

Beaten Zones

Author: Dave Choat (---.arl.army.mil)

Date: 10-24-00 17:11

Dear Readers,

Regarding beaten zones as caused by infantry machine guns.

What kind of effect can you see happening if the following mod were to be employed?

An LMG gets one beaten zone template per firing turn. That is, it fires a small burst template which must attack everyone under it. It can be placed in any way so as to overlap an aiming point.

An MMG gets two templates. A HMG gets three templates. I would like to say that the M2 Browning 50 cal would get four, since it is such an outstanding weapon, but that may be too uch.

This would be separate and distinct from AFV machine guns. I am talking about infantry served weapons here. This "what if" would simulate the penetration effects that MGs have on the field. They can create "fire lanes" and when being used obliquely, cause all sorts of havoc to infantry. I havewnt really given any thought to area fire with MGs, a la indirect fire over hills and whatnot. It was done, but the mods would seem to make it not real usable (the minus one shelling mod?)

Any thoughts?

Dave

RE: Beaten Zones

Author: Craig Burnett (---.bigpond.com)

Date: 10-25-00 06:26

Dave,

Sounds good to me. The MG BZ varies at different ranges for various weapons, but the clean Lmg/MMG/HMG concept is perfectly gameable (is that a real word?).

I'm into it for sure. Depending on ranges for the weapon, the BZ will be either 'long' (= grazing fire) or 'wide' (=area) from axis-of-fire, ie from MG aiming point.

Area affect for indirect fire is simplified as a boxed-template, likely with the similar negative for shelling as you say. (= plunging fire).

I wonder what others on this forum think too. But it is definently correct for application and BF already has the mechanics built in to simulate it. In fact it is no more difficult than artillery has been dealt with under this great system. How much more perfect can you organize fixed and staked line arc machine guns on-table?

Great idea, who else votes for Mg beaten zones?

RE: Beaten Zones

Author: Mike Pierce (---.uscg.mil)

Date: 10-25-00 07:35

An intriguing idea. However, I don't think LMGs should get an area fire, for two main reasons. First, the LMG, as BF models it, was a platoon weapon, intended to direct against a target the platoon was attacking. Second, I don't think the LMG team carried enough ammo for this kind of fire. May also pertain to MMGs, too.

But I kind of like the idea, especially for HMGs---it makes them a special support weapon, subtly different in the same way as mortars are different. But this needs to be playtested. AS Rich is fond of saying: "It's all dominoes", so one change can really unbalance things if we are not careful.

RE: Beaten Zones

Author: Dave Choat (---.arl.army.mil)

Date: 10-25-00 09:38

I agree Mike. I looked over some MG stuff and that is simply true. The basic MG kit as far as the Germans are concerned just added different components to the same weapon. Instead of a drum magazine and a bipod, the MG 42 would be belt fed and tripod mounted. In the HMG version, there is simply more ammo and spare barrels available, and the weapon could operate at a higher rate of fire. MMGs should still be possible though--this rules out the BAR or Bren, which have very small ammo loadouts and aren't proper MGs anyway. That could include the Vickers machine gun (303) and the Browning .30 cal and other tripod mounted terrors (ooh, like the Italian Breda, talk about a high rate of fire).

Unless you are suggesting that this only be reserved for HMGs. Are you suggesting it is a function of how much ammo a given weapon could access? That is certainly a factor, but I was more into the consideration of a stable, tripod mounted weapon that was using all the fire mechanics and operations that come to mind in this period. There is a LOT of penetration in one of these weapons, and we really don't reflect the effect an MG would have in how it could shoot through several stands with ease.

Perhaps the MMG would get a template or two, and the HMGs get two or three (or one for MMGs and two for HMGs)

As it stands now, an MGs fire stops at the first stand it hits, leaving further stands intact. We should model this and test it, as there is a ripple effect whenever we try to introduce a new wrinkle into BF. Heck maybe cannister rounds should have the same type of mechanic...

Dave

MG Companies & the RA

Author: Dave Choat (---.arl.army.mil)

Date: 10-25-00 11:23

Hmmm, the Royal Army tended to mass their MGs into platoons rather than scatter them amongst the poor bloody infantry. Interesting for when we get some scenario stuff done for Operation Epsom and the subsequent fiascos, er, offensives around Caen . At a rough guess, anybody trying to run Operation Goodwood better have a lot of friends with lead, or they will be laying out some serious bucks for miniatures. There were a BUNCH of tanks there. I thought Zitadelle was a crowded game,,,

Dave

RE: MG Companies & the RA

Author: Mike Pierce (---.uscg.mil)

Date: 10-25-00 15:18

Good point, Dave. We should playtest with 1 template for MMG and 2 templates for HMG and see what dominoes tumble. I'm just imagining a German Infantry company defending with its LMGs reinforced with 3 HMGs---a horrible thing for a Russian Battalion commander to contemplate attacking!

Mike

RE: MG Companies && the RA
Author: Craig Burnett (---.bigpond.com)
Date: 10-26-00 05:22

I made the templates and played with them.
Not pure scale, just testing.
See 'ya later.

RE: MG Companies &&& the RA
Author: Craig Burnett (---.bigpond.com)
Date: 10-26-00 05:57

Bren gun template in scale too small. About pencil line width if that. Thing too accurate. More like fast firing rifle. Shot it in Queens medal shoot 1987. Lost too!

True BZ for MG is application. Try different variations for weapon. Never fired MMG.
LMG simply SFMG on bipod - same weapon, different application. Don't alter role 'within game'. Choose before.

But I'm voting for MG BZ's!!

RE: MG Companies &&&& the RA
Author: Rich Hasenauer (---.arl.army.mil)
Date: 10-26-00 10:43

Paul Bernadino suggested we place only one template per MG, however, LMGs (bipod mounted) should use a smaller template and MMGs and HMGs (tripod mounted/vehicle mounted) use a larger template. Jim Baker suggested the MG has two fire options. It can still fire at a single target without placing a template, or it can attack multiple targets within one template, but with a negative one modifier on the fire table. If we include Craig Burnett's suggestion that the template can be oriented long for grazing fire, or wide for area fire, perhaps this is all we need to model the killing zone of an MG. This would be a modest change to the rules by simply adding an optional fire mission for MGs, with a "MG grazing/area fire" modifier on the fire table. What do you guys think?

RE: MG Companies &&&&& the RA
Author: Mark Hayes (---.nhc.navy.mil)
Date: 10-26-00 11:41

the more the bullets have to be dropping vertically, because the more you have to aim them at the sky to compensate for that 32 feet/sec/sec gravitic acceleration that's acting on them.

All of which means that effective grazing fire only takes place out to about 250-400 meters. Within that range the highest the bullet has to rise before it hits the ground is less than 6 feet, so you have an appreciable chance of passing through a man-sized target anywhere in that Zone. Area Fire takes place beyond grazing range, when you are dropping a bunch of rounds into an area to saturate it. This requires that you be able to traverse and elevate pretty accurately in order to cover the entire area thoroughly. That requires a tripod or other fixed mount, because a gunner resting on his elbows with a bipod just cannot do it very well. Both grazing and area fire, to be effective, require a good sustained rate of fire, and that means either a heavy barrel, water cooling, or the ability to change barrels quickly.

In summary, automatic rifles like the BAR, light machineguns either drum magazine, or belt-fed like the BREN, DP, or MG-34/42, cannot use grazing or area fire effectively because they cannot maintain the sustained rates of fire, don't carry the required ammo loads, and cannot adequately traverse and elevate to cover the entire target area. Tripod mounted, heavy barrel or water-cooled MGs like the Vickers, Browning, Maxim, or MG-42 all can do this, and can use area or grazing fire.

In BF game terms, then, the LMGs are limited to point fire: pick a target and hose it as the game allows now. They can do this out to about the limit of the tracer burn out, which is about 800 meters. HMGs or MMGs can use point, area, or grazing fire:

Point Fire: as in the rules now, pick a target stand/element and attack it at the values and modifiers printed on the cards

Grazing Fire: Set up an aiming point, which can be a geographical point, and attack everything to the right, left, or either side of it out to X distance. You attack every stand/element between the gun and the point out to 400 meters (10" in 15mm scale). To keep it simple, use a fan-shaped template about 1" at the gun end and 2-3" at the other, and 10" long.

Area Fire: Drop all the bullets you can at a sustained rate into an area, which can be set up as left and right limits on your tripod scales. Although this area will vary with range, for practical (gaming) purposes we could make the template into which we can expect to do damage about 1 - 1.5 by 3". Note that although you could in theory elevate and delevate to make a vertical template, in practice it is much easier to traverse back and forth like a fire hose spraying bullets, so I'd make the placement of the template with the long side parallel to the firing gun mandatory.

In grazing or point fire all targets touched by the "beaten zone" (template) are attacked, at -1 from the card value of the MMG for that range. This is because you are spreading the rounds fired over a greater area than with Point Fire which the card values are meant to portray.

Note that because in a defense position you can set up Firing Tables for the MMGs with Aiming Points, Limits, and Ranges pre-measured, Area and Grazing Fire from an MG that starts the scenario emplaced on the board is not affected by darkness or lack of vision into the target area.

Note also that by adding these MG techniques to the game, we not only add the extra effects used in WWII, but also the MG tactics used from WWI to the present day - which extends the game nicely to both ends of the century, at least for machineguns!

RE: MG Fire, Templates and Physics
Author: Craig Burnett (---.bigpond.com)
Date: 10-27-00 06:14

Charles,

I agree with the physics and ballistics etc of the MG in general. Additionally, in response to people here (home), regarding BF I have said that as far as I'm concerned, BF is the perfect style system for 1900 to 2000, (at least) and quite possibly back to 1870.

The use of the MG is an art and is taught so.

The MG-42 from my reading is the origin of the M-60, like the AK series originated from the StG43/4 (I stand for correction if wrong).

I lead myself to believe that the '42 would have extremely close characteristics to the M-60. (?). Not including differences in calibre, manufacture, refinement etc.

In the section role, regarding the gun being in it's own BZ, the template used would be placed (in a virtual and physical sense) 'at the muzzle', ie at the aiming point of the MG stand. That is, by it's nature, the gun cannot fail to issue a BZ, wether a player wants to or not!

Battle sight in this instance is usually set at 200m anyway, so the fire proceeds in a cone along that path. The gunner has to be aware of these things and set sights for engagement at ranges in excess of the 200 - 400. So the LMG role with BZ still applies, but not in the same manner as the BZ for the same weapon pre-determined in position for a sustained or area-supressive fire role, ie tripod and fixed steady base.

I really believe that from the inception of the MG as a working tool (ACW+?), that a BZ existed, even if it wasn't realized at the time. I'm interested in further lessons on this topic, but don't want to cause any problems!

On template sizes (unperfected at best):

Direct fire from 0 to battle range: 1/2" to 3/4" wide at centre. Single point at 'base'. 5" long. Aiming reticule or 'placing' point defined on template at 1/3 (about) from base of template. (use at 0 - 10"). Use for LMG, MMG and HMG class.

Semi-indirect/median/extended range: 1" - 1 1/2" wide at centre. 3" to 4" long. Reticule in centre. (use for beyond 10" to 15"/20"). MMG and HMG class.

Indirect/area/extreme range: 6" to 8" wide and 1 1/2" to 3" long. reticule in centre.

(range measurement to be determined, feasibly 20" to 30"). MMG (?) and HMG class.

Total requirement 3 templates. Use only one at a time per weapon firing, quick placement, easy calculation, practical application on-table gaming method.

An MG pre-determined to operate along lines in the general sustained fire-support role, (regardless of basic frontline ammo issue), will have extra barrels and additional ammo beyond basic frontline organized prior to the event anyway.

I think it can work well in the game anyway, once sizes and scales are worked out properly. The ones I mucked around with are not correct, but a test was required, for the basic concept at least.

Regards,

Craig

RE: MG Fire, Templates and Physics

Author: Mark Hayes (---.nhc.navy.mil)

Date: 10-27-00 07:51

Although I like Charles's idea of a grazing fire template, I am concerned about its effect on game playability. Currently, all units have at least a 180 degree firing arc, representing the fact that individual men or vehicles in the represented unit can be oriented differently or change orientation quickly. This gives the player a lot of flexibility, and he doesn't have to worry about the exact placement of his unit on the playing surface. A grazing fire template would make the exact placement of the unit very important. I have played other games where this is the case. It increases the time players spend trying to line up units and multiplies the number of gray areas that require a decision. Also, what happens if an enemy unit moves completely through an area covered by the relatively narrow friendly grazing fire template? This could frustrate a player that set up his machine guns to place grazing fire accross the front of his defensive position. Kind of defeats the purpose, doesn't it? Do we add another case that triggers opportunity fire (moving into and out of a grazing fire template)? Giving machine guns beaten zones may well be worth the trouble they cause, but I do think they will effect playability. For that reason, I agree with Mike, that we should limit BZs to MMGs and HMGs, even though it seems logical for MG 42 LMGs to have this ability. Maybe we could use the grazing fire templates for M-60 LMG stands in Vietnam. There aren't many MMGs and HMGs (other than vehicles) that appear on the Vietnam battlefield.

Mark

RE: MG Fire, Templates and Physics
Author: Mike Pierce (---.uscg.mil)
Date: 10-27-00 08:20

Charles makes a good case for BZs. But Mark's comments on playability raise some serious questions. If the effect we are looking for is to allow MMG/HMGs to affect more targets near their aiming point, then can we simplify with a small rectangular template, placed as Charles indicates, that can only be placed in Offensive Fire (represents the deliberate, aimed intent)?
I still maintain an MG42 being fired in a bipod mode should not get a template!

