SGS' Fall Weiss

SPECIFIC RULES FOR SGS FALL WEISS

INTRODUCTION

These rules apply specifically to the SGS Fall Weiss game.

They are in addition to the basic rules presented in the video tutorials, or to the rules available in French and English in the Afrika Korps game manual, in pdf format (said rules being accessible free of charge and with no obligation to own Afrika Korps). In some cases, they completely replace the general rules given for Afrika Korps.

https://strategygamestudio.com/pdf/afrika-korps/eng/SGS-Afrika-Korps-Rules_English.pdf

These special rules make Fall Weiss a game that belongs both to the "classic" SGS set and at the same time a relatively distinct one, giving it special features that better represent the conflict in question, namely the invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939.

The rules in question will feature prominently in two future games in the "blitzkrieg" offensive series, France 1940 and Balkans 1940-1941.

COMMAND UNITS IN FALL WEISS: MANDATORY FOR ATTACKING

Commands are mandatory for attacking. A stack can defend itself without a command, but will defend itself better if commanded.

Fall Weiss is an operative-scale game where, in principle, divisions (and other ground units) should be able to attack without the concrete need for command. However, the invasion of Poland is a special case in military history where it was important to represent doctrinal disparities, if only through the use of radios (by German forces) as never before.

The requirement to have commanded stacks - with an HQ of any kind - in order to attack makes it possible to transcribe these disparities in an interesting way, creating advantages and disadvantages that are easily perceptible (and exploitable) by the player. It limits Polish offensive actions. In both player-versus-player and player-versus-AI games, the Polish camp will not be able to massively attack in all directions, in a historically incoherent manner. Indeed, Polish commands are relatively limited in number. The same applies to the Soviets, effectively reflecting the serious shortcomings of their command after the terrible purges suffered by Moscow's army in previous years.

Conversely, the German player has many more command counters, at different hierarchical levels, enabling him to carry out a greater number of attacks, favoring certain effects depending on the hierarchical level. Prosaically, since the German player has more command counters, he'll be able to attack more, in more places simultaneously.

This need for command on an operational scale also reflects another reality: during the Polish campaign, Polish troops frequently saw their actions not carried out simply because they hadn't received orders to do so, or too late. On the German side, historians have repeatedly reported the lack of initiative of units left to their own devices, with lost opportunities and offensive actions that, because they were delayed, later came at a considerable human and material cost to the attacker.

Of course, uncommanded stacks defend themselves normally, notwithstanding the various bonuses that apply. In other words, they will face the attacker with the same bonuses as the commanded attacker.

COMMANDS OUTSIDE THE HISTORICAL ORDER OF BATTLE

On turn 0 (pre-turn), the Polish player will have from 6 to 22 "Orders" counters (random number from game to game), which simulate the fact that some of the units deployed without army or corps command are in any case ready and have in any case taken their orders into account in the event of a German invasion, and that these units can therefore be considered to be temporarily in command until the situation changes.

These counters are immobile and are only present on the German player's turn one. Their capabilities are somewhat less than those of conventional HQ/command counters, but these "order-units" have the merit of mitigating the superiority of commanded enemy stacks over uncommanded stacks.

Deploying the counters in question is a source of uncertainty for both sides: the German player won't know in advance which Polish stacks will have received their orders, while the Polish player won't know in advance whether he'll have more than six order counters to place, or even more...

German and Polish players also have a number of so-called "field commands" which do not correspond to any command in the historical order of battle. This translates two realities that combine very well with gameplay requirements:

- The emergence of commands in the course of operations, based on necessity and the ability of staff to create subordinate commands;

- The fact that stacks of units, even without "official" commands, can demonstrate initiative without being directly stacked with a historical command.

WHAT DO THE COMMANDMENTS BRING?

Commands (or "command-units") give advantages in attack and defense, morale and sometimes movement.

The way commands work in SGS Fall Weiss is partly the same as in other SGSs. Basically, when a command is present in an area where combat is about to take place, a differential is calculated. This differential is calculated on the basis of the counter's command value (which corresponds to the combat factor for other normal units, i.e. all other units except command units) in attack or defense (with a command factor specific to attack and a command factor specific to defense). Leaders in a stack also contribute their own morale value to the stack's overall morale total, plus the morale boost that applies individually to the units in the stack (which will also affect overall morale).

If no enemy command is present in the area, the differential is simply the command value of the command counter present.

For example, if an enemy stack attacks (necessarily with a command, otherwise the attack is not possible) in a region where the defending friendly stack is without a command (since defense is always possible even without a command), the attacking command value will be applied as a tactical modifier (to the attacker's benefit, therefore). A command with an attack combat value of +2 would therefore add +2 to the attack combat factor of all friedly units in the area.

