down the right, ammunition. The tab in the lower left is the mode: T travel, A assault, D defense, P prepared (dug-in). A red corner means out of command; red hatching means suppressed.

Unit	Side	Atk	Def	MP	Steps	Fire / range	Command / sight
Tank Battalion	NATO	8	6	8	3	—	—
Mechanized Infantry Bn	NATO	5	7	8	3	—	—
Armored Cavalry Squadron	NATO	6	6	10	3	—	sight 3
SP Artillery Battalion (155)	NATO	1	2	6	2	6 / 10	—
Combat Engineer Battalion	NATO	2	4	8	2	—	—
Attack Helicopter Battalion	NATO	0	2	20	2	8 / 3	sight 3
Brigade Headquarters	NATO	0	3	8	2	—	5 (6 SP)
Division Headquarters	NATO	0	3	6	2	—	8 (3 SP)
Motor Rifle Battalion (BMP)	Warsaw Pact	4	5	9	3	—	—
Tank Battalion (T-72)	Warsaw Pact	7	5	9	3	—	—
Reconnaissance Battalion	Warsaw Pact	3	3	11	2	—	sight 3
SP Artillery Battalion (152)	Warsaw Pact	1	2	7	2	5 / 9	—
Rocket Launcher Battalion (BM-21)	Warsaw Pact	1	1	7	2	8 / 10	—
Engineer Battalion	NATO	2	3	9	2	—	—
Regimental Headquarters	Warsaw Pact	0	3	9	2	—	4 (4 SP)
Division Headquarters	Warsaw Pact	0	3	7	2	—	8 (2 SP)

A unit's attack and defence scale with its remaining steps. Ammunition runs from 0 to 3 (2 for rocket launchers). Combat units with attack 3 or more exert a zone of control into the six adjacent hexes.

4. SEQUENCE OF PLAY

A game turn is eight hours: 0600 and 1400 are day, 2200 is night. Weather is rolled each game turn (clear, overcast or rain). The first side plays the four phases below, then the second side.

1. **Intelligence.** Intelligence points (division headquarters, one fewer at night) buy reconnaissance sweeps that reveal every enemy unit within 3 hexes of a chosen hex until the end of the turn. Brigade headquarters may draw staff points from division.
2. **Command.** Mode changes and forced marches, paid in staff points. Asset transfers happen automatically at the start of the side's turn: a unit whose headquarters has been destroyed is re-attached to the nearest surviving headquarters.
3. **Fires.** Artillery, attack helicopters and air sorties fire on observed enemy units.
4. **Maneuver.** Units move one at a time; assaults happen during movement. Then housekeeping: resupply, and suppression on the side's own units is lifted.

5. COMMAND AND CONTROL

Every unit belongs to a headquarters. It is **in command** while within its headquarters' command radius (one hex less at night). Brigade and regimental headquarters must in turn be within reach of their division headquarters, or they generate only half their staff points.

- Staff points are generated afresh each turn: brigade 6, regiment 4, division 3 (NATO) or 2 (Warsaw Pact); 2 fewer at night.
- Out of command, a unit attacks at $\times 0.75$, is not resupplied, and may change mode only to DEFENSE (free).
- Each unit may change mode once per turn. A change costs 1 SP from its headquarters; DUG-IN costs 2.
- Forced march: a unit in TRAVEL or ASSAULT may be given $\times 1.5$ movement for 1 SP; it is fatigued (attack and defence $\times 0.75$) until its next turn.

Mode	Movement	Defence	Notes
TRAVEL	$\times 1$	$\times 0.6$	Roads cost $\frac{1}{2}$ MP. Cannot assault; artillery cannot fire.
ASSAULT	$\times 1$	$\times 1$	May assault adjacent enemy.
DEFENSE	$\times 0.5$	$\times 1.4$	Reaction fire on units entering adjacent hexes.
DUG-IN	$\times 0$	$\times 1.8$	Reaction fire; only from DEFENSE after a turn without moving; 2 SP.