RE: MG Fire, Templates and Physics
Author: Craig Burnett (---.bigpond.com)
Date: 10-27-00 08:24

Works for me.

RE: MG Fire, Templates and Physics
Author: Eric Boyle (---.newcas1.de.home.com)
Date: 10-27-00 12:50

I have read these rule suggestions with with some interest, although one should not ignore the playability issue. MG beaten zones, grazing fire, etc has been addressed in skirmish games (which shall remain nameless!). The effect in a man to man scale is can be quite different since you are applying fire effects to each figure the MG fire hits. Even then area effect is given more of a suppression effect than outright KIA, the tactical use being to pin the attackers or in the case of an attack to provide a fire base for maneuver.

My question is what is the intended effect, in terms of combat results on stands, of a rule mod. allowing for MG area fire? Does an MG still have the same AI mod, for example a +2 with area fire, thus allowing the same kill % as with targeted fire?

Additionally as a suppressive fire a HMG could be placed on overwatch fire perhaps, firing on defensive firing MGs - a gun duel so to speak.

Eric

MG Area (Plunging/Grazing) Fire Rule
Author: Rich Hasenauer (---.arl.army.mil)
Date: 10-27-00 13:06

All MGs can conduct point fire against a single target. As an option, MMGs and HMGs can conduct area fire against multiple targets. MG area fire can also target a terrain feature. There are two kinds of MG area fire; grazing fire and plunging fire. Each has a unique template. The MG grazing fire template is keystone shaped:

one and one eighth inch wide at the near end, two inches wide at the far end, and ten inches in length. The MG plunging fire template is one inch deep by three inches wide. Larger and smaller templates can be provided for different scales. MG area fire must occur within a 45 degree arc. Grazing fire is conducted from zero to ten inches, and plunging fire from over ten to twenty inches. MG area fire can occur during offensive fire, defensive fire or opportunity fire. During op fire the template must remain in place until the end of the enemy maneuver phase. Targets passing through the beaten zone are subject to interdiction fire. The modifier for MG area fire is minus one vs. spotted targets OR minus two vs. suspected or hidden targets.

I really enjoyed the on-line exchange of ideas. This has truly been a group effort with ideas from Dave C., Mike P., Jim B., Mark H. Craig B. Charles S. and Paul B. Unless someone has another issue or I've missed something, let's try some playtesting at FALL IN!

RE: MG Area (Plunging/Grazing) Fire Rule
Author: Peter Landry (---.whoj.edu)
Date: 10-27-00 23:00

I am new to WWII gaming and really don't know the fine details I am seeing in this discussion. (MG use and effectiveness for area fire) To me it sounds that a -1 drm is too generous. Would area fire be used more to suppress and disorder than kill? If that is the case then maybe 'Knocked out' result should not apply, at least for good order troops. My feeling is that point fire is for killing while area for suppression and disorder. I do like the templates for MMG and HMG.

Great stuff!! Pete

RE: MG Area (Plunging/Grazing) Fire Rule
Author: Paul Bernardino (---.proxy.aol.com)
Date: 10-28-00 00:28

Guys,

I playtested MG area fire 2x two years ago. Here was the rule we used. Mind you this was before the aimpoint concept was used.

Rule: MGs could fire area fire at a-1. Template was small arty template for LMGs, large template for MMG and HMGs. Template could be oriented anyway desired.

Observations - Every time a MG fires it was area fire. Infantry assaulting a position with 2 LMGs defending could not get close enough without getting either disordered or suppressed. Vehicles firing at troops with area fire template was overpowering.

Suggestions based on observations. Area fire should be limited to tripod weapons. template should be large arty template. template should be oriented centered on target stands near aimpoint, and edge of template should be parallel to LOF. MG stand should have to emplace before it could fire. The emplacement requirement would reflect bringing up extra belts, etc.

More food for thought.

Paul

RE: MG Area (Plunging/Grazing) Fire Rule
Author: Dallas Gavan (---.cbr.au.asiaonline.net)
Date: 10-28-00 04:50

G'day, Gents.

Craig's been raving about these rules and we had a bit of a talk this morning about the theory of MG fire. So I had a read of the posts and it's a very interesting discussion. However, if I may I'd like to add a bit of theory that you might find interesting.

First some definitions:

Culminating Point- the highest point of the trajectory, typically 2/3 of the distance along the trajectory..

Dangerous Space- that area in which the trajectory of a round is at or below a standing man's height.

Beaten Zone- the area in which the rounds from a burst come back to ground.

Now a definition of "grazing fire" is "grazing fire occurs when the culminating point of the trajectory remains below the height of the target for the entire trajectory, resulting in dangerous space extending from the weapon muzzle to the beaten zone". That means that any bipod mounted weapon will generally provide grazing fire unless the terrain includes dead or rising/falling ground.

Plunging fire, on the other hand, can be regarded as any fire that is not grazing fire. Generally plunging fire is a result of long distance direct or indirect fire, although it may also occur as a result of firing from an elevation down to the target or at rising ground from a lower elevation. The main affect of plunging fire is to shorten the beaten zone and decrease the dangerous space.

In game terms, from what I've read here, which template you use will depend on the range the weapon is firing at (as well as whether the weapon is being traversed on a tripod). In defence a tripod mounted weapon, dug in with the muzzle just above ground level, can literally have a dangerous space extending out over 700 metres due to grazing fire. An MG team's dream is grazing, enfilade (ie flanking) fire as the dangerous space can encompass the whole enemy position/ assault line. It was this type of fire that proved so deadly during WW1. But a section/squad level bipod mounted weapon can be used in the same way, lacking only the ammo needed to keep up sustained rapid fire. Barrels aren't really that big a part of it (at least these days) as there are all sorts of methods of colling the barrel down, without damaging it, after it has been changed and every MG comes with a spare barrel in my experience (carried by the number two on the gun). In WWII things may have been different, though.

In the attack, direct or indirect long distance MG fire can actually be more effective for suppression and causing casualties than grazing fire- if the defenders don't have overhead protection. Quite simply the rounds are dropping into the defences, coming over the lip and berm of the trench or whatever. Grazing fire has the effect of making it too dangerous to put your head up and aim your weapon and, against a dug in defender, is really only a suppressor. There's also the "flinch" effect of having rounds fly just over your head- anyone who's been under fire (or even just acting as butt party on a small arms range) will tell you how loud the noise of a round can be- and it can make you cringe (especially if you know it's being aimed at you and not a target).

MG fire is a lot more complicated than just throwing bunches of bullets down range. The Sustained Fire MG (ie tripod mounted MG's) course I did was four (six? It was a while ago) weeks of work- 75% of it theory. The problem will always be in deciding when the detail detracts instead of adding to the game. A suggestion is to use your grazing fire templates for ranges under 750 M and the plunging fire (still with the short side towards the gun. Even at 2400 M an M-60 on tripod using 7.62mm standard Nato ammo has a beaten zone of about 7 M wide by 13 M deep. At 600M the BZ is 1 M by 87 M and the culminating point is only 1.4 M high.) for anything over that range and when firing down/up appreciable heights. And only allow ME that are actually tasked as fire support to use them when attacking (though everyone should be able to use them when defending).

Thanks for your time, gents.

Dal.

<http://www.wargamesreview.com>

RE: MG Area (Plunging/Grazing) Fire Rule
Author: Craig Burnett (---.bigpond.com)
Date: 10-28-00 07:36

Hey Dallas you bugger, you snuck in !!!
Another lesson from a crabby old sergeant?!!

....only kidding....

RE: MG Area (Plunging/Grazing) Fire Rule
Author: Paul Bernardino (---.proxy.aol.com)
Date: 10-29-00 21:26

Guys,

For those of you who have wondered how did we go about design the rules. This discussion on MG beaten zones is a good example of the process we went through during the entire design process.

Now let me turn and add my views to the subject. These comments are in addition to ones I have made before.

It has been suggested that grazing fire should be represented and plunging fire should be represented as two distinct types of fire. It has also been suggested that area MG fire should have two types of templates to represent the same. I have some problems with that proposition.

Teardrop or truncated templates: I believe that we should if we must have area MG fire use a rectangular template. Every one's suggestion for truncated templates (grazing fire templates makes on incorrect assumption. That is that a MG stand represents a single weapon. It does not, it represent 2-3 weapons spread out roughly 30 yds apart. The truncation of a single weapon would average out to roughly rectangular area for effect. Therefore, I propose that area fire be rectangular (use large arty template. oriented either parallel and centered to the LOF or perpendicular to the LOF. The LOF is defined as the line from the front aim point of the firing unit and the nearest aim point of the target unit.

Grazing fire : should it be represented or are there problems to the grazing fire suggestion. I just came back from a weekend undergoing firearms training for the DA's office I belong to. Part of the training included firing automatic weapons both in day and nighttime conditions. When firing the HK MP5 (a SMG) at full auto, I found that suppressive fire was more or less "hosing down an area with the trigger depressed. Any object that was in the line of fire stopped the rounds from hitting the rear bullet trap to the range. This brought back my ROTC training on grazing fire. Grazing fire (which is design to put rounds 1-2' off the deck, will be stopped by any low wall, or and slight rise i=on the ground. Since the ground scale is 1"=40yds, is grazing fire as a truncated zone extending 10" viable or accurate, I suggest not. Unrepresented rises and dips in the ground could stop grazing fire. Secondly, unless we model hill slopes realistically, we run into the problem of a MG deployed on a hill top firing grazing fire. I would submit that it could fire grazing fire at anything that was on the downslope of the hill, if the hill was a perfectly straight line. Moreover, any troops not on the hill or slope but on the flat ground surrounding the hill would not be subject to grazing fire, but plunging fire. Thus, to model both grazing fire and plunging fire would add in my opinion too much complication to an already elegantly smooth running system.

But, Paul, I really want to have MG affect more than one stand. I agree that MGs should be allowed to affect more than one stand. If you must have this rule, I suggest an optional rule as follows:

1. One rectangular template for MG fire, whether plunging or grazing, and it should be oriented as indicated in relation to the LOF
2. Only tripod MGs or vehicle machine guns that have been emplaced should be able to area fire. [Rationale: While firing the MP5 on full auto, I went through a 30rd magazine in about a second just holding down the trigger, and maybe 5 seconds squeezing of short bursts. I concluded that in order to have sustained (10min game turn) effect, you will have to get lots of ammo to the MG section.]
3. Area fire should be at least a -2, otherwise it will be to deadly at close (under 5") range and infantry will never be able to close. [Rationale: short burst or full auto from the MP5 trying to cover an area with fire, I was practically hosing the area with lead and not really aiming at anything in particular. I would have kept the bad guys heads down, but probably would not have killed many of them.]
4. This should be an optional rule. If you allow tripods MGs to fire area fire, you must also allow vehicles to fire area fire if they have an MG. This could unbalance the game tremendously. An dug in infantry line backed by two halftracks on the flanks, attacked by just infantry without support might as well not attempt to attack unless the approached to the defensive line is covered.

Now there is a rationale that could be made for limiting area fire to only tripod MGs. During the night firing on the range, getting that one mag into the the weapon in pitch darkness was a bear. Either it was in the receiver, but not properly seated, or I was having a hard time getting the dark magazine end into the dark rectangular hole in the dark gun in the dark night (I thin you get the picture). My buddy next to me, had a hell of a time loading his revolver and he had a speedloader (Try fitting 7 little pegs, bullets and center peg, into 7 holes). Mind you we had been at this for two days straight, and had gotten pretty proficient in the daylight. Now, imagine having to get a belt on by yourself in a dark cramped smoke filled tank hull. If the MG outside and manned by a crew, the loader is entire job is too keep the belts coming (including stringing the new belt on to the one in use while the gunner is firing. Mind you most vehicle mounted weapons I have seen, has one box of ammo fed to the machine, yanking an empty box out, putting a new one in its place and then feeding the next belt is not going to be easy.

That being said. I think area MG fire may be something that must be explored, but beware of what we wish. We may be opening up a pandora's box, that could greatly unbalance the game. We need to playtest, and then playtest again.

BTW, I did get some insight into night actions and night fighting. It sucks. I will be able to give you a better perspective after I have gotten some rest.

RE: MG Area (Plunging/Grazing) Fire Rule
Author: Craig Burnett (---.bigpond.com)
Date: 10-30-00 04:12

Paul,

Grazing fire as affected by slight dips and bumps (rise and fall of ground) is true in that any potential target within the BZ is now in effect in dead ground. Having said that, the target/s in the situation are to all intents and purposes pinned to their own private area of relative 'safety' - for the moment. This occurs, as I see it to any target within BF that receives a 'supression' result. So the simulation for the non-represented folds etc on-table already exists in the system. Otherwise, it is hardly possible that a rifle section delivering fire across what looks on-table like an absolute flat area of ground, at quite close contact range, can miss at all. Even a non-in game registered nil result must still represent an affect, like the ground, of too small detail or attention to register within the game at that point.

The effect of your own automatic fire spraying an area, keeping heads down is exactly what will occur - then your mates will be able to close or, with your own fire directed at that area, will be able to move themselves to better fire positions to take aimed, fire-controlled shots that will have the next phase of affect against the enemy - preferably the fatal affect.

Tha anology with the MP5 is not possible here. Nor is the vehicle MG allowance to fire if also infantry or crew served MG. The type of fire spoken of here regarding crew-served MG is deliberate, pre-known to a well trained gunner and in a defensive location deliberately pre-planned. The vehicle mounted weapon is too high off the ground to obtain the affect.

