

SQL#2: Boys with Toys:

Using Flamethrowers, Demolition Charges and Smoke in the Assault

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The Challenge:

If wandering around a live battlefield with a tank of flammable explosive strapped on your back sounds like fun, then the Assault Engineers is for you! Scenario Two introduces several new elements to the squad leader system. This essay will focus on Assault Engineers, Flamethrowers, Demolition Charges, and smoke in general; in addition to their use in Scenario 2 "THE TRACTOR WORKS" in particular.



New Contestants:

The second scenario introduces a new infantry type, the German 838 Assault Engineer. In addition to a higher combat value and shorter range to reflect SMG replacing rifles, the 838 also enjoys a higher morale relative to the first line German squad. The Assault Engineer status allows this squad type to use both Flamethrowers (FT) and Demolition Charges (DCs) [22.4 & 23.2]. A critical battlefield ability for Assault Engineers is their smoke making capability [24.2]. German 838s always have unlimited smoke making ability unless restricted by Special Scenario Rules.

Several of the 838s greatest attributes are the high attack factor and high morale. As such, they appear ideal to initiate Close Combat. However one should resist the temptation to do so.

Key Rule Constraints

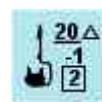
The default condition is German 838 Assault engineers possess smoke making ability. Other combat engineers do not unless a SSR provision exists.

All units in a hex have access to all support weapons in a hex. There is no equipment possession until GIA.

Using both Flamethrowers and deploying DCs can be a risky procedure to the attacking engineers. Just having a FT in your hex is hazardous to a unit's long term health.

German forces are typically outnumbered in any given scenario. Their firepower is artificially enhanced through a more liberal allocation of support weapons, inherent range, and both the quality & quantity of leadership. The specialized toys of FT and DCs, when effectively used, can greatly influence the scenarios outcome. These assets are often considered in defining a scenario balance. However they can potentially be used against the original owner as well.

The power of smoke making cannot be overstated as smoke has many uses, both offensively and defensively. Misuse or wasting these assets may shift the balance to your opponents favor. Let's review these assets individually.



Flamethrowers (FT):

This support weapon is the most feared in a player's Order of Battle. One of its prime advantages is that attacks made by FTs are immune to TEM or smoke [22.2]. A secondary advantage is that FTs are not subject to AREA fire in the AFPh after moving in the MPh [22.8]. This greatly enhances the lethality of the attack and potential for a KIA result. The FT

attack is halved however, versus a concealed target [22.1].

Disadvantages of FT are also multifaceted. All units in hexes containing a FT are subject to -1 TEM for each FT [22.7], including attacks by opposing flamethrowers. A FT in a hex is a detriment to the units in the hex, regardless if anyone in the hex can use it. This DRM does not apply to Close Combat attacks per Q/A.

The use of FT requires specialized training. Leaders of all nationalities with a -2/-3 leadership may use FTs of their own nationality with full effect. Additionally, German 838s are automatically capable of these weapons. American elite units (8-4-7) and leaders with a -2 or -3 leadership modifier may use FTs of any nationality [50.2]. There are no Russian FT counters in the SQL counter set; Russian FTs are introduced in COI. Any Russian usage of a FT a SQL scenario would be SSR only.

As weapon possession is not in effect until GIA, only one trained unit needs to survive DFPh unbroken to use the weapon, regardless of which squad brought it to the party. The unit firing the FT is limited to using its inherent fire against the target of the FT only [22.5]. Hence an Assault Engineer with a FT can only attack a single hex of attacker; while they can be easily attacked from several hexes.

A critical element is that the FT 'flames out' if on a roll of 9+, although the final attack is still resolved. As the chance that a flameout will occur is 27.8% for any flamethrower shot, every use may be its last.

Be aware that flamethrowers have a penetration of 2 and this penetration is not optional. Friendlies at range 1 may be toasted when targeting an enemy hex two hexes away as a function of LOS rules.

Per the game card, captured use of a FT is per Notes A (Must have a leadership modifier of -2 or -3), C (Must be Assault Engineer), H (Must be American Unit). The 11/14/05 conversation with the rules authorities is summarized as follows: American -2/-3 leaders or an American 847 Assault Engineer may use captured FT counters. Until the use of COI Rule 90 (Captured Equipment & Vehicles), only qualified American units may use captured FTs at the SQL rules level. As always, this is subject to any SSR.



Demolition Charges (DC):

This support weapon is one of great potential promise. The DC has a wide range of applications in non-combat roles later in the ruleset, but until then it is merely another offensive weapon. It has no defensive application until later rulesets. It possesses some of the elements of a FT but remains a distinctive unit in other respects.