If an enemy command is present, the differential will be calculated according to their reciprocal attack command value for one, defense for the other. With an enemy command with an attack command value of +2 in an attacking stack against a defending stack with a friendly command with a defense command value of +1, the differential will be +1 in favor of the attacking stack. The attacking stack's tactical bonus is therefore +1. This means that attacking units will have +1 to their attack combat factor. Added to this are direct boosts to combat factors.

Direct boosts apply even if a command does not prevail and does not bring a tactical bonus to the units it commands. Using the previous example, if the defending command provides no tactical modifier, but can nevertheless boost directly with +1 in defense, the units it commands will have no tactical bonus, but will still benefit from a +1 boost to the defense combat factor.

RECONNAISSANCE UNITS AND SITUATION ASSESSMENT ROUND

Reconnaissance units (ground and observation aircraft) can be used to withdraw from a battle before it develops, if the terrain allows.

If certain units (starting with reconnaissance units) are present in an attacking stack, depending on the terrain and the presence of at least one division (of any kind) in the defending stack, the attacking player can decide at the start of the battle phase whether to carry out his attack to the end, or not. This translates into a retreat even before the card-playing round, if the attack is not launched. The idea is to give the player the opportunity to inspect enemy stacks in a certain way.
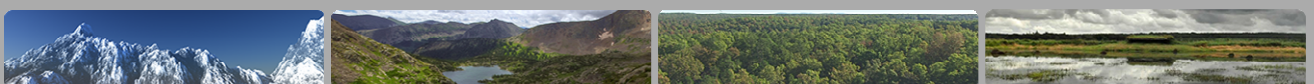
- Motorized reconnaissance units can bring about a pre-battle retreat if :

   Terrain is: clear, hill or wood

- Cyclist (or predominantly cyclist) or cavalry (or predominantly cavalry) reconnaissance units can bring about a retreat before battle if :

   Terrain is: high mountain, mountain, forest, swamp

- Cooperative air units (= essentially light observation aircraft) can bring about a retreat before battle if:

   Terrain is clear, hill, swamp, wood

In all cases, the defender's stack must include at least one division (otherwise, reconnaissance will not allow a pre-battle retreat).

This ability to inspect enemy batteries is not without its constraints. As mentioned above, to benefit from this "situation assessment" round, the attacking player must have a reconnaissance unit (or one considered as such) in the stack concerned, all in a region with a type of terrain that does not prohibit reconnaissance. *For example, Polish cavalry can trigger this round in a forest area, but motorized reconnaissance units cannot (see above).*

The other constraint concerns the need to engage reconnaissance units (or units capable of reconnaissance actions, like the Polish cavalry as a whole). As far as other combat units are concerned, if the player ultimately decides not to launch the attack at the start of the battle phase, they obviously cannot be used for another attack during that same turn, so every attack by a stack in a region against another stack must be thought through, even if ultimately the possibility of not entering the battle exists as described here.

In a way, then, inspecting enemy stacks to determine whether or not a battle is going to take place has a "cost". In any case, this means committing at least reconnaissance units and, at best, an extensive stack with all the units deemed necessary to fight the battle if it is finally decided to do so. This immobilization of units for a battle, with no certainty as to its outcome, is consistent with realism: a battle is being prepared, and the units destined to take part in it are on the move, assembling. Meanwhile, they do nothing else.

This system makes it possible to inspect enemy stacks up to a certain point. It gives reconnaissance units an important value, not just in terms of their combat factors (in principle low in the game) or the boosts they provide (relatively limited in Fall Weiss), but above all in terms of what they allow more generally (to avoid triggering a battle whose results could be very unfavorable to the attacker).

If a battle is not finally launched, and the attacker decides to retreat before the battle begins (= not to trigger the battle), all non-attacking units will be placed in friendly areas adjacent to the attacked area. It is therefore important for the player to prepare for the offensive action he is not certain of carrying out, by making sure he has enough space (in relation to stacking limits) in adjacent regions. Otherwise, retreating units are likely to be eliminated because they cannot be placed in an adjacent friendly region (due to stacking limits being exceeded).

Reconnaissance units - again under certain conditions - can also enable the defender to retreat (see How can the defender retreat).

Reconnaissance units are therefore not anecdotal in the context of the game: notwithstanding the boosts they can provide (which remain limited, see Artillery boosts on the subject of inter-army synergies), their combat factors are generally mediocre. Using them as pure combat units is therefore ill-advised, as they can play a considerable role in greatly limiting losses, often avoiding potentially difficult battles.

HOW CAN THE DEFENDER RETREAT?

Reconnaissance units (ground and observation aircraft) can be used to withdraw from a battle before it develops, if the terrain allows.

During the game, the Polish player receives several abstract units (which arrive randomly as the game progresses) which, when present in a stack during a battle, allow him to decide whether to retreat from the current battle or not. If he does not retreat, then the round proceeds as a normal battle before moving on to the next part of the battle.