The tripod mounted weapon will usually be dug-in to a position that it's barrel is only just above ground level, the bipod does not allow this to occur, nor does the vehicle mounted weapon. Therefore 'emplace' is absolutley correct.

The MG on tripod is belt, not magazine or drum fed. This may not sound much, but the difference is absolutely enormous. The rationale that you need lots of barrels and tons of ammunition etc to maintain the fire over 10 minutes of sustained fire is incorrect. Barrels are not used until the rifling is worn, turned white hot and drooping (I have seen this) as a standard practice. The barrel is changed by a good gun crew through its cyclic rates, sometimes when as few as 200 rounds are passed through. The life of the barrel and working parts are thereby extended once again, enormously. The barrels themselves are 'recycled' through the gun.

The co-ordination of the professional crew allows constant changes, ammunition re-linkages, Immediate Actions for stoppages and allowance for cooling of barrels to occur, at a very rapid rate - between 3 - 5 seconds at most for a barrel change - even that was looked at semi-critically sometimes!

The reference to the vehicle mounted problem of performing these tasks you raise is correct - that is the exact reason vehicles cannot perform sustained fire in the same manner as the crew-served weapon being represented here.

[Later periods (eg SVN) may alter this, but only in exceptional circumstances and in actual fact, not alter to the point that it requires vehicles to perform this role, in this scale. (But thats for the other forum on this web).]. Also, all gaming systems time/ground scales etc must wear the utility that you can get close but never exact. So the time frame of 10 minutes does not mean the gun or anything else is doing it's thing for the entire 10 minutes. The time scale must also allow for delays or lulls and in fact must surely represent the 'mad-minute', or 'mad-few' or 'mad-several minutes' within the 10.

I am sorry to say that this cannot be optional - it is a physical reality. The BZ is caused by the very nature of the weapon in question. There is no 'kick' (or 'recoil'), as with a rifle. There is no 'deflection' 'up and away' as with a short barrelled automatic - which usually use pistol or carbine lower velocity ammunition. The gun simply vibrates, straight back along it's own axis and this vibration is taken through the gunners body, or subdued through the stableized tripod mount. High velocity automatic rifles, used on full automatic are notoriously

innaccurate after the first round, as the firer is not stable enough to both support the weapon during recoil, nor prevent the barrel rise due to deflection as the rounds exit the weapon at high velocity.

The scale of BF actually encourages the use of a template for the use of the MG in this role, for the exact reason that it does represent 2 or possibly 3 actual weapons. Sited along varying arcs of 20 - 50 mils (1 degree = 10 mils), with limited traverse capability, the BZ of the MG when employed by section is devastating - hence the current sized test-template (I cordially presume).

Therefore the starting point has been made, we should play it out in testing. There may be adjustments to template size etc, but the physical reality will still exist.

On the template shape: The MG does have a very distinct shaped BZ. As a matter of interest, so too does artillery fire compared to mortar fire. Believe it or not, one is rounded, the other more elliptical. The net effect however at this scale is virtually irrelevant and generally area-of-affects or 'danger-zone-of-fire' are given in such terms as to determine a rectangular shape, of the overall section fire, with overlapped gunnery.

Not so at all with the MG utilizing Grazing fire - as said, this is a deliberate usage of the weapons physical characteristics to best advantage. I do not believe that a BZ for MMG/HMG would unbalance the game at all. In fact, I think you will find defenders will better-site their defence and attackers will take more careful preparation when launching assaults against such a defence - or pay the penalty as did happen. To me that all adds up to a better refined simulation. The added allowance to also fire point-to-point direct shots from the weapon is also correct. This represents the gunner taking either single aimed shots, or more standard 3 to 5 , well contained, fire-disciplined bursts. When he has a greater number of targets, within his arc and within his known BZ, then he can let go, increasing the rate of fire through the length of his bursts and by the quantity of those bursts. Sustained continual fire will more normally be used - deliberately again - against an area to suppress that area. If it happens to be relatively close, grazing fire will result, if further, then plunging fire will result. Fire from high ground to the forward position of another high ground feature, or against ground much lower ground than the firer will result in the plunging fire affect.

On high ground: The commander, be he section, platoon or company level, when sighting or checking the sighting and arcs of his gun/s, will want to ensure that they do not oversight a concave slope, but sight along the convex slope. Otherwise that little dip you spoke of becomes the perfect place for an FUP prior to assault. The commander (again whatever level) in the recce prior to the assault, will look to attack high ground exactly from such a position - the concave side of the hill - as he is in dead ground.

I also think that games have not adequately covered the artful application of correct machine gunnery practice, as it may be perceived to be 'too hard' or 'not worth it' etc. These are all excuses. The fact is, it is simply not generally known and thereby, often dispensed with or totally disregarded at best.

At worst simply not believed.

Finally, the fact you mention the discussions concerning the design process is exemplified and increases my own personal confidence with this system. At least people are not only permitted, but encouraged to make suggestions and add their view. Face it, if you buy it, your'e entitled to an opinion! This, I believe will make BF the most universally played set of WWII combat rules, along with the fact it is very good. My belief is only minor variations and specifics for out-of-WWII era, will allow this system to be used in all periods where the bulk of the combatants use infantry magazine-fed, bolt action or semi-automatic rifles; where any 'MMG' or 'HMG' style crew served weapon is used; where artillery is breech loaded and any form of vehicle is used to a military purpose, these afterall are the basic fundamentals of modern combat.

Having rambled on with this thread, I suggest the exact same you did - lets get on and play test it out. But ensure you get your gun arcs right and cover the dead ground with crossed arcs - because if you dont get them, they are going to get you.....

High Regards too, no offenses or slanders or anything like that intended at all.

Craig

RE: MG Area (Plunging/Grazing) Fire Rule

Author: Dallas Gavan (---.cbr.au.asiaonline.net)

Date: 10-30-00 05:36

G'day, Paul.

A nice post, but may I make a couple of observations before leaving this thread to those that know the game:

The MP5 isn't an "MG" in the sense we were discussing. It's a machine-pistol/SMG and wouldn't be used for the type of fire we were discussing. The insights you got into it's use are pretty universal when firing any automatic, shoulder-directed, non-stabilised weapon- including an M-16 fired on it's (tinny and useless) bipod. As you said the cyclic rate of fire, difficulty of control and other factors are what make these weapons (and many automatic rifles such as the L1A2, BAR, Bren and similar- ie box magazine fed, highly accurate weapons) unsuitable for the task. It's why the MAG-58, GPMG M-60, RPD and MG-3 were developed- to provide the ability to utilise the theory of MG fire at a section/squad level.

An experienced MG crew has no problems changing the barrels, keeping the ammo fed and rectifying problems in the jungle, on a moonless night in a rainstorm and after no sleep for two days. I've done it. The same for magazines on M-16, M-203, L1A1 SLR, L1A2 AR, L4A4 Bren and F-88 Austeyr- even in Topp 3 gear it becomes instinctive and can be done effectively, virtually without thought. The purpose of all the drills and training (TOET's we call them) has that as its primary purpose. It's one reason well-trained troops tend to become veterans more quickly than those not-so-well trained. A test in our army, a pre-requisite for graduating from infantry training, was to load the weapon and progress through the various states of readiness, correct stoppages and strip and assemble the weapon. The times for each procedure were all in the 5 to 10 second mark. An experienced soldier was expected to be able to do the same drills in under five seconds as well as strip, re-assemble and confirm the operation of the weapon (using inert rounds) while blindfolded (though without the time limit *grin*).

Craig makes a couple of very good points re vehicle-mounted MG and dead-ground/ obstructions. Their weapons aren't designed for quick barrel changes nor sustained fire (ie 10-20 round bursts up to 200 rounds per minute) and are generally mounted too high above the ground for grazing fire (though vehicle positioning could negate that problem). Pintle-mounted weapons suffer from the limitations of height and also the weapon problems you describe- the time taken to change the liner is a lot longer than it takes to simply clip on a new belt. They are also less stable than a bipod or tripod mounted weapon, in my limited experience, which will effectively "spray" the bullets rather than allowing them to form the cone of fire integral to the operation of the theory.

As for obstructions, if you've ever seen the effect of 30 or 40 7.62mm rounds from one M-60 on sand-bag walls, besa-blocks, bricks and even earth used as a trench berm, then you know just how much cover these really offer and how much they'd block the cone of fire. It's one of the reasons our army is going back to a 7.62mm GPMG in place of one of the current 5.56mm weapons in a section. With the full-charged rounds of WWII, as opposed to the post-war intermediate rounds like the 7.62mm NATO, the effect was probably more devastating.

You make a very good point that the stand represents more than one LMG/GPMG. That will also affect the way the template is shaped and used. For some weapons (such as a Bren where a 10-round burst can give you a 200mm group at 200M- at least for the L4A4 7.62mm version) that had a very narrow cone of fire, "point fire" only may well be the way to reflect their capabilities. However the Detygarev (WWII or later?) and MG-34/42 at least were designed to take advantage of a useable cone of fire and wider BZ. For them the template would be appropriate. (BTW, I've fired both and had to change the barrels on both, if you accept that the MG-3 is just a modernised MG-42. It's more time-consuming with the MG-3 than the RPD and M-60, taking about 45 seconds for unpractised users, as we were, as opposed to three seconds for the M-60 and MAG-58 and 15 seconds for the RPD).

As for the position with two 1/2 tracks providing flanking fire, if it were me I'd take the guns out and use them I'd defending (no vehicle to cam up) and look for a way to get around them if attacking- smoke/smoke and HE?

The main reason this tactic wasn't used (as you imply) would be more to do with concealing the vulnerable vehicle than anything else.

The main concern, as you and others pointed out, is that the templates can unnecessarily "dirty up" the system for no real advantage. And this is a very legitimate concern that needs to be addressed. I don't know enough about the rules to make suggestions but your idea with the templates could be the way to go. Depending on size, maybe you could just use half the width to represent the very narrow, even when overlapped, cone of fire/ BZ?

Like Craig, I'm impressed at the willingness of the people here to discuss it the subject so amiably. Some I know (G'day Pembs and Larry) from other boards. Others are new to me. They seem like a good crew. Anyway, good luck with your rules. If Craig's enthusiasm is anything to go by then they should do very well. I'm not quite tempted to start (another) new period yet. I only chimed in to throw up some experience that really has no use to me anymore in civvie street (any legal use, anyway). But after seeing Craig's figures and reading the discussions here (and seeing AB's new 20mm stuff) I can feel the start of that old familiar itch. Just a couple of stands of grunts. Maybe a heavy weapon. Won't cost much, after all. And an AFV, better make it two. And.....

Take care.

Dal.

RE: MG Area (Plunging/Grazing) Fire Rule

Author: Mark Hayes (---.nhc.navy.mil)

Date: 10-30-00 10:07

I have found this entire discussion to be very educational. I especially appreciate the soldier's point of view from our Australian friends, Craig and Dallas. Like Paul, I have fired automatic weapons (including a .50 HMG - what a rush!), but I didn't receive extensive training on their use.

I support Craig's point that folds in the ground are virtually represented in the game system. The templates (whether for machine guns or artillery) represent the area where units MAY BE affected. The randomness of the die roll covers the multitude of details that are not otherwise discernable.

I share Paul's concern about the effect an MG template would have on the game, and that we can only figure this out through extensive playtesting. One additional problem that I foresee is that if you give the friendly player the flexibility to rotate the grazing fire template up to 45 degrees it will become virtually impossible for the enemy player to avoid having two or more stands in the beaten zone. We want MGs to be able to effect more than one stand, but the capabilities provided by a 45 degree arc are probably too much. It would also make it less necessary for the friendly player to sight his MGs to fire along the front of his defense; a tactic I think we want to encourage. I know that I said placing the template in strict alignment with the stand might complicate play, but now I think it would be the lesser of two evils.

Some of the benefits (in terms of encouraging historical tactics in the game) I see from using a grazing fire template include:

- 1) punishes players who bunch up
- 2) makes it more difficult to attack a position supported by flanking MG fire
- 3) gives players a reason to set up 'L' shaped ambushes - remember, just like in indirect fire, even friendly units are attacked if they fall under a machine gun template

I'm looking forward to giving this a try this weekend. We'll let everyone know how it works.

Mark

RE: MG Area (Plunging/Grazing) Fire Rule
Author: Craig Burnett (---.bigpond.com)
Date: 11-01-00 04:57

All correct.

Crossed arcs are usually through fixed and staked lines anyway. By fixing the template to alignment with the stands leading edge, will ensure the defender has to literally fix and stake the arc, thereby creating a correct defence. Obviously attacker will see this after initial ambush and look for way around, which should be covered by flank protection group.....all correct tactical postures and results.

Lucky bugger, I never got to give a .50 a whirl!!
CB

RE: MG Area (Plunging/Grazing) Fire Rule
Author: Craig Burnett (---.bigpond.com)
Date: 11-03-00 05:00

Typo error: 1 degree approximates to 17 mils + a bit.

RE: MG Area (Plunging/Grazing) Fire Rule
Author: Mark Hayes (---.nhc.navy.mil)
Date: 11-03-00 07:36

<<Lucky bugger, I never got to give a .50 a whirl!!
CB>>

One advantage of having been in the Navy. I got to play with bigger guns. ;-)

Mark

MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Al (---.proxy.aol.com)
Date: 05-13-01 00:16

What's the current status of the MG beaten zone rule? Is it being widely used? Does it work? If so, could it be posted somewhere on the website, to save having to search through the forum for it?