Usage requirements are identical to the FT as stated above. Unlike the flamethrower, there is no negative TEM of being in a hex with this compact explosive. However, similar to FTs, the units carrying them are subject to a lot of attention, making them a priority target for your opponent.

If you read the DC's label, you will note it has an impressive attack factor of 30. However, there are two offsetting factors. First, the TEM of the target factor applies [23.4], except that the presence of smoke does not modify the DC attack in any way. The attack strength is halved if placed against a concealed target, even if the target is later revealed prior to the AFPh [23.5]. Secondly, the DC is placed in the MP, but explodes during the AFPh only if all units capable of placing it survive the DFPh unbroken [23.3]. The DC returns to the placing unit's hex [23.2] if all qualified units are broken or KIA. Should a unit place a DC from its starting MP hex and then moves away, it still may be targeted in its original hex [Q/A 16.4 & 23.3], even though this is an exception to being immune to fire in your original MP hex where MP are not expended. Unlike a FT, the DC has no hope of repeated use. Similar to a FT, smoke is the friend of the DC squad that seeks to use this weapon.

An additional restriction is that the unit placing the DC may only fire into the same hex as the DC [23.6]. This is moot if the DC eliminates the opposition. However, it is a factor preventing application of the inherent fire versus a more worthwhile target. Against a powerful enemy stack topped by a -2 DRM or better leader, the likelihood of surviving the DFPh is greatly diminished. Hence as a sole attack against an enemy strongpoint, a DC alone is not the best prospect of

carrying the day. Consider the DC as a supplementary weapon best used in conjunction with attacks from other hexes.

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Smoke:

Smoke is a personal favorite as it allows one to create TEM his own to their advantage. The placement of smoke negates open ground for most purposes. This can be useful to create a rout path or a relatively safe avenue for attack. Smoke does not negate the -2 DRM for moving in the open, but the smoke's DRM is cumulative and may hopefully offset it.

Each smoke counter creates a 1d6 TEM in the hex. This is rolled for each shot into, through, or out of each smoke hex. More than one smoke counter can be placed in a hex; however the maximum smoke TEM for a hex is +6. The smoke DRM is determined for every shot. A single smoke in a stone building hex is typically sufficient. Multiple smokes to safeguard movement through an open terrain hex, is at times an option to consider. As the smoke DRM is fickle, be aware a negative DRM is still possible in the movement phase if the -2 MIO DRM applies in conjunction with enemy leadership modifiers and/or the presence of a FT in the target hex. One of the basic tenets of SQUAD LEADER remains in force regardless of smoke; it is safer to advance into than to move into open ground.

One quirk of the wording of this rule is that the smoke must be visible on both sides of LOS. Hence if the smoke is only on one side, its TEM does not apply.

This is changed in GIA, but that discussion is for another time.



Figure 1: Smoke does not affect fire from DD1 to BB1 or vice versa as smoke is only on one side of CC1/CC2.

Each good order German 838 can place one smoke counter at the onset of the Prep Fire Phase. One may NOT conduct Prep Fire and then place smoke to impact subsequent Defensive Fire. The inherent 838 smoke-making capability can be modified by SSR. Additionally, other units may be granted restricted smoke-making ability by SSR. Placed smoke is temporary; it is removed as one of the last actions of the owning player's next Rally Phase.

Smoke can also be used defensively. It can shield friendly units from the effects of enemy fire whose LOS crosses your unit's location. In this manner you are isolating your units from portions of the battlefield. When placed adjacent to your position, it will not affect your fire, only incoming shots from the impacted direction. When placed in your adjacent opponent's hex, the enemy's fire effectiveness is greatly reduced. This should be considered a prelude to the initiation of Close Combat. Smoke placed in one's own position hampers the fire of both sides.

The tricks of the trade; getting the most out of your toys.

1. The best use of a FT is not to use it at all!; the threat of a FT attack is its strongest attribute. When used, a FT can crush an enemy strong point, blunt the opponent's attack, or serve as your last ditch ace-in-the-hole. View your FTs similar to Napoleon's Old Guard; the threat of a FT can manipulate the opponent's actions. An enemy will rarely move into range of a FT. Once a FT flames out, it loses all of its intimidation.

2. A key factor to consider is that your units bearing FT should travel in the company of a lot of friends. An unsupported FT equipped squad can be broken and when routed, they will leave the FT behind. Once captured by an enemy unit capable of using it, the FT it has no loyalty to its country of manufacture. A worse-case scenario is a German 838 with a FT losing the CCPH melee versus a berserk Russian 628. A berserk 628 armed with a FT can prove to be a nightmare. This is only a concern if Russian usage is enabled by SSR allows its use or COI level using rule 90.0 is in effect. This situation has occurred in my game history.