6. INTELLIGENCE AND THE FOG OF WAR

In the Controller game an enemy unit is visible while one of your units is within sighting range of it: 2 hexes, 3 for cavalry, reconnaissance and helicopters; 1 less at night and 1 less in rain (minimum 1). An enemy in DEFENSE or DUG-IN in woods, rough ground or a town is seen at 1 hex less. Adjacent units are always seen. Sweeps, contact and a battery's own firing also reveal units. When a unit passes out of view a dashed *last-known* marker stays where it was seen, stamped with the turn; it is cleared when your units look at that ground again.

7. MOVEMENT

- Entering an enemy zone of control ends movement, but the unit keeps the movement points it needs to assault. Leaving a zone of control costs 1 extra MP.
- Sighting a new enemy halts the move so you can reconsider.
- Reaction fire: an enemy combat unit in DEFENSE or DUG-IN with ammunition fires at each unit that enters a hex adjacent to it (twice per turn at most, 1 ammunition each). A hit costs the mover a step and pins it.
- A unit may pass through, but not stop on, a hex holding another friendly ground unit. Helicopters fly over everything and stack freely.
- A unit with all its movement points may always move one hex, whatever the cost.
- Movement points: base allowance $\times$ mode, $\times 0.75$ at night, $\times 0.85$ in rain, $\times 0.5$ when suppressed, $\times 1.5$ on a forced march.

8. FIRES

In the Fires phase an artillery or helicopter unit that is in command, has ammunition and is not in TRAVEL may fire once at an observed enemy within range, for 1 ammunition and 1 SP from its headquarters. The Fire Mission slip shows the chance of a step loss (which also suppresses) and of suppression alone. Fire against an enemy battery that has been located is $\times 1.5$ (counter-battery). Artillery that fires is located for the enemy until the end of the enemy's next turn. Helicopters risk a step to air defence. Air sorties (2 in clear weather, 1 overcast, none in rain or at night) strike anywhere you can see.

9. ASSAULT

A unit in ASSAULT mode with at least 1 ammunition, not suppressed, and with movement points at least half its allowance may assault an adjacent observed enemy once per turn. Every other adjacent unit able to assault may join. Artillery and helicopters in range that have not fired may support at 0.6 of their fire strength (1 SP each), and each air sortie adds 4. Each attacker spends 1 ammunition and the assault cost in movement points.

Attack strength is the attackers' attack factors scaled by steps ($\times 0.75$ out of command, $\times 0.75$ fatigued, $\times 0.9$ NATO or $\times 0.7$ Warsaw Pact at night) plus support. Defence is the defender's factor scaled by steps $\times$ terrain $\times$ mode ($\times 0.5$ without ammunition, $\times 0.75$ suppressed, $\times 0.75$ fatigued). The ratio gives the column: below 0.4 $\rightarrow$ 1:3, below 0.75 $\rightarrow$ 1:2, below 1.5 $\rightarrow$ 1:1, below 2 $\rightarrow$ 3:2, below 3 $\rightarrow$ 2:1, below 4 $\rightarrow$ 3:1, below 5 $\rightarrow$ 4:1, otherwise 5:1. Combined arms (armour with infantry or cavalry) shifts one column right; a river crossing, or a dug-in defender with no fire support, one left.

d10	1:3	1:2	1:1	3:2	2:1	3:1	4:1	5:1
0	A2	A2	A1	A1	A1	EX	EX	D1
1	A2	A1	A1	A1	EX	EX	D1	D1R
2	A2	A1	A1	EX	EX	D1	D1R	D1R
3	A1	A1	EX	EX	D1	D1R	D1R	D2R
4	A1	A1	EX	D1	D1R	D1R	D2R	D2R
5	A1	EX	D1	D1R	D1R	D2R	D2R	D2R
6	A1	EX	D1	D1R	D1R	D2R	D2R	DE
7	EX	D1	D1R	D1R	D2R	D2R	DE	DE
8	EX	D1	D1R	D2R	D2R	DE	DE	DE
9	D1	D1R	D2R	D2R	DE	DE	DE	DE

A1/A2: the attackers lose steps, the first from the leading unit. EX: each side loses a step. D1/D2: the defender loses steps; R: it also retreats one hex, away from the attackers and toward its own edge; if it cannot, it loses another step. DE: destroyed. If the defender's hex is emptied the leading attacker advances into it and captures any objective there.