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Craig Burnett (---.prem.tmns.net.au)

Date: 05-13-01 07:02

YES

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?

Author: James Baker (66.61.32.---)

Date: 05-13-01 08:49

While MG beaten zones are not an "official" rule yet, there is a playtest template for them on the free stuff page and if you search the main and modern forums for "beaten" (you don't need to do this by hand(!), see the SEARCH link on the top of the forum pages) you should find some of the ideas we were trying. When you do the search, make sure you look through all of the old postings, as these were among the earlier ones. As these are not official, make sure that your players agree on how they were to be used. We were having some trouble with some of the fine points about firing MGs over obstacles and got side-tracked by the British supplement. We will get back to these at some point. When we tried these out last November at Fall In, they worked pretty well.

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?

Author: Brian (---.bio.tamu.edu)

Date: 05-14-01 14:02

I've used them and been pretty happy. Since this option is restricted to MMG's or HMG's only and they must be emplaced, they have not been abused at all and were used primarily by defenders against attacking forces being channeled by a natural or emplaced obstacle.

Later

Brian

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?

Author: Craig Burnett (---.mega.tmns.net.au)

Date: 05-16-01 22:01

Thats the way they are used and the way it was given earlier on the phorum, it works well. I always use them and I think has made the MG better and more used as a direct area support weapon, rather than a fast firing, good factored, longer ranged rifle.

CRB

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?

Author: Richard Hasenauer (---.hwrld1.md.home.com)

Date: 05-20-01 19:40

Its been a while since I playtested the grazing fire rules for heavy and medium machine guns. We did some playtesting last summer with Germans defending a strongpoint on the Russian front. The game mechanics appeared to work well in that scenario. When the MGs were emplaced in a bastion the weapon could be turned and emplaced to fire with the grazing fire template in any one direction. However when emplaced in a trench line the unit according to the existing rules in the book, must conform to the edge of the linear terrain feature. A unit conformed to a trench line could only fire straight ahead with the template.

The problem here is that if we want to game in terrain like the Bocage we can't recreate the affect of MGs positioned in the corners of the hedgerows. They would have to be emplaced conformed to the linear terrain feature, forcing the unit to conduct grazing fire directly ahead instead of diagonally from the corner across the open field. This would negate the historical tactic we are trying to recreate.

I believe a game design should avoid making rules that cause exceptions to another rule. This has been a recurrent design problem in the game's six years of development. Whatever the final grazing fire rule is, it cannot change an existing rule like conforming to a terrain feature. So we have to come up with a game mechanic that allows an emplaced MG to fire at an angle while remaining conformed to a linear terrain feature.

Any ideas out there?

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Jeff McCulloch (---.treas.gov)
Date: 05-21-01 08:55

Good day!

Has someone compiled the MG rules into something cohesive that we can put out to the house rules section?

Thanks,

Jeff McCulloch

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Brian (---.bio.tamu.edu)
Date: 05-21-01 13:35

I simply allow the firing unit to place the grazing fire template centered on their front aiming point and within a 90 degree arc. This allows some flexibility but not too much.

As for hedgerows, just design your terrain with a one stand wide 45 degree cut on each corner. This slight terrain abstraction will allof you to put a stand in the corners and create historical tactics....

Later

Brian

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?

Author: Richard Hasenauer (---.hwrld1.md.home.com)

Date: 05-22-01 04:11

The original play test rules called beaten zones for MGs allowed players to choose from three kinds of fire for medium and heavy MG troop stands: point fire, grazing fire and plunging fire. Plunging fire and grazing fire have templates. A fellow wargamer, Brian Cantwell, has provided downloadable templates on the website. His illustrated templates look better than mine, so I recommend them

The original concept was an MG unit could only fire grazing or plunging fire if it was emplaced. The narrow edge of the pie shaped, 10-inch long gazing fire template was placed perpendicular to the front of the unit base. It could be placed during either the offensive fire or defensive fire phases, and even during opportunity fire against an enemy unit that passes across the fixed 90-degree line of fire.

Plunging fire, an approx. 3" wide x 1" deep template, could be placed out to 20-inches during offensive fire only, and placed perpendicular to the fixed 90-degree line of fire to its front.

Point fire is simply direct fire against a single target with no modifier. In grazing and plunging fire, all units with an aiming point in the template are attacked with a minus one modifier. Once placed the template remains in place until the end of the fire phase and interdiction fire is resolved against any friendly or enemy unit passing through it. When placed during opportunity fire, the template remains in place until the end of the defensive fire phase.

I'm leaning towards Brian's suggestion to allow the template to be rotated up to 45-degrees left or right (90-degrees total) along the line of fire before placement. Once placed a template still remains in place until removed the end of the fire phase.

Should the entire template fall within the 45-degree arc or should we allow it to be centered on the line of fire, which would give it a few more degrees beyond the 45? The later would certainly give it enough of an angle to get that fire from the corners effect I was looking for in Bocage country without the special angled corner Brian suggested.

I also don't see a need for plunging fire. I know it was used in conjunction with an artillery barrage in WWI but I haven't yet seen it mentioned in my WWII reading.

So here are the old play test rules as I can remember them and suggestions for hopeful improvements. Comments welcomed.

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?

Author: R Mark Davies (---.proxy.aol.com)

Date: 05-22-01 07:16

Hi Rich,

As regards indirect MG fire in WWII, two examples that pop immediately into my head are the preparatory bombardment prior to the battle of the Reichswald in 1945 (probably the most intense bombardment of all time by anyone! Anyone with anything that went 'bang' was firing into the target area - certainly the MMGs and even the 40mm Bofors as well) and the crossing of the Seine at Vernon (the 43rd (Wessex) Division used indirect MG fire there as well). I have no idea whether it was effective in either case (I suspect not, considering how much artillery was going downrange into the same target area) - and neither did they, I suspect

Mark

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Mark Hayes (---.nhc.navy.mil)
Date: 05-22-01 08:30

Doesn't grazing fire also suffer a -1 penalty ?

Mark

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Craig Burnett (---.mega.tmns.net.au)
Date: 05-22-01 22:13

Hi,
I think placing the template centreline along the 45 deg arc is the way to go. If Mark can check the PNG campaign for 5th MG battalion (AUS), then the plunging fire is certainly relevant.

With regards to plunging fire - you could perhaps restrict it for fire delivered from high ground to high ground and for fire from low ground against a slope, if using only direct fire.

In the role when utilizing plunging fire - your'e actually using a form of artillery fire. So it is possible to have the weapon in a position where it cannot even view the target area - that is, firing indirect, on-table. For example over a hill, low rise or beyond a treeline, hedges etc. I use an FO for my HMG when used in this role, (the support coy commander) which I also limit to when the MG's are operating as a support company, not when parceled out to the rifle companies. It represents the proper role and deployment of the Regt HW coy with mixed 75 Inf Guns, HMG's and 80mm Mortars.

Further possible limitations for the BZ might be that the weapon not only must be emplaced to fire, but actually in an 'improved' position - with the gun pit dug down - to issue Grazing Fire.

Regards
CRB

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: jim davis (---.dallas.navipath.net)
Date: 05-22-01 22:54

In the hedgerow you can have the MG dig in with their trench forming a line between the two sides of the angle think of an A with the MG firing out the open end. This gives you the angle of fire you want, diagonal across the field, and preserves the conforming to terrain rule. the MG is just conforming to the trench/foxhole rather than to a hedgerow side. It will take time to do, which means the player will have to do a little planning ahead as to when to displace his MG, which is to the good also. Jim

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Craig Burnett (---.prem.tmns.net.au)
Date: 05-23-01 06:50

That concept seems very well thought-out....why didn't I think of it?
CRB

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Rich Hasenauer (---.arl.army.mil)
Date: 05-23-01 07:19

Yes Mark Hays, there should be a minus one modifier for grazing fire.

Craig Burnett & Mark Davies. My secret reason for wanting a good grazing fire rule is so Craig and I can game Viet Nam later. Therefore, I'm not that concerned about having a plunging fire rule right now. If used in WWII it must have been on rare occasions. Your examples support that assumption. So it's not really necessary for us to model. Even grazing fire is one of those crone rules not necessary to play and enjoy the game. I'm inclined towards abandoning plunging fire rules. At least for the immediate future.

I am interested in what Craig suggested about being in an improved position (or dug-in) in order to conduct grazing fire. Perhaps this should be the rule and not emplaced?

Jim Davis, I'm not sure what you mean regarding using a trenchline in conjunction with the hedgerow. A trenchline must be either positioned in front of a dense linear feature, or behind it either conformed or unconformed to the hedgerow. A unit in a trench must be conformed to the trench and the trench in turn must be conformed to the edge of the hedgerow in order for the unit to see beyond a dense linear terrain feature. If the trenchline is unconformed to the feature, the unit's line-of-sight is blocked beyond the edge of the feature.

I think the solution is Brian's suggestion to allow a 90-degree arc by rotation the template up to 45-degrees left or right of the units front. I also think I need to make those Bocage fields smaller so the corners are closer together to cover the center of the field.

Any other comments?

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: R Mark Davies (---.proxy.aol.com)
Date: 05-23-01 11:49

Hi Rich,

I'm with you on this one - the only examples I have come across of indirect MG fire in WW2 are supplementary to corps-level artillery stonks. I can't see how they could have been of any additional value than several thousand tons of TNT raining down on the enemy?! As you say, I don't really see the need to model this in game terms.

Mark

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Al (---.proxy.aol.com)
Date: 05-23-01 11:59

I know the Vickers MG was used in the indirect fire role by Australian troops. In the desert they engaged targets at ranges of two miles or more. I suspect that British and Commonwealth troops used it more widely in this role than troops of other nations.

Quote from regimental history of the Australian 2/2 Machine Gun Battalion: "With the new long-range MkVIIIz ammunition in the belts, our Vickers guns in 1942 were able to reach targets more than two miles away, by indirect fire. At Alamein one day two guns of an A Company platoon produced observed strike around an enemy mortar 4900 yards away in the coastal sandhills."

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Craig Burnett (---.mega.tnms.net.au)
Date: 05-24-01 01:45

Yahoo! Go the Aussies!

I get the point on the plunging-fire v grazing-fire thing.

Craig

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: R Mark Davies (---.proxy.aol.com)
Date: 05-24-01 17:48

Hmm,

Yes, I don't doubt that these things did occur, but is it really necessary to model everything with a rule? The British often used what was known as a 'pepperpot' barrage, which was basically everything bigger than a Bren - MMGs, 2", 3" & 4.2" Mortars, AA Guns, AT Guns and tank guns - indirectly - usually to thicken up an artillery barrage, but also when operating beyond the range of the artillery (the capture of 'Joe's Bridge' by the Guards is a classic example of this). But is this something that would be called in tactically by the commander in the field? I would put this in the same bracket as random fighter sweeps - yes, it did happen; it could sometimes have a decisive effect; but it was outside the normal range of tactical options open to a company, battalion or brigade commander, which is what we're trying to model here. I think this is better represented by a scenario-specific rule and shouldn't be generally available as a matter of course.

Mark

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Craig Burnett (---.mega.tmns.net.au)
Date: 05-25-01 09:05

Always, always with words of near-divine wisdom.....

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Dave Choat (---.arl.army.mil)
Date: 05-25-01 15:02

Umm, there are some accounts of Americans using ID MG fire in Sicily too. Mostly as Harrasment and Interdiction fire...

Dave Choat

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: R Mark Davies (---.proxy.aol.com)
Date: 05-25-01 18:12

Hi Dave,

I'm surprised you're awake ;) How's y'lad and the Mrs?

Mark

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Richard Hasenauer (---.hwrld1.md.home.com)
Date: 05-26-01 05:33

He's not awake. He's dreaming about harrasment and interdiction fire.

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Ken Natt (---.server.ntl.com)
Date: 05-26-01 05:41

Plunging fire + MMGs in general

I would have to say it is a must to have plunging fire. I dont think it is a rare event at all, at least from a British\CW point of view MG barrages were pretty much standard - possibly even the favoured tactic on the attack - just look through the photos and see how many Vickers guns have dail sights on them - it was certainly a common and this is reflected in the organisations, otherwise why have the MMGs as seperate units at all if all

they do is bolster a company's immediate firepower. The experience of WW1 - which is very relevant to WW2 when you consider the vast majority of infantry rarely saw a tank, was that the MMGs were more effective when massed rather than "penny packeted". One of the problems we have is that BF tends to view the MMG as a point fire weapon issued out to boost the fire of companies on an individual basis, whereas they (UK that is - not sure about others) - can and should be used as an ME in their own right, and really should have their tactics represented a bit better.

Im also a bit worried about the ability to rotate the grazing template - when exactly is it placed? - I thought the grazing template represented a more sustained fire along pre defined and surveyed fixed lines, so as such it should involve a bit more planning and thought than just positioning the template at will to cover the maximum number of targets - if you look at pg 46 fig 52 of the rules and then replace one of the German rifle stands with an MMG firing a grazing template, then there are plenty of opportunities for carnage - but this is not representing the historical use of MMGs to channel opponents or cover weak spots or do anything tactical at all, it is just maximising the killing power. I would suggest that to use either template the firer needs to be emplaced in an improved position, to represent the digging in and the setting up needed, and that the grazing template is fired perpendicular to the front of the MMG\HMG stand, but in these circumstances I wouldnt reduce the factors, as after all the firer has gone to a lot of trouble to get the set up right and thoughtful and historically accurate play should be rewarded.