3. A single squad with a FT may conduct DFPh versus only one hex. The opposition's best tactic is to swarm the hex from several sides.

4. Until COI is reached, DCs have no DFPh benefit.

5. Both FT and DC can be can be lost to the opposition when successful DFPh occurs and the 'owners' rout away. This scenario can be prevented through planning. The use of a qualified reserve squad should be available to advance and recover abandoned toys. Lack of planning may result in an enemy entering the hex for the sole purpose of destroying these weapons, or risking DFPh in turn for captured use. The use of backup squads is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

6. As the effect of a FT attack versus a concealed target (8+0 DRM; 72% chance of MC; 6% of KIA) is significantly less than versus revealed units (20+0 DRM; 97% of MC; 11% of KIA); do not shoot at conceal targets unless truly desperate! The risk of flameout is only slightly less chance of getting a favorable result.

7. The high modifier leaders capable of using these toys should be deployed with the engineers. In addition to modifying infantry fire & CC attacks, they also increase the likelihood a qualified unit will survive DFPh to use the toys in the AFPh.

8. Leaders alone with broken squad are not a detriment to enemy squads moving into an adjacent hex. However if it is a qualified leader with a FT of its own nationality, that is an entirely different situation.

9. Do not place more than one FT in a hex. The doubling of the -1 DRM may prove fatal.

10. Do not deploy a FT in any hex that will yield a net +0 or negative DRM. Factor in both the -1 for the FT and the TEM and enemy use of leadership.

11. Any squad or leader can be the mule to relocate the FT/DC and hence be subject to DFPh. This will spare the engineer the risk of DFPh. The goal is to safely get the weapons into the same hex as the engineers or qualified leader for the AFPh use.

Implications in Scenario #2:

Things are simplified in this scenario due to the limited ruleset. In most cases, the Russian perspective is the opposite of the German. The Germans have a lot to accomplish in a short amount of time. They need to eliminate the Russian concealment as fast as possible, slice through the factory, and reach the far side to interdict the Russian relief force before the latter negates the German screening force, typically by turn 3, depending on the success of the screening forces and which side moves first. The Russians seek to prevent the Germans from meeting their objectives on schedule and extract a price in blood for any success.

Some key points are offered below.

German:

1. The FTs are merely offensive weapons; vehicle targets and fires are not factors in your deployment and attack definition decisions. Similarly, the only effective use of the DCs is to attack enemy infantry stacks.

2. Spread your attacking 838s across several hexes, to maximize your future smoke options.

3. Resist the temptation to put the 838s into CC situations unless the odds are heavily in your favor.

4. Avoid moving your FT and DC into CC situations as adverse die rolls yield their control to the opposition. Fortunately at this scenario is played at the SQL rules level as the Russian 92 cannot use these captured weapons with the exception of MGs. However this would be a potential disaster if the opposition was a American 92 leader or play was at COI rules level using rule 90.

5. The use of a DC should be weighed against the value of the target, in proportion to time remaining.

6. Don't put all your DCs and FTs into common hexes. Targets should be threatened from multiple hexes. FT in one, DC from another and so on.

7. The use of multiple DCs against a key position can be justified. It is preferred to assault from several hexes; preferably more than the defender can deal with.

8. Plan for the use of smoke to provide rout paths out of the factory. Failure to do so will result in the death of your lead elements.

9. The use of smoke combined with movement & advance phase is the most effective way to remove Russian concealments.

10. Smoke is not a detriment to FT and DC attacks. Its use is never a detriment unless you run out of smoke counters.



Figure 2: Points illustrated: Use of 10-2 to place DC; backup engineers to recover dropped weapons in advance phase; multiple unit who can place the DC, leader to port FT around; FT use is withheld as a latter threat and overwhelming the defender with multiple assaults.

11. Beware of the killing potential of the Russian 92 in both fire attacks and CC. He is the linchpin to the Russian position until the reinforcements can flood in. He is a worthy target of multiple FT and DC attacks.

Russian:

1. Encourage the German player to use a FT against a concealment stack and silently thank him. An exhausted FT is a cause for silent celebration. Once a FT flames out, it is no longer a factor. The Germans only have two.

2. Look for opportunities to capture and destroy the German toys. Appropriate your fire accordingly to create these situations.

3. Target the 838s at every opportunity, shoot at broken ones and keep them under DM. The German success is dependent on these units.

4. Target the 838s in every CC situation. Their value if eliminated more than justifies the lower CC probabilities. I recently had 2x838 killed in a CC by a single Russian squad. A big CC kill can turn the tide.

Everyone can roll a 2 or 3 once in a while. Don't deny yourself a chance to win on a single die roll.

5. The most effective way to kill the 838s and other German units is to deny rout. (This is another SQL gem). Similar to real estate, the three biggest factors dictating your deployment and movements are location, location, and location.