10. SUPPLY

At the end of each side's turn, a unit regains ammunition if it is in command, its headquarters is in contact with division, and the headquarters can trace a path of hexes free of enemy units and enemy zones of control (unless friendly-occupied) to the friendly map edge. It regains 2 if it neither moved nor assaulted, otherwise 1. Toggle *Supply net* to see the traced area.

11. SCENARIOS

Scenario	Turns	Attacker	Objectives	Par	Units NATO / WP
The Covering Force Battle	6	Warsaw Pact	5	15	9 / 21
Fulda Gap: The Main Battle	9	Warsaw Pact	14	-20	20 / 46
Counterstroke on Fulda	6	NATO	6	10	22 / 22

The Covering Force Battle

Day one. Three regiments of the 27th Guards Motor Rifle Division cross the border toward Hünfeld and Fulda. The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment must trade ground for time without being destroyed.

Objectives: Hünfeld 4, Fulda 8, Tann 3, Gersfeld 3, Eiterfeld 2. Each enemy step destroyed is worth 1 to NATO and 1.5 to the Warsaw Pact.

Fulda Gap: The Main Battle

Day two. The covering force has fallen back through the 3rd Armored Division. The 27th Guards Motor Rifle Division is in contact, the 39th follows on day two, and a Guards tank division is committed on day three. Hold the line of the Fulda.

Objectives: Fulda 10, Bad Hersfeld 6, Hünfeld 4, Schlitz 3, Lauterbach 5, Alsfeld 6, Grossenlüder 3, Neuhof 3, Schlüchtern 4, Gersfeld 2, Tann 2, Herbstein 2, Grebenhain 2, Eiterfeld 2. Each enemy step destroyed is worth 1 to NATO and 1.5 to the Warsaw Pact.

Counterstroke on Fulda

Day four. The Soviet first echelon has spent itself taking Fulda. V Corps releases the 3rd Armored Division and a brigade of the 8th Infantry Division to retake the city before the second echelon arrives.

Objectives: Fulda 10, Hünfeld 5, Grossenlüder 3, Neuhof 3, Schlitz 3, Tann 2. Each enemy step destroyed is worth 1 to NATO and 1 to the Warsaw Pact.

12. VICTORY

Each side scores the victory points of the objectives it holds and the scenario's value for each enemy step destroyed. The attacker's margin (attacker total minus defender total) is compared with the scenario's **par**, the median margin of 200 computer-versus-computer games over two seed families. Margin $\geq$ par+8: attacker Decisive Victory; $\geq$ par+3: attacker Marginal Victory; within 3 of par: Draw; $\leq$ par-3: defender Marginal Victory; $\leq$ par-8: defender Decisive Victory.

13. ENGINEERS, SIGNALS, SMOKE AND SUCCESSION

Engineers

An engineer battalion with at least half its movement points, in command, and with 1 SP available from its headquarters may spend the rest of its turn on one task in an adjacent hex: **lay a minefield** (not on a river or an observed enemy), **bridge a river** (the hex then costs 1 MP and gives no river-crossing shift in an assault) or **clear a known enemy minefield**. A unit that enters an enemy minefield stops there. A minefield found the hard way costs a step 35% of the time; a known one costs +2 MP to enter and is dangerous only half as often. Your own minefields are crossed by their lanes at no extra cost. Enemy minefields are hidden until found.

Radio direction finding

Every staff point a headquarters spends counts as radio traffic for that turn. In the Intelligence phase, 1 intelligence point buys a direction-finding sweep that fixes every enemy headquarters whose traffic on its last turn reached 3. A fix is drawn as a dashed counter marked DF: it is a position, not a sighting, and cannot be fired on until a unit or a reconnaissance sweep observes it. The Staff Board shows each of your headquarters' traffic against the threshold. Quiet staffs survive; busy ones are found.