Ken

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Craig Burnett (---.mega.tmns.net.au)
Date: 05-27-01 06:16

Ken,
Thats a new slant very well thought. The MG ME is certainly correct in CW formations. And I think the weapon should be properly emplaced via a minimum of being in an 'improved position' to issue grazing fire.

Being able to adjust the arc along which the weapon fires though is quite correct. From what you've written I get the idea you know a bit about it - hence the difference between fixed and staked lines, which as you would realize lend weight to the concept of allowing the on-table weapon the capability to adjust the line of fire, within limits, ie vary the arc of fire by the placement of the template. Weapon pits would always still be sited correctly, with alternate arcs - and you cannot always cover everything.

CRB

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: R Mark Davies (---.proxy.aol.com)
Date: 05-27-01 08:04

Hi Ken,

I think we actually agree on more points than disagree. British MGs were definitely still using very much a WWI doctrine of massed firepower used indirectly over long distances. Another very common use was to fire differently-coloured tracer on fixed lines to indicate objectives/axis of advance/right & left limits of advance during night attacks.

However, my argument is; just how effective is this? This type of indirect fire almost always seems to be directed against known or likely enemy positions in preparation for and in advance of an attack - as you say, being able to move a template to cover the maximum number of figures should be a definite no-no.

But even once you've done this, just how effective is this when the bullets reach the beaten zone? In the British Army of WWI, an attack would be preceded by entire brigades of MGs blazing away (my great-grandfather was attached to the Guards MG Regiment, and I've heard the stories!). In the British Army of WW2 they were generally penny-packeted out as a platoon to each infantry battalion. While this (in BF terms) could undoubtedly cause a bit of Suppression and Disorder, I doubt four MGs firing indirectly would be able to wipe out whole sections of infantry (which is what a BF stand represents) unless they got very lucky. A similar argument here as the one for/against snipers. However, as always, I am open to persuasion (and by God you've persuaded me quite a few times over the last year, Ken :).

On the rare instances where entire MG battalions were firing indirectly en masse (my apologies, but I'm stuck in 'British Army 1944-45' here!), the MGs were also accompanied by practically every gun and mortar in the 21st Army Group, so how much more effect could the MGs possibly have added? We don't model multi-group heavy bombing raids in BF either, but they too were a reasonably common precursor to an assault in 1944-45. A pity, I think :D

I should point out that I am arguing against indirect-fire MGs here - I am in total agreement about grazing fire and firing on fixed lines (I remember a WW2 veteran officer telling me that they used to put a candle in a biscuit tin (with a small slit cut in the tin to allow a little light out) out on the line of fire to provide an aiming point in the dark).

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Richard Hasenauer (---.hwrdr1.md.home.com)
Date: 05-27-01 09:01

So what I gather here is the tactic of MG plunging fire, though used by the British, was only in conjunction with massive artillery barrages. It required whole MG battalions or companies, which would not be present in our small unit action scenarios. Therefore, plunging fire is beyond the scope of the game.

The only issue remaining (unless someone else out there finds one) is, should the grazing fire template be fixed to one line of fire or be placed within a limited arc of fire. I wouldn't mind a rule that only allows the template to be positioned directly to the unit's front, however that would require an exception to the rule for conforming to the edge of a terrain feature (see earlier comments). And I hate exceptions to rules. Right now the only way I see it is to limit the arc in which the template can be placed and once placed it cannot be moved for the remainder of the player turn.

The effect of the template is one enemy unit is targeted and attacked normally. All other enemy units are attacked with a minus one if caught in, or happen to wander into, the beaten zone.

I too can be persuaded but I just don't see a better and as simple a way to portray grazing fire.

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Ken Natt (---.server.ntl.com)
Date: 05-27-01 11:06

Hi Rich, Craig, RMD et al

It is this "The effect of the template is one enemy unit is targeted and attacked normally. All other enemy units are attacked with a minus one if caught in, or happen to wonder into, the beaten zone" that really worries me as I dont understand what we are recreating with it, it seems to be a variation on "point fire" (for want of a better phrase) which is what I assume the rules as printed represent (a big rifle). I want to try and clarify that this "point fire" is what all LMGs and vehicle mounts do, but that properly prepared and used MMGs can do other stuff.

Craig is (as usual) correct in that you should be able to position the template with some restrictions, and to be honest I think the only area of disagreement is on the restrictions. My problem is that if we allow the firer to place his grazing template in any other manner than fixed, we will risk making the MMGs too powerful. Every wargamer in the world will position it for maximum hits on the current enemy, which is a good "wargames" tactic, but not, if I understand the situation correctly, either historically or tactically accurate. I want a system that will encourage and reward the correct tactics. Answers on a postcard to.....

In this particular instance I think the game sequence works against us, in that defensive fire happens after movement, so I cant lay down my template in an area my opponent must cross to get to me, I place it where I maximise the casualties. Similarly, few if any opportunity fire triggers will let me get the shot in earlier in the sequence.

I am puzzled about Rich's comments about the restrictions to emplacements and trenches - my spade does'nt seem to work that way - is this in the rules somewhere - I've probably missed it, or is it something to do with spotting?

RMD - "While this (in BF terms) could undoubtedly cause a bit of Suppression and Disorder, I doubt four MGs firing indirectly would be able to wipe out whole sections of infantry (which is what a BF stand represents) unless they got very lucky" the image of squads being wiped out is an onteresting one - why do you doubt that plunging fire can't do this when I suspect you accept that grazing fire can? The ability of MMGs in indirect fire to hit a target cant be doubted, but I think that you hit the nail on the head when you say they could cause a bit of suppression and disorder - this is the aim of the game as far as Brits are concerned - our artillery and by extention indirect MG doctrine is based around the concept of neutralisation, not killing, which if I understand it is the US model.

Anyway - please keep thrashing this one about because some really useful ideas keep popping up.

All the best

Ken

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: R Mark Davies (---.proxy.aol.com)
Date: 05-27-01 11:29

Ken,

Aha! Once again, after much argument, we've established that we do really agree with each other :D

Sorry, I didn't make myself clear: I don't think that grazing fire or firing on fixed lines should be able to destroy sections as a matter of course either - only point (i.e. concentrated) fire should be able to achieve this, unless the indirect/grazing MGs are firing in large numbers.

I think my main problem is with what might be termed 'unnecessary complications' (my brain hurts enough already - as Homer Simpson says: 'Every time I learn something new, some old stuff gets pushed out.'). I do need to be totally convinced that there is a necessity for adding new rules to what is, in my view, the best set of WW2 rules there is. However, I do think we've almost reached a consensus and this would reflect the British MG doctrine rather better than at present.

All the best,

Mark

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Richard Hasenauer (---.hwrld1.md.home.com)
Date: 05-27-01 12:37

Mark and Ken. i'm an artist, which means I'm more creative than smart. I can't figure out what it is you two are in agreement on?

Point fire. I forgot about point fire. When we playtested grazing fire last year a machine gun could point fire at any one target within a 360-degree radius (with a minus one modifier firing to the rear) or it could conduct grazing fire directly to its front. Grazing fire was a minus one attack against all targets within a template placed perpendicular to its front.

i think the modifier has to remain unchanged. An MG can either pick a single target and fire at it unmodified or it can spray bullets at everything within a beaten zone at minus one.

So what is wrong with placing the template within 45-degrees to get as many targets as possible? Do you think its too deadly?

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: R Mark Davies (---.proxy.aol.com)
Date: 05-27-01 13:14

Hi Rich,

We agree that British MG doctrine was somewhat different to everyone else's and still largely based upon WWI doctrine and that it in the indirect role was more of a long range harassment and suppression weapon - this is reflected in that the British Army persisted in using MG Battalions when everyone else had long since disposed of them.

However, I still don't believe that indirect MG fire should be 'called in' during the game, but I agree with Ken that it could be used as a preparatory softening-up 'barrage' - though why anyone would want to bother is beyond me!

All the best,

Mark

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?

Author: Al (---.proxy.aol.com)

Date: 05-27-01 23:24

The example I gave earlier of the use of indirect MG fire by the Australians involved two machine guns firing against a specific target (an enemy mortar), not an entire battalion. The book the quote was taken from (history of Australian 2/2 Machine Gun Battalion) gives the impression that indirect fire was standard doctrine in Commonwealth armies. So I don't see how indirect fire by machine guns can be left out of the rules. I'm all in favour of anything that brings out differences in doctrine between the various armies.

Since the indirect fire machine gun rules would only apply to Commonwealth forces, it's not really going to cause any inconvenience to people who don't have Commonwealth armies.

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?

Author: Craig Burnett (---.mega.tnms.net.au)

Date: 05-28-01 04:29

Except the targets Uncle Al,

Throwing in my \$1's worth now. Would have said 10 cents, but I need to throw in an entire dollar, due to the current exchange rates.....

I see now exactly what Ken is getting at regarding the placement of the template. (Which I did not before): In this turn I put it left because there are four targets I can get, but next turn right because all of a sudden I can get three targets, and in my next turn up the guts because there is a column directly to my front.

I do understand that problem. But I take it as this. The game turn is ten minutes. No weapon fires continually for 10 minutes - we already went through all the ammunition issues, barrel changes, stoppages and other etc's. The full restriction in this system, with the introduction of a playtest template for grazing fire were:

- The weapon must be 'emplaced to fire'.
- Only MMG & HMG may do this.
- All targets were attacked with a - 1 modifier.

From memory, I don't think I have ever yet killed anything with this fire. I've suppressed 4 of 6 Russian infantry stands, then shot them to death with my rifle groups - I thought that was a good result. But I have also had 5 of 8 get into my pits too.

A limiting fire arc can be solved simply by stating that criteria 1 be changed to 'improved position' (we know that gets our barrel a fly's nut above the deck). The remaining criteria stay the same.

To simulate covering the ground, remember the template stays in place during several phases of fire-play. So fire out with it, even if no target presents itself and already part of the aim is achieved - sure the enemy know where your template is, but big woop, if they don't want to walk into it - go around it, into your pre-prepared killing ground.

If however the arc seems too big, maybe simply change the arc from 45 to the good old 22.5 and introduce the 'improved position'. That would cut down some effectiveness. At this time, I still think it works fine though.

Plunging fire from MG might best be simulated as indirect, off-board fire. An option available to those evil menaces that would use such tactics - like ME!!!!

Regards,
CRB

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Ken Natt (---.server.ntl.com)
Date: 05-28-01 09:15

OK Craig - I'll buy it as it sounds workable and I cant think of anything better ;), and for the record - I'll be hosing enemy positions with indirect MMg fire along with you mate.

Ken

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Richard Hasenauer (---.hwrld1.md.home.com)
Date: 05-28-01 11:18

You guys and mates go ahead ang plunge and hose with your machine guns all you want. I've been convinced that its a mass MG battalion tactic rarely used by WWII British forces and beyond the scope of the game.

As for placement of the grazing fire template. We all can't seam to agree on that either. To conform or not to conform to terrain, that is the question. Let me get a coin out here. Heads its conformists. Tails its non-conformists. Here goes the flip. Trust me. Sorry its heads!

The latest (but not final) version, unofficial, unpublished, optional grazing fire rule is as follows: medium and heavy machine guns may conduct either point fire against a single target or they may conduct grazing fire at multiple targets. The MG unit must be emplace, in an improved position or dug-in in order to conduct grazing fire. The grazing fire template may be placed within a 45-degree arc to the left or right of the firing unit's front aiming point, during defensive or offensive fire, or during opportunity fire against any target that moves within the 45-degree arc. All units within the arc are immediately attacked during the player turn. Any unit that enters the zone later in the turn is also attacked. Units conducting gazing fire apply a minus one modifier to the die result. All grazing templates are removed at the end of the current player turn.

A grazing fire template (designed by Brian Cantwell) can be downloaded from this website.

I think me and the guys are going to playtest with this for a while. I'll let you know if it works.

Re: MG beaten zones yes or no?
Author: Craig Burnett (---.mega.tmns.net.au)
Date: 05-29-01 07:46

Oh it works fine - just wait till I get back at those nasty Russians now.....

Here we go Ken!

Feuer!!

HMG IDF

Author: Bouko de Groot (---.16.dialup.cybercomm.nl)

Date: 11-18-01 07:32

Reading the rule about Grazing HMG's, I was reminded of the fact that in theory HMG's could also be used for Indirect Fire.

The .50 for example could be used for IDF upto 8 kilometers (or was it 6?).

Has anybody come across actual combat examples of this use?

Bouko

Re: HMG IDF

Author: R Mark Davies (---.proxy.aol.com)

Date: 11-18-01 16:57

Hi Bouko,

Such indirect MG fire was a primary role for British and Commonwealth MMG units - hence their organisation in independent MG Regiments & companies. I don't know of any other armies having such an indoctrinated role for their MGs in WW2 (though this sort of thing was common enough in WW1), though I'm sure someone will correct me. The Vickers MMG was specially suited to this type of mission, being water-cooled (thus able to maintain the fire for a very long time), and had sights calibrated for very long ranges indeed. Additionally, the crews of Vickers MMGs were trained for such a mission task.

This type of fire was especially prevalent in the desert, where there were often very long lines of sight. This sort of fire would never be radio'd in by a FOO as artillery or mortar fire could be, but was either LOS fire at very long range (using an observer situated with the MG unit), or was simply 'map-firing' on a pre-arranged range and bearing - usually as part of a preparatory fire plan. This sort of fire was especially common as part of a 'pepper pot' barrage, where everything that could (Vickers MMGs, Bofors guns, 3.7" AA guns, tank main guns & MGs and even Brens and 2" Mortars) was fired into the target area to thicken a barrage (usually in support of a big artillery concentration, but sometimes - as in the case of the Irish Guards at 'Joe's Bridge' - when operating beyond the range of the artillery).