6. Even though I am an engineer in real life, the engineers of my enemy are not my friends.

Conclusion:

German success requires aggressive use of their key resources: 838s, FTs, DCs, and smoke. Both wasting these assets too soon and hoarding them after you have run out of bodies to put into the factory represent failure. Although this is a pure infantry engagement, it can be considered combined arms of leadership, infantry, engineers, MGs, FTs, DCs, and smoke.

Many tactical decisions will be presented to the human participants during play. The additional unknown of the die sequence will also play a part. The OOB and die alone however, will not win the day. A superior opponent will typically pull out a victory. Such a defeat should not to be considered a failure if you observe and learn from the experience. Applying the techniques learned will enhance your player acumen for future matches.

APPENDIX: Other SQUAD LEADER Rules

These are Squad Leader particulars, some aspects may change in later rulesets.

- German 838s are the most effective tank killers in the game. With the addition of smokemaking, 838s are superior to the American 847s and Russian 628s in this role.
- Flamethrowers may also be used to destroy AFVs [37.2]. This killing power is greatly enhanced in COI (TK#s are doubled if the target is adjacent and/or open topped; armor modifiers are ignored; no crew survival is possible.)
- FT will start a fire with a KIA if rule 59.3 is in play. The building is considered "occupied" for victory purposes by the side that did not cause the

fire [59.6]. A fire is assumed to be on all building levels of a hex. Worse yet, it can spread. **Note: It is strongly recommended that scenarios 2 & 3 never use the rules beyond that of scenario 3. Should the Germans set fire to the factory with one of their FT attacks, in most instances they have ceded control to the Russians and have lost the game?**

- Both FT and DC are distinct types of SW. One elite squad with a FT, DC, PF/BAZ and MGs, has many options, but they can only use one type of SW in a fire phase [5.75]. If a defender can be suckered into using the type for the first threat they encounter (typically a unit that must be fired upon as they move), you can respond with another type of attack knowing the other toys are now temporarily useless.
- When multistory rules are in effect [57.0], both FT and DC affect the non-targeted floor as an AREA attack on the same resolution die roll [57.8]. This can be risky when the occupants of the non-targeted floor are friendlies.
- When a multistory building is rubble by a DC attack, units on all levels are affected by a KIA [58.1]. Placing a DC on an upstairs hex from the downstairs hex may have unpleasant consequences. Additionally, one can place a DC in the empty downstairs/upstairs hex regardless of whether there is a stairwell, in the hope of creating rubble and killing the upstairs/downstairs occupants.
- DCs will create a fire in a similar manner as an HE attack. A fire will result if the attack KIA results after TEM modification can be followed up with an automatic second roll resulting in a KIA after TEM modification. [59.3].
- There is one key rule, which is often overlooked and learned the 'hard way'. FT may not be used by units inside an entrenchment [54.6]. Make your opponent pay for such an oversight without forewarning. Consider it an invitation to loot a FT from the enemy Order of Battle.
- Friendly units under an AFV are affected by FT and DC attacks [32.5].
- Other uses of the DC make themselves available as the rules further develop. They can be used to

close sewer entrances [27.6], clear wire [53.53], clear roadblocks [62.4], and rubble buildings with various conditions and DRs [58.1].

- DCs may also be placed to kill and AFV. I find no rule reference for this, although it is listed on the charts, and covered by Q/A 23.3. For TK purposes, the facing is defined by that at the time of placement, independent of changes made in the DFPh.
- The placement of a DC is a movement activity and does not require a preAFV MC. Hence squads unloading from transport can place DCs to an adjacent hex after unloading. This doubles the number of threats the defending vehicle may have to deal with.
- Additionally, a smoke hex is a non-open ground hex [Q/A 36.1]. This enables units within and otherwise open ground hex to attempt vehicle immobilization.
- One of smoke's most effective uses is to block OBA direction as smoke does block observation attempts in and through the smoke hex [46.7]. Hence when smoke in the observer's hex, he can only maintain a FFE or RSR in its current board location, it cannot be moved or adjusted. A critical feature of the RPh sequence of play is that Artillery activities occurs prior to the removal of last turns smoke counters. So in effect, smoke performs this function of blocking artillery adjustment for 1.5 turns, typically forcing the observer to a new location.
- In SQL, AFVs may fire smoke with no risk of depletion [41.2]. (Depletion is a COI concept [63.22]). Additionally, German AFVs may place smoke via use of smoke dischargers in the PFPh and still retain MPh capability. [41.4].
- Beware of SSR and COI environmental rules. Mild Breeze reduces the impact of smoke; Heavy Winds negates smoke [101.62, 101.63].

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