The Poles can also benefit from this retreat option in the said round if the German player has motorized kampfgruppen or reconnaissance kampfgruppen in the stack with which he is attacking. This reflects the fact that these units are well advanced in relation to the main forces (significantly further back), which may give Polish forces time (provided the terrain conditions are met) to retreat by spotting German tactical units, without waiting to be shocked by the forces coming up behind.

The German player can also use his motorized kampfgruppen to achieve this result. In other words, if the German player has at least one motorized kampfgruppe in the defending stack, depending on the terrain and the nature of the attacker, the German player can decide to retreat before the battle gets too far advanced.

Recon units on both sides can also allow a pre-combat retreat, in addition to authorizing a retreat before the battle breaks out (see Recon units and situation assessment round).

The contact-breaking round described here is only possible on certain types of terrain (forest, high mountain, mountain, swamp and dense urban area) and if the attacker includes at least one infantry unit (or motorized kampfgruppe/reconnaissance unit as indicated above) in the stack with which he is attacking.

GERMAN ARTILLERY

German artillery provides an attack and defense boost to all units in a stack.

Steven Zaloga explained, among other things, that the Polish campaign was largely won by German artillery which, better organized, more powerful and benefiting from the German radio network, generally crushed Polish counter-attacks, gradually contributing to the physical annihilation of the Polish army.

Admittedly, the air force played a significant role, preventing reservists who were mobilized too late from reaching their units, and complicating the deployment of reinforcements and the movement of trains. It also played a role in gradually melting Polish morale (notably by hitting the country's military and civilian infrastructures, as well as directly attacking civilian populations). Nevertheless, one of the major tools of German victory was its artillery.

After the war, the idea that the Luftwaffe, along with the panzers, had been one of the two pillars of victory was both a legacy of Nazi propaganda and an easy way of explaining defeat. In both cases, the superiority of the German artillery, a "banal" weapon emblematic of the First World War (and therefore hardly in harmony with the "Blitzkrieg" built around the "Panzers" and "Stukas"), was less promising as an element of explanation.

All the more so given that a significant proportion of German artillery in 1939 (and throughout the war) was largely horse-drawn. And yet, in the collective imagination, the German army that invaded Poland in 1939 was highly motorized, having relegated the horse to the past, unlike the Polish and French armies.

The power of German artillery is reflected in the game. German corps artillery units are generally powerful, and unlike Polish units, they provide both attack and defense boosts. The idea of various boosts, such as "unit assets" for ground forces or "mission assets" for air forces, is introduced on a massive scale in the SGS NATO monster game, to create cross-army synergies that have a considerable impact on the game. In SGS Fall Weiss, the question of inter-service synergies is not as crucial as in SGS NATO, given the period. Inter-army principles, although already developed in 1939, are not as elaborate as in 1985. More prosaically, the concepts of the two games are not the same.

German artillery counters (which correspond to corps artillery) are among the few in the game to confer boosts to all units present in the same region/stack. This expresses the fact that these units see their potential to be well utilized for the benefit of all units in a common geographic, temporal and operational space. It is implied that they are well utilized, thanks in particular to the use of extensive radio resources, which in 1939 represented an enormous force multiplier for German troops.

All in all, German artillery was a particularly effective weapon in the campaign.

HOW TO USE THE LUFTWAFFE

Among other things, the Luftwaffe balances overall morale in a battle, making it easier for the German player to win the battle.

This point should also be borne in mind when reading about the German artillery. To sum up, although the Luftwaffe played a significant role in the campaign, it was not necessarily the primary instrument for destroying the Polish army. Rather, its effect was indirect. Translating this into gameplay was relatively complicated. Initially, it became clear that the campaign could be won on the ground virtually without Luftwaffe intervention (thanks in particular to the weight of German artillery).

Reflections based on numerous works, some of them recent, led to significant rebalancing. In September 1939, before the outbreak of the conflict, the real implications of German methods adapted to motorization, armor concentration and elaborate transmission networks were unknown (or at best very poorly understood) to the Allies. Poland therefore considered that, if it could not win a war against Germany, it would in any case have the moral resources to resist until the start of an offensive that would bring the Allies to Berlin, overthrowing Hitler. If Poland doesn't give up, it will survive by standing its ground and fighting bravely - even at the greatest sacrifice.

It was in this frame of mind that the Polish forces entered the war: holding on was the key. As a result, in the early stages of the campaign, Polish troops demonstrated incredible courage in the face of adversity, despite a rapidly deteriorating situation. Just as much as the Finns against the Soviets (if not more so, as the situation of the Warsaw troops was almost immediately desperate), the Poles fought on in disastrous conditions (albeit benefiting from German shortcomings and errors) and without collapsing. For several days, in total chaos, they tried to reconstitute defensive lines, they tried to retreat to form pockets of resistance. The capital was organized as a defensive hub, with civilian volunteers taking up arms. The same happened in Lvov...