We've bounced a few ideas around for this in the past, but haven't really come up with much yet. Ken Natt's yer man for this, and was the main advocate of indirect MG fire during the development phase - hence the existence of MG platoons as an independent ME in the 21st Army Group TO&Es, rather than as the simple MG attachments you find in the other nations' TO&Es.

Mark

Re: HMG IDF

Author: Ken Natt (---.server.ntl.com)

Date: 11-19-01 03:57

I was in favour of inclusion, but the balance of the argument was that the inclusion of MG IDF was not worth the extra complication at BF's level. There is a good point here, although it may need another coat of looking at in the Desert where long lines of sight are available or where a specific scenario is in mind, but in ETO I would suggest that the map fire is swallowed up by other support fire, or is directed at crossroads etc as interdiction which has effects off table.

Ken

Re: HMG IDF

Author: Joe (---.alphalink.com.au)

Date: 11-19-01 17:11

I've been researching some of your earlier discussions on this issue and can't agree with your solution. While MMG's & HMG's were used in addition as part of a "pepperpot barrage" - they were also used on a smaller scale in other situations - particularly in assisting troops assaulting troops in prepared positions - Nth Africa & Italy.

It seems to me you had a workable solution several times and then let it go for reasons that I can't quite follow - other than there seemed to be some differences on the size of the template you should be using. May I suggest that you reconsider and use the following trial rules you discussed:

1. IDF or plunging fire can only be used by MMG's & HMG's at ranges greater than 10" and up to their maximum direct fire range
2. MG's must be emplaced in an improved position
3. The template is placed during IDF phase only and its effects resolved along with other IDF. If part of an artillery shelling, barrage it is ignored on the basis that the artillery will have more effect anyway
4. Template size 3"x 1" deep
5. -2 modifier

These rules won't have a dramatic effect on a game but they will be useful for some scenarios, are complimentary to your existing grazing rules and help to satisfy those players who might wish to use such tactics - although personally I would limit these to British and Commonwealth forces.

Rgds Joe

Re: HMG IDF

Author: Ken Natt (---.server.ntl.com)

Date: 11-19-01 18:28

Joe - my only comments would be that the the maximum range is only 20" - 800 yards. If we were to adopt MG barrages (for want of a better word) I would hope for more range.

The real restrictions on firing MG barrage would be that the guns are water cooled and that doctrine allows it - which restricts it pretty much to UK\CW units in my understanding.

Ken

Re: HMG IDF
Author: Mark Hayes (---.proxy.aol.com)
Date: 11-19-01 18:42

It might be worth examining this issue as part of the barrage rules rather than on-board IDF. Then you wouldn't need to limit the range of the MG units to the on-board range of 20". Perhaps you could have them conduct a standing barrage at key points or behind the front lines to interdict reinforcement or counter attacks. With a -2 vs. TGsV, it wouldn't be good for much else.

Mark

Re: HMG IDF
Author: Joe (---.alphalink.com.au)
Date: 11-19-01 22:03

Ken/Mark Your concerns/suggestions make sense and you could go one step further to simplify things by giving MG's using this sort of fire a small template to use - less width more depth.

Joe

Re: HMG IDF
Author: Bouko de Groot (---.15.dialup.cybercomm.nl)
Date: 11-20-01 06:13

Ken: did / could US troops not use their .50's for IDF?
That's why I asked the IDF question: basic .50 training.

Or was it only a theory, never used by the US?

Bouko

Re: HMG IDF
Author: Joseph DiCamillo (---.boeing.com)
Date: 11-20-01 15:31

I think that a misinterpretation of some historical example has occurred. Machine guns can be used to cover dead ground by arching (plunging fire) their fire (used very effectively in world war one against the massed assaults of the early years, especially when masses huddled together in out of sight depressions, which they presumed to be out of line of fire). This arching fire is a form of indirect fire in machine guns terms, but not in artillery terms. Machine guns, even HMG, do not have the accuracy or rate of sustained fire to do fire indirectly. The plunging fire should use the MG's max range, not 6 or 8 km.

One plunging fire comment - this rule should only be used by HMG emplaced at the scenario start by the defender or by special rule by the attacker. Plunging fire would need to be pre-plotted by a machine gunner.

Re: HMG IDF

Author: Shawn Taylor (---.adsl.gen.pacificcoast.net)

Date: 11-20-01 19:39

Joseph, I agree with some of your comments, like the plunging fire would need to be pre-plotted, but not by the machine gunner. The gunner would have perhaps 2 or 3 plotted areas in which he could fire. In WWI this was used by the Canadians many times (they also pioneered the technique) against defensive positions, crossroads, light rail lines the whole nine yards. My reading on WWII is lighter than the WWI side but I do know that the Canadians used indirect MG fire on a number of occasions in Sicily and Italy to good effect. Ranges I am not totally sure of but I seem to remember 2 kilometers being mentioned at one point during the movements towards Ortona.

Shawn

Re: HMG IDF

Author: Matt Laing (---.wi.rr.com)

Date: 11-21-01 00:52

I was an 81 mm mortar man with the United States Marines for 8 years. My mortar platoon was in a weapons company along with an AT platoon and a machine gun platoon. The MG platoon was equipped with the Ma Deuce (M2 HB .50 cal Browning machine gun. During the period of several months I helped to train the machine gunners in IDF principles, gunnery, and forward observation. Once they had acquired the basic knowledge of how to perform a fire mission from start to finish, we had some field trials. The trials were conducted in three different environments, desert, gently rolling woodland, and jungle. The main conclusion that we came up with is that it wasn't worth the time or expense to train the machine gunners as both machine gunners and artillerymen. One of the major problems concerned trajectory. As most or all of you know, a bullet has a relatively flat trajectory while an artillery shell has a higher trajectory. So the problem was that often intervening terrain prevented the bullets from hitting the target. Another problem was the difference in equipment. The machine guns lack the necessary sighting equipment needed to perform IDF. Another problem we encountered was that the machine gun was very range restrictive, in conjunction with the other problems listed above you could not expect to hit any target at any but the longest ranges (at very long ranges machine guns use what is called plunging fire). Another problem was that the machine gun tripod wasn't stable enough to deliver the volume of fire needed to be effective, this point is open to debate since the term effective is subjective. The last major problem was of observation. The observers found that it was very difficult to spot the strike of the rounds in order to adjust them onto the target. And still yet another problem is that the mg platoon lack the required personnel to coordinate IDF. I think Joseph DiCamillo sums thing up fairly well, "This arching fire is a form of indirect fire in machine guns terms, but not in artillery terms." Lets face the facts here guys, a MG is NOT ARTILLERY and should not be represented in a fashion that allows them to act like artillery. I think what you are trying to do is allow a mg to fire at long range against targets that they themselves cannot see (cannot spot) and where the LOS is not obstructed. To accurately portray Mgs in BF I suggest you use the

grazing fire template and a small artillery template (or half of that size) at the longest range band for plunging fire and allow qualified spotters to spot for the machine guns(FOs or commanders on hill with binoculars will see advancing troops before the mgs will. "Lt. Smith prepare the machine guns to open fire on my command at 800 yards"). Although I must say that this sort of thing is already incorporated into the rules. If a commander is on a hill and his mgs are below him, the commander is able to see things before the mgs will and the rules state that if a unit in a ME spot an enemy unit, then all other units in the spotters ME that have a clear LOS to the target will at least suspect the target.

If I understand his comments then I also have to disagree with Shawn on his statement that the Canadians pioneered the use of plunging fire. Plunging fire is a result of ANY long range missile fire be it catapults, ballistae, longbows, or artillery. The fact of the matter is simple physics, the farther you want to shoot, the higher you have to aim, thus the steeper the descent of the projectile, plunging fire.

Re: HMG IDF

Author: Shawn Taylor (---.adsl.gen.pacificcoast.net)

Date: 11-21-01 09:17

Matt, no I was talking about massed MG fire in a "Indirect firing role" at least that is how it is described in the books I have read. A Canadian officer came up with the concept and the Canadian Corps started using it in 1916, followed closely by the Australians and eventually the British Army. You are right though it is not indirect in the true sense of the word, and the amount of MG's needed to use it effectively is quite high. One of the reasons it could be done by British Empire armies was due to the MG's being grouped into battalions rather than being part of the infantry battalions/regiments.

Shawn

Re: HMG IDF

Author: Matt Laing (---.wi.rr.com)

Date: 11-21-01 10:36

OK shawn I understand your point now, Thanks

Matt

Re: HMG IDF

Author: Matt Laing (---.wi.rr.com)

Date: 11-21-01 10:48

So in the sense that shawn states maybe the rules should remain unchanged except perhaps to include a commander that acts like a forward observer (for spotting purposes) to Mg maneuver elements in addition to using the templates.

Matt

Re: HMG IDF

Author: R Mark Davies (---.proxy.aol.com)

Date: 11-21-01 17:51

Gents,

I agree with the comment that there isn't a lot of point in indirect MGs - just use mortars for ordinary 'club-night' games, unless it's part of scenario-specific circumstances such as a historically-based mission. The fact that the British Army subsequently scrapped independent MG units says a lot about the efficiency indirect MG fire! However, in the case of the Vickers MMG (which I believe to be the only weapon capable of performing this task), it DID have sights capable of accomodating large ranges. I've fired one, and the flip-up sights' 'stick' is about nine inches long and rated up to several thousand yards, though I forget exactly how far. There is an example somewhere lower down this forum of Australians using them successfully at 4,000yds to KO a German position (within LOS, I hasten to add).

However, as has been said, this sort of MG fire would ONLY be used for carefully pre-registered targets beyond LOS (either offensively or defensively) or directly observed against targets of opportunity (using IDF techniques at extreme ranges). There should therefore be no capability for 'calling in' IDF MGs as with mortars or artillery.

A lot of these same points also tie in with a couple of previous threads on indirect fire by tanks - although tank sights weren't calibrated for extreme ranges, British and Commonwealth tank crews were eventually trained to fire IDF missions either at very long range LOS or on carefully-registered map targets - just like MGs, these should not be capable of calling-in by forward observers.

So, to cut a long story short, if you feel a desperate need for indirect MG fire (I don't, personally), I would limit it to 'standing' offensive or defensive barrages as part of a pre-programmed fire plan.

Mark

Re: HMG IDF

Author: Ken Natt (---.mid.ntl.com)

Date: 11-22-01 05:28

Yes - I think Mark about sums it up, although I think that he underestimates the effectiveness of the "MG barrage" especially when used en masse in the WW1 sense. The problem is that the prerequisites are difficult to achieve - water cooled MGs are needed because the barrage needs a constant rate of fire that air cooling can't give, you also need the sights (dail sights and the associated ephemera) and the training and doctrine to use it, and the organisation to support it. You also need a static target. With these restrictions it is really a UK/Commonwealth tactic. If you do want to represent it then careful thought needs to go into how it is used.

Ken

Re: HMG IDF

Author: Greg Lyle (---.proxy.aol.com)

Date: 11-23-01 13:01

I agree with mark and ken! IDF by MGs was in the noise level. If you persist in its use - make it a house rule. I could add about a dozen other house rules, but again I consider them to be in the noise level and feel they would detract from the flow of the game. GL

Re: HMG IDF

Author: Craig Burnett (---.mega.tnms.net.au)

Date: 11-24-01 18:13

Hello again,

This type of fire was deliberate at first and the units trained and equipped for it. In later times such units were no longer used as such - reorganization along near current lines (say to about 1990).

At least to that date machine-gunners in the Australian army were taught in the principles of all aspects of machine-gunners practices and had the weapon and capability to produce such fire. Generally the comments above are true and correct.

The one point is, such fire from certain positions is physical, rather than 'deliberate' or planned. Example is when weapon fires from high ground to lower ground, or to/from slope to slope. Plunging fire is best en masse - hence the WW2 vintage MG battalions in CW organizations.

We don't bother with it at BF level at this stage. Though I suppose in a given contact where a CW table-top formation had off-board indirect fire support from at least a company from the MG battalion, then that's how it would be best simulated -with templates like artillery fire. Any on-table MG units I suggest are involved tactically and therefore direct, but not like mortars, which fire by nature.

The juice would be having a dozen MMG/HMG weapons with your command at low tac level - wasted producing what really is a massed suppressive, interdictive, harrasing or possibly diversionary fire, which would suit the off-table role. On-table, such a formation would become a people-grinder.

CRB

Re: HMG IDF

Author: Joseph DiCamillo (---.boeing.com)

Date: 11-26-01 08:54

The discussion has been great.

With regard to the British MG battalions, I'm not familiar with their exact tactical usage. Does anyone have any historical information on their employment?

I was in the Combat Engineers, my guess is that the MG battalions were used like Engineer Battalions (excepting the German Assault Pioneers). A Combat Engineer Battalion that is tactically supporting a Combat Unit (as opposed to a battalion building a bridge, etc) is not employed as a battalion, the Engineer companies and platoons are parceled out to Combat Units. If a Bn was supporting a Brigade, each battalion would probably get an engineer company, and then each company would get an engineer platoon.

I'd bet that the British also distributed their MG battalions out.