Undo, minimap, situation report

A move that revealed nothing new (no contact, no reaction fire, no minefield, no capture) can be taken back with Undo (U) until another order is given. The minimap shows the whole front with the current view outlined; click or drag it to move the view. After each enemy turn the Situation Report lists your steps lost, units destroyed, objectives that changed hands and the key events you observed.

Hot seat

Two players may share one screen. Between sides a hand-over screen hides the board so that, in the Controller game, neither commander sees the other's picture. Doctrine settings do not apply.

Smoke

In the Fires phase an artillery unit that could fire may fire smoke instead, at any hex within its range, for 1 ammunition and 1 SP; the battery is located as for any fire mission. Until the end of the enemy's next turn the smoked hex blocks observation: a unit in it sees and is seen only from adjacent hexes, and no reaction fire is made into or out of it. Smoke does no damage.

Succession of command

At the start of a side's turn, if it has no division headquarters left, the surviving brigade or regimental headquarters with the most battalions assumes command of the division. Its counter is marked DIV; it generates intelligence points (2, one fewer at night), its command radius grows by 2, and the other headquarters re-attach to it.

Electronic warfare

In the Intelligence phase, 1 intelligence point jams one enemy headquarters that is observed now or was fixed by direction finding this turn. Until the end of the enemy's next turn its command radius is 1 hex shorter, and on that turn it generates 2 fewer staff points (never below 0). A headquarters can be jammed only once at a time; a jammed

headquarters carries a yellow zigzag. Jamming a division headquarters can put its brigades out of contact, halving their staff points as well.

Known threat overlay

The overlay (T, or Map Overlays) marks every hex in the zone of control of a known enemy combat unit, the hexes adjacent to an observed enemy in DEFENSE or DUG-IN where reaction fire waits, and the range of known enemy artillery. Observed units and last-known markers count; nothing you have not seen does.

High contrast

Map Overlays → High contrast switches the panels to black and white with stronger borders and draws heavier hex lines, counter edges and last-known markers on the map. It is on by default when the system asks for more contrast.

Order of battle and after-action review

The Order of Battle sheet (O) lists every one of your formations under its headquarters, with steps, mode, ammunition and command state, and the staff points left to each headquarters; reinforcements show their turn of arrival. At the end of the battle the result screen charts the attacker's margin against par and each side's cumulative losses turn by turn, with a table view of the same figures.

14. THE ENEMY

The computer obeys the same rules and the same fog of war. Its doctrine sets how good the odds must be before it commits to an assault: Cautious waits for 2:1, Regular accepts 3:2, Aggressive goes in at 1:1 and force-marches its columns. A defending computer holds the forward objectives with posted units, digs in, mines the approaches and keeps a third of its tanks in reserve to counter-attack; it jams the most valuable enemy headquarters it can locate; its headquarters choose positions that keep the most battalions in command, and its division staff stays below the direction-finding threshold; an attacking computer chooses one objective per formation each turn and musters several battalions on one target before going in.

15. CONTROLS AND SAVING

Mouse: click to select, move, assault and fire; drag to pan; wheel to zoom. Touch: tap, drag, pinch. Keys: Enter end phase or commit, Tab next unit, 1–4 modes, Esc cancel, + – F zoom, arrows pan, S quick-save, L load, U undo, O order of battle, T threat overlay, M sound, H rules. Options in the Map Overlays panel turn the minimap, automatic next-unit selection and end-of-turn confirmation on or off. The game autosaves after each of your turns and each enemy turn; Save writes a separate manual slot. Full screen and an effects volume slider are in the Game panel; animations follow the system's reduced-motion setting.

16. DESIGNER'S NOTES

The original's reputation was that the Competition game was paperwork and the Controller game was drama. A computer does the paperwork, so this edition keeps the drama: you will lose battalions to units you never saw. Staff points are deliberately scarce — a brigade can reshape perhaps half its battalions in a turn — so plan modes a turn ahead. Par values are measured, not guessed, so a draw against par is an honest result.