In the name of this remarkable spirit of resistance, the morale of most Polish units in Fall Weiss is exceptional. It represents the hope, unfounded though it may be, that a formidable Allied offensive will break through the Siegfried Line and that Poland will be saved. This morale is likely to be a serious obstacle to German ground forces which, despite heavy losses inflicted on the Poles, may see their offensive actions repulsed. The corollary of this would be to facilitate Polish reinforcement (with reservists who had not been mobilized in time, with the reconstitution of units, with the reorganization of units, with the preparation of various fortifications), but also to see the Polish victory level increase in the absence of the capitulation of Warsaw and Lvov.

The best way for the German player to counterbalance Polish morale in battle is to engage the Luftwaffe. Dive bombers and bombers will represent both direct strikes on Polish forces, as well as strikes further back, which will have an impact on Polish morale rather than on lined-up equipment and manpower. By raising morale on the German side and contributing to the fall in morale on the Polish, the Luftwaffe acted as a "lever" on the enemy's morale, facilitating successes during attacks and limiting heavy defeats during Polish counter-attacks. In short, apart from destroying enemy aircraft and contributing to military losses, the Luftwaffe's role was to level out Polish moral superiority.

ARMORED TRAINS AND FLOTILLAS

Some units can only move in very specific areas (and not in others).

Armored trains don't feature much in SGS games. They are, however, present in SGS Fall Weiss, where Polish and German armored trains are represented. These counters can only move in certain regions. In this case, the regions with roads are schematically those where the main railway lines also run, and therefore where the armored trains can travel.

If a stack doesn't seem to be able to enter an adjacent region, this may mean that it contains one (or more) armored train unit(s), and that it is therefore necessary to break up the stack in order to remove the armored train unit. Be careful, as German border guards and Polish units (Warsaw or Lodz defenders) may have certain movement restrictions.

Poland also has several river flotilla counters, which function in the same way as land counters, except that they can only move along certain rivers: part of the Vistula for the Vistula river detachment, and the Pripyet rivers for the "Pinsk navy".

If these counters are stacked with other land units and the player wishes to make a move outside the regions allowed for the flotilla counter in the stack, the move will appear impossible. As with armored trains, the player simply removes the flotilla counter from the stack concerned, allowing it to move normally.

ABSTRACT UNITS

Many counters represent units that exist only very temporarily, or that do not exist in the historical order of battle, being considered as created during the confrontation.

The concept of "abstract" units was conceived and developed in SGS NATO's Nightmare. It recognizes that, alongside theoretical orders of battle, armies in the field see these theoretical orders of battle at best reorganized and at worst completely overturned by the realities on the ground. In concrete terms, these are a variety of counters that lie between game markers like those found in old-fashioned paper-and-board wargames, and between actual units detached from larger units, with a more or less ephemeral autonomous existence.

In Fall Weiss, the German player has at his disposal several abstract units known as "kampfrguppen" (combat groups), representing ad hoc units detached from divisions (mainly armored divisions) and operating for the benefit of all units in the region (= a stack in the region in question). These kampfgruppen provide the player with operational flexibility, while at the same time increasing his offensive or defensive potential, given that certain types of units will operate in specific rounds of the battle phase.

The Polish player also fields several units of this type. Unlike the German player, these also include some air units. Also specific to the Polish player, certain abstract units under his command "self-destruct". More precisely, each time the unit "fires", it automatically loses one step of losses, until it is completely destroyed. The idea is not that the unit is actually destroyed, but rather to represent the fact that it exists only for a very limited time and/or for a very specific mission.

For example, local Polish counter-attack units, which simulate small-scale counter-attacks on a tactical scale, will melt away as they are "fired upon" (which is best understood as a crumbling of resources as the local counter-attacks in question are carried out). The Polish player can therefore expect to do little more than use them to wear down the German forces, in keeping with historical reality (the Poles often launched this kind of action, which had no operative scope but played considerably on the nerves of the German troops, sometimes causing non-negligible losses).

Polish abstract air units operate on this model: each roll of the dice (whether successful or not) inflicts a step loss which in reality corresponds to the dissolution of the assets involved in the attack (whether they were hit in the attack or simply because the assets dedicated to this attack were in any case few in number, thrown into the battle desperately and with no immediate possibility of renewing the aforementioned one-off action for lack of fuel, ammunition, personnel or equipment). The Polish player can harass German troops with P23 Karas raids. The "destruction" of aircraft when firing does not necessarily mean absolute destruction.

Abstract units can be present in the game from the start (= German kampfgruppen) or arrive randomly during the game (as is the case with most Polish abstract units).