Re: HMG IDF

Author: R Mark Davies (---.proxy.aol.com)

Date: 11-26-01 10:41

Hi Joseph,

Fortunately, there's plenty of evidence for their employment. Basically, each infantry division would get one MG battalion, and this was usually divided up: one MG company per infantry brigade and one MG platoon per infantry battalion. However, being an independent unit, the MG platoons sometimes often massed to fire the sort of missions described above (if not physically massed, then their fire could be massed). It should also be noted that there were also four 4.2" mortar platoons integral to each MG battalion, which again could be parcelled out, but were more frequently found massed as a divisional asset.

Armoured Divisions had one MG Company, which also included a single 4.2" platoon, as Armd Divs only had one infantry brigade.

Mark

Re: HMG IDF
Author: Joseph DiCamillo (---.boeing.com)
Date: 11-26-01 10:54

Thanks Mark.

I was fairly sure that was the case. That supports the use of MG indirect fire as only by special scenario rules. I was concerned that because the British had MG battalions, that there was confusion that that meant that they were employed as battalion sized units.

Re: HMG IDF
Author: Craig Burnett (144.138.134.---)
Date: 11-27-01 03:58

G'Day Joe,
Battalion sized unit's of MG would be a blast - imagine some fruit cake actually painting one such unit? It would look sensational.

Regards,
Craig

MG Grazing fire templates
Author: Nigel Perry (---.defence.gov.au)
Date: 11-18-01 22:56

The original discussion on this list about the placement of MG grazing fire templates was clear. The template had to be placed with its short edge touching the MG stand.

The wording in the web version of the playtest rules seems to be more ambiguous, coming as it does in a bullet point dealing with the template's axis.

Could someone please confirm whether the requirement that the template touch the firing unit has changed? I've already seen games in which the template has been placed starting at the nearest target unit and am wondering whether I've missed something.

Nigel Perry.

Re: MG Grazing fire templates
Author: Mark Hayes (---.proxy.aol.com)
Date: 11-19-01 18:31

Nigel,

The narrow end of the template must touch the firing MG unit.

Mark

MG grazing fire template
Author: Mark Hayes (---.nhc.navy.mil)
Date: 04-17-02 10:33

A grazing fire template and rules for it are given on the extras page. This is the culmination of lengthy discussion on the forum shortly after it opened. One of the problems was deciding just how to place it. IIRC, we ended up allowing the player to shift the template itself 45 degrees to the left or right of the MMG/HMG stand. The objection at the time was that giving the stand a cone of fire based on its front was too restrictive to be realistic. Upon further reflection, I'm wondering if that's really true if we are representing a MG team setting up their gun to fire across the front of an attacking infantry company. Could somebody with real-life experience or knowledge help me out? When a machine gun is set up on defense, is the placement made to maximize firepower to the front and eliminate covered approaches? If so, wouldn't it be better to use the template by placing it in conformity to the stand's front, with with any fire outside the template to be conducted as normal direct fire?

Mark

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Matt Laing (---.wi.rr.com)
Date: 04-17-02 16:52

Mark,

You pose a difficult question because the answer involves more than just the placement of the cone of fire. The difficulty here lies with the fact that we cannot model all the variations of terrain that made real life deployment a necessity. Game stands always have a clear LOS all around them unless the LOS is blocked by significant terrain features specifically found in the rules. However, in reality open ground is rarely completely open, there are natural defiles, depressions, hillocks, stands of trees, and whatever you can think of that are insignificant and therefore unnecessary to model in BF game terms. Naturally gamers want to make the most out of their

assets and given the ability to fire and observe at near full effect in a 360, the players will incorporate this fact into their plans.

The whole idea of limited arcs of fire and grazing fire templates adds a level of tactical detail that is not represented in BF. IMO the existing fire arcs of all infantry weapons/ squads are much too big. A typical arc of fire and observation (area of responsibility, AOR) for a squad deployed in a defensive position is about 30 degrees to its direct front. This AOR is the determining factor on how a squad is deployed IE the squad is deployed to maximize its firepower and observation potential within its AOR, not to its flanks or rear. The AOR of a squad is supposed to be interlocked with the AOR of the squads that are adjacent to it. The same is true of platoons, and companies. The AOR is narrow because it is the area that a squad could be expected to observe and deliver its firepower through effectively. It is more difficult for a squad to spot enemy troops that are outside its AOR. This is not to say that a specific squad COULDN'T spot outside its AOR, its that a specific squad wasn't SUPPOSED to spot outside its AOR.

From my experiences, when occupying a defensive position an MG is assigned a primary arc of fire (AOR) that usually covers the front of at least part of the defensive line and is interlocked with the arc of fire of another MG when possible. A MG may also be deployed to cover a specific avenue of approach that usually provides a cover and concealment to the enemy like a ditch, a draw, or a river bed, and other types of terrain that I mentioned above. A secondary arc of fire may be assigned depending on the tactical situation. A MG or rifle squad is generally most effective when it is firing within its assigned AOR. Considering that a MG stand is actually several mgs and to answer your question directly, I see no problem with limiting the grazing templates placement to the front of the stand in fact I strongly recommend it. Aside from the things I mentioned, the fact of the matter is that flexibility is not the rule especially since defensive warfare is characteristically less flexible than offensive warfare.

Yes technically a stand of several MGs could cover a larger AOR than just one gun but in BF we are not dealing with individual weapons but groups of them. When you consider the fact that an MG section when deployed as a section actually takes up much less space than an infantry squad but is based with the same frontage, this already gives the mg section a larger AOR than an infantry squad. If limiting the placement of the fire templates reduces flexibility, so what, that's the way it should be. Anyway if a player doesn't like it he can always change it.

Much of this goes hand-in-hand with the discussion concerning improved, dug in positions. If you accept what I have written, then the same limitations should be incorporated into the the dug in rules. For example, if a mg dug in or improved position wishes to redeploy so it can use the benefit of grazing fire in direction other than to its original front, then the mg should lose the benefit of its cover.

STBLW (sorry to be long winded)

Matt

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Dave Choat (---.hyatsv01.md.comcast.net)
Date: 04-17-02 22:14

Excellent post Matt! In some modern applications, I have seen ranging stakes and whatnot emplaced so a weapon (M79 for example) could be blind fired so as to place rounds onto a critical area in conditions of low visibility-like night or smoke. The area was usually some cover or a likely avenue of approach.

dave

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Mark Hayes (---.proxy.aol.com)
Date: 04-17-02 22:58

No need to appologize Matt. Your post is very helpful. I am persuaded to incorporate the restrictions you recommended when I run my games. Back when we discussed improved and dug-in positions, my gut told me that restrictions you suggest were right, but I didn't have the experience or reading to make an informed decision.

Mark

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Ken Natt (---.server.ntl.com)
Date: 04-18-02 00:59

I think this was ploughed through during the earlier threads, and while I supported the idea of fixed arcs, I was also convinced of a requirement for some flexibility because of the time scale and also the artificial restrictions imposed by BF's terrain system - ie conforming to the edge of a terrain peice. To take this second "game mechanics" point, a unit defending the edge of a feature, such as a wood or e hedgeline, can only observe and fire out of it if it is conformed to the edge. This would immediatly prevent the positioning of MGs with grazing zones to enfilade probable routes of an attack as they can therefore only fire directly to their fronts, rather than enfilading the expected attack, or alternatively positioned conforming with a flank to the feature, which would then enfilade their own defences not the opposition.

The 45 degree "swing" helps overcome this, and I think is a reasonable and simple mechanism to get around a complex problem.

Ken

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Matt Laing (---.wi.rr.com)
Date: 04-18-02 02:08

Thanks Mark and Dave. During the period when I carried an M203 Grenade Launcher (not to mention the SAW and the m16) we would use such aids as aiming stakes set in the ground to help us locate dead spaces and other areas as Dave mentioned.

Ken brings up a good point about the terrain. I see the reason for allowing the placement of the template as Ken suggests, especially if your model hedgerows are 20 yds wide at the base. Was the original suggestion to allow the mg stand to place the template anywhere within a frontal 90 degree arc (45 degree swing to either side) at will? If so then I would suggest that the template placement be limited to a prerecorded direction (or two) within the 90 degree front arc. This will allow for example, a German HMG stand at a "T" in a hedgrow to be able to fire across the front of the line (within its main AOR) while maintaining the conforming rule.

Matt

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Ken Natt (---.server.ntl.com)
Date: 04-18-02 02:59

The proposal that we sort of agreed on was to allow the template to be placed anywhere within 45 degrees of streight ahead.

Ken

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Bob Hart (---.prem.tmns.net.au)
Date: 04-18-02 07:03

To add a bit more to what is an already complicated topic. I presume the whole matter is based on MGs in defence! When I was a YO (Young Officer) If I had any of my MG's covering MY front, I was castigated. Due to such things as the fall of the ground and the dreaded dead ground problem, MG's, and I'm talking about Bipod LMG's in a platoon, were to be sited (and sighted) to cover the front of the NEIGHBOURING platoon. Thus achieving enfilade fire from , hopefully, a defilade position. Anyone pointing their LMG straight out in front of their own position failed and went back to redo the tactics exam.

I might add the same thing went at Company level, even when the LMG's (M-60's) were put on tripods. Fixed lines and fixed limits were the go. And when we had MG Platoons in the Bn, the same thing just carried on. I would therefore argue that a MG stand ,conforming to the edge of terrain so it can fire out ,should be able to fire along the edge of the terrain feature.

And as for changing AOR. If you did not have a secondary arc for your MG, just in case the enemy did what nobody but the DS expected and came from a different direction, then fail! And this secondary arc had to be an improved position as well. At least shell scrapes, if not an extension of your pit. Unless of course you had to actually move the depth MG. Even then, the section in which the depth MG was expected to deploy to was expected to have a shell scrape or pit available to house it when it redeployed.

a bit long winded but I hope it helps
Bob Hart

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Mark Hayes (---.nhc.navy.mil)
Date: 04-18-02 09:31

Thanks guys. I had forgotten about the conforming issue. So much for simple solutions. With regard to the secondary position, I would think that the normal arc of fire rule provides for that. What I would like to do is give players a reason to deploy machine guns historically and provide for interlocking fields of fire. I want to provide for the reality of maximizing a MG section's fire by allowing it to use the grazing fire template to attack more than one stand. I see the large firing arc as representing a unit's ability to make small adjustments in its AOR it response to the tactical situation, including alternate firing positions.

I know that open terrain is not really open, and we adjusted the lethality of weapons based on that reality. We use to have players place markers for their troops going to ground or taking advantage of all kinds of natural cover. There were just too many markers on the table and we were looking for a solution. I suggested a concept

I had used in my WWI game. Troops taking advantage of unrepresented cover (open ground) while moving became the norm, and Rich redesigned the combat tables to reflect that.

BTW, great post Bob. My only real-life experience was in my secondary role as Ship's Self Defense Force Officer. We were trained in, and graded on how fast we could get to that space which contained what I can neither confirm nor deny was on board U.S. Navy waships. Not exactly the environment to learn proper tactics. :-)

Mark

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Joseph DiCamillo (---.boeing.com)
Date: 04-18-02 11:30

I second that a unit should have maximum flexibility in its firing arc. Players are company commanders (CO). The CO would not get involved (normally) in the facing of a squad (leaving that to the Plt Leader). And the squad itself would know best which way to face. From a game standpoint, players should not be involved in the detail of facing squads/MGs, other than the general facing, which the 180 degree arc accounts for. A MG covering the front of a company would normally be sited to fire across the front of the company. So if a company is deployed in a straight line, the MG is facing 45 degree from that line. But, as stated, the requirement to align along a terrain feature makes this impossible.

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: John Rigley (204.97.185.---)
Date: 04-18-02 11:52

Mark

Back in the 70's in my younger day's I was the squad m60 gunner for about a year. The new man allway's got stuck with it, but it did get you out of other little jobs. When I set my up my fox hole , we would work up a range card , witch covered a 180 arc to are frount. On it we would put avenue's off approach and dead zones, with primary and secondary targets on it. That way if something happend to me or my second, the new man would know where to pick up.

john

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Mark Hayes (---.elkrdg01.md.comcast.net)
Date: 04-19-02 00:28

How about this for the rule on placement of the template:

1) Normally the template is placed to conform to the MG unit's front.

However:

2) If the unit is conformed to the edge of a terrain feature place a counter with an arrow under the MG unit to indicate the direction that the MG section is sighted for. Adjusting the counter is a movement action that takes place in the Friendly Maneuver Phase.

3) If a MG opens fire to its front (or in the direction of the arrow if conformed to the edge of a terrain feature) using opportunity fire, place the template down and leave it there until the end of the enemy Maneuver Phase. Any enemy units that cross the beaten zone of the template are attacked as if they were caught in the beaten zone when it first opened fire.

Again, this rule is just to represent the primary firing position of MGs. They can fire in any direction using normal direct fire.

Comments?

Mark

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Bob Hart (144.139.71.---)
Date: 04-19-02 04:58

Mark, clarifying, what you suggest is that during phase 2, the defending player places his MG template to get an opportunity fire effect. Are you now suggesting that that template remain during phase 3 and 4, then throughout the defenders turn and then through the attackers phase 1 and 2 again? Or is it just placed during the attackers Phase 2 and removed at the start of the attackers phase 3?

I like the idea that the template goes down and forms a barrier of fire that enemy must cross if they are assaulting. I am not sure that the time frame is clear?

I would also be a bit iffy about the MG firing direct to the front. I would be more supportive of a MG stand being allowed to conform by placing its flank aiming point on the edge of the terrain. As I suggested in my previous post, MG's were not expected to fire directly out in front of their own PI. In fact, there was a serious move to have MG pits dug so they had a berm on the front and a firing position to the flank to force them to fire to THEIR front, which may not be to the Section's front!

And please remember I am talking Britcom but also down to Section LMG's. Different armies, different doctrines. But we did have the advantage when I was a YO (Crikey, was I ever a YO? so many years, so many beers!) of having chaps who had been Vickers gunners in WW2 and Korea who could give us pointers.

HTH Bob

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Craig Burnett (144.139.11.---)
Date: 04-19-02 08:47

We always went for the gun on the right or the high ground on contact, or in a section assault and while patrolling in certain formations. Sometimes your gun would be on your left (like when your section is the left-forward section in a platoon assault).

Defensively, your gun covered the most likely enemy approach in a section location, the front of the neighbouring section in a platoon harbour and variations between fixed and staked lines within the company. We often had a floater gun too. In this situation (with the M-60), we used it in its GPMG role. Support Coy had an SFMG platoon - which could use several varieties of 'HMG' or GPMG - which they did in both the General-

Purpose mode and Sustained-Fire mode. Thank God I personally never went into anybody's SFMG platoon - because they also had to carry and parachute in, with TRIPODS for their guns.

Not often did we carry a tripod for the M-60 within the rifle sections, but sometimes for a particular task or role we did - [such as functioning as Fire-Company for a battalion attack, or occupying purpose-built defences (from base gun-picquet pit to enforced, roofed, protected bunkers)].

As a section commander, you might also have to consider the possibility of CARRYING and JUMPING the said tripod yourself. The only man utterly exempt within the section from having any share in the responsibility for lugging the tripod, was the bloke on the gun itself. Either way it's an each-way bet. The gunner is a prime and obvious ambush-target, anyone around him is likely to attract an unhealthy dose too, in which case that's more than likely to be the bloke carrying the said-bloody tripod and the section 2IC. Conducting an assault with gun itself was difficult, but do-able and done - but not on a tripod.

In BF terms to date, since the subject was first brought up, we've used the MG BZ template within the simplified limitation of allowing it's placement up to 45 degrees either flank of the stands front. The other limitations were that the weapon had to be emplaced in an improved position. When we used Plunging Fire, the further limitation imposed as an experiment, was that the weapon also had to be pre-tasked to do so.

Another variation used in our application was an added +1 modifier against any target caught in the cross-arc of more than one MG. All-round company defence games and battalion attacks became a common rave for about 3 months. Small, 2 hour contacts on small tables, representing an area in ground scale approx 1200 x 1200 yards (or basically a grid square).

Essentially, due to the stand scale in BF, we adopted the 'SFMG-level' role when utilizing the BZ. I think it works well at this scale, probably work better at a scale down too, which would be more representative of the GPMG role.

CRB

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Bob Hart (144.139.71.---)
Date: 04-19-02 09:30

Craig, crikey, you jumped with them! I don't know, perfectly good airplane.... mutter, mutter....

I had the luxury of being able to call up tripods out of Coy stores if needed.(And don't start the Monty Pythons, luxury, we had to rely on mules in my day,mutter, mutter...)

One thing that doesn't work well in BF scale. If we had the SFMG pl in DS, or when I had to deploy the SFMG Pl, the guns were always deployed in pairs. That did not mean they were sited together. It meant they were deployed so one gun's arc overlapped the other gun's arc and preferably from the opposite direction. So No 1 gun might be on the coy right flank firing across the front right to left and No 2 gun would be on the coy left flank firing left to right with a good overlap in front of the coy.

Now BF scale would be two guns per stand, so this one at either end does not work well. Still, if it was perfect it would not be war!

The same thing would happen with Antiarmd weapons or ATG's in BF parlance. Deploy in pairs but positioned such that if a tank turned to face one gun and offer its front armour to it, the other gun should have a perfect side shot. Enfilade from defilade. As with the mgs, one either side. Again difficult with BF scale. Just hope the scenario writer gives you two of everything!

And don't get me started on fireplans involving obstacles!

Hope this helps

Bob

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Dave Choat (---.arl.army.mil)
Date: 04-19-02 15:06

Ahhh go on..

Shall I taunt you a second time?

Obstacles must always be covered by fire... (or they aren't obstacles)

Dave

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Bob Hart (144.139.71.---)
Date: 04-20-02 10:27

Dave,

I warned you and after a preAnzac weekend pissup, take that you French chappie you.

Okay, Obstacles may be installed but as mentioned, should not be called an obstacle unless covered by fire, ie enemy attempting to cross, or remove said obstacle must be able to be interfered with by fire, preferably direct but at least indirect. If not, it is a simple matter to remove the obstacle. The barrier minefield laid in Vietnam is a teaching point in all lessons on obstacles.

Problem! Obstacles, either minefields or wire are laid to channel enemy into a killing ground, not to prevent enemy from crossing them. Any determined enemy can cross any obstacle! The time factor is the deciding factor here.

Site your weapons such that you can cover those obstacles.

MG's, fire along the front (enemyfront) of the wire/minefields as they wander about trying to figure out where the wire/minefields end. Interlocking arcs of fire should give the MG arc a good workout.

More of a problem, site your Mortar/Arty DF's such that they gain maximum effectiveness on said enemy who have failed to identify said obstacles before their assault. Too many enemy milling around crying what do we do now is a god send, if you do not miss the target and land the rounds right on the obstacle, blowing said obstacle to the proverbial and thus allowing enemy access through the obstacle.

ie Danger close should allow a path to be blown through the wire/minefield!

BTW, have I missed something or is there a section where arty/mortar missions can blow a safe passage through mines/wire?

If too long winded, sorry but a few bottles toasting Anzac is my excuse. Wait until next Thursday. If you get a coherent word out of me then, its a bloody miracle. Thank god SWMBO can drive.

Bob

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Craig Burnett (---.prem.tnms.net.au)
Date: 04-20-02 21:01

Bob,

Yes, we jumped with everything integral to the battalion. Guns, tubes, pods, 84's and on several occasions, vehicles. Air-landings or extractions were rare. For that we would normally walk. Quite dumb really. Modern era and the infantry are still mostly walking. Should have learned by now you would think - second-class ride is better than a first-class jaunt.

Definitely. Obstacles are as useful as tits on a Bull if not covered by at least observation and more properly by fire. The Vietnam mine-belt is the most prolific case in point. 8RAR in the Long Hais can attest to that, though for WW2, the 'Maginot' and 'Seigfreid' lines LEAP to mind.

With conformity, I conform where I want. If the opponent doesn't like the position, then all they have to do is get me out of it. We are fortunate with our model terrain though, as it is made as miniaturized ground, rather than un-integrated separate features, so it's conducive to the way we play.

With BF:WW2, I've used the MG in the SF role, because of the stand scale. In the modern game, where a stand is probably more likely to be represented as the Group or 'Fire-Team', then the GPMG usage would come about naturally.

Also with the BZ template, we've used it in two other different ways:

1. Using the weapon-rating range bands.
2. Not using the range-bands. Where the 'raw' template is, regardless of range.

Also used it to 600/800 (at a stretch), with the top-half of two templates together at the aiming point (sometimes a feature) and down the fire goes. This method proved very difficult to explain to adults. It may also have not been used that way.

On historical tactics, it seems though weaponry similar, the employment of the weapons is different. Cross-arc MG deployment is premier - and for good reason.

Many 'movies' show the weapons on bipods being frantically traversed - granting guaranteed innaccuracy and wasteful expenditure of ammunition and indicating poorly sited gun positions. With the shoulder plate, 'oscillating' the butt, rather than traversing the barrel is the correct method. (Hard to explain without the demo).

The cone of fire we represent is 'flat'. A physical necessity in a game. I like it where the line of fire is continuous, out to absolute maximum or optimum range. It is possible anything along the line will be affected - whether seen or unseen, known or unknown, friendly or enemy. This is where the 'oscillation' comes in to play. Gives the height and represents 'overs' or 'secondaries'. Goes the same for rifle fire. (Perhaps too much detail for the section scale?).

On the cutting charges for mortars and artillery - another use with big ordnance, like ships guns or bombers, were cratering rounds whose object was to provide great big holes the soldiers could get into. I think this was done often in the Pacific for the Marines.

Craig

PS: You got into ANZAC early - practicing? P P P P P.

CRB

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: John Rigley (204.97.185.---)
Date: 04-21-02 19:34

Mark

At cold wars I had a new Idea on this. At least I hope It's new. But it might not be what you are looking for. First their is no template. Now going on what I hope is brain power and common sense here it is. HMG is dug in on edge of woods. Infantry squad "A" moves out of a woods 7 inches away, useing two action. So HMG use's op fire at 5 inches. Disordering "A" squad who now finnishes it's first action. Now if you used a template, what squad leader is going to move into that zone. Especially when their is a machine gun still rakeing over "A" squad. What I mean when I say rakeing them over is. The HMG is still firing at squad "A" ,ever 30 seconds or so. They would fire a short burst of 5 to 10 rounds,just to say hello. Now for my idea. Squad "B" moves into the open several inches to the right from where "A" squad came out, allso useing two action. Now HMG targets squad "B", with a extra negitve one. Next out is squad "C" ,and is targeted by the HMG with a extra negitve two. And each time the HMG fires it goe's up one more. Easy to keep track of by puting a die next to the machine gun to keep track of how many times it fires.

Just my two cents

John.

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Mark Hayes (---.elkrdg01.md.comcast.net)
Date: 04-21-02 22:37

Back from Cold Wars.

Bob,
Regarding the idea of a template remaining and creating a beaten zone, I meant that it would be placed on the table when the defensive unit firest executed oportunity fire and remain until the end of the same enemy manuever phase (the second option that you presented). My thought was that this would allow an attacker to send a scout forward to find out where the enemy MGs were in a defensive postion, allowing subsequent units to move away from the template. This also could give MGs an added value if they are sited to fire across the front of the company's position (ie. the enemy's suspected direction of attack).

I understand what you are saying about MG's not really firing to their front. I often place ATGs, MGs, and even troops behind a terrain barrier or cover so that the enemy cannot get a good shot at them. But I'm suggesting simlating that tactical concept at the next higher level. It's an abstraction, to be sure, but one that could add to the tactical flavor.

Mark

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Craig Burnett (---.prem.tmns.net.au)
Date: 04-22-02 07:06

Hayesy,
Been a bit bloody warm while you've been gone too son.....

CRB

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Mark Hayes (---.nhc.navy.mil)
Date: 04-22-02 07:38

Craig,

So I've gathered from Jim's post. As I do this for fun, I don't like to spend too much energy on negatives. I had a great convention: old friends, new finds, rediscovered products, and I thought both games that I ran went well.

John,

I'm not so interested getting a die roll at on the other stands, as I am in creating a zone of fire that catches more stands in the open or encourages the attacker to pick another approach it.

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Bob Hart (---.prem.tmns.net.au)
Date: 04-22-02 07:45

Mark, correct me if I am not reading the same piece of paper but...

In the Maneuver phase, each base does everything it wants to or is permitted to do before any other base on its side does anything else? Correct??

(sorry about calling them bases but after 30yrs of referring to a Bn sized organisation as a unit, it just doesn't sit with me to call a base/stand a unit!)

So the MG has to hold its fire until a few more come into the arc to gain maximum effectiveness. Can the MG opportunity fire at the end of the phase to catch the last one moving and thus catch all the previous movers in the template?

You would have to be confident that all the rest will follow the first if you are going to hold your fire. Still of the various reasons for op fire, vehicle target in a defile does not occur, unless we are talking soft vehicles and overrun is done by vehicles as well. So we are talking disappearing, enfiladed and rapid advance.

I would probably decide to wait until defensive fire if my MG was not likely to be uncovered. And if it was just the scouts, then my supporting rifle teams should be able to deal with them. Serves them right for sending forward the sacrificial scout squad! Reminds me of the kamikaze jeep squad that used to dash down the road to draw fire. Under some rules, didn't cost much and was useful (!) in finding out where the enemy were.

Just a few more thoughts on what is a very interesting topic,

Bob

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Craig Burnett (---.tmns.net.au)
Date: 04-22-02 08:37

MH,

Well don't leave me in suspense then - what were the games you did?

CRB

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Mark Hayes (---.nhc.navy.mil)
Date: 04-22-02 10:07

Bob,

Yes, you complete the move of one base before moving another. As I'm sure you know, there is a lot of wasted time considered in the turn scale. So, the movement sequence allows for the simulation of some sequential movement. It's an abstraction, but it provides players with another tactical nuance.

The terms "unit," "maneuver element," and "battlegroup" have specific meanings in BF. I try to be consistent in talking about the game, so that there is less confusion.

If the movement of a unit could trigger opportunity fire, the moving player notifies his opponent of what he is doing. If the moving unit reaches a point where the opponent wants to fire, the opponent simply says "stop," and resolves the opportunity fire. After movement is completed, you CANNOT go back to earlier in the maneuver phase and decide to opportunity fire. We're not trying to be legalistic; we just want to avoid abuses of the opportunity fire rules. I imagine that placing a MG template down for OP fire would cause the moving player to avoid that particular piece of ground.

Mark

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Bob Hart (144.139.73.---)
Date: 04-23-02 07:37

Mark,

generally I get the idea. However, consider the following.

Squad A moves all their movement, whether move, breach etc. They are in the template of a MG which chooses not to fire at this stage. The MG, using hidden movement or counters is not known to be a MG. Further, Squad A has failed to spot the MG. Let's say, troops dense edge improved position = 2" to spot.

MG does not declare op fire.

Squad B moves up, MG still does not declare op fire.

Squad C moves up, presenting a flank for enfilade fire and MG decides its now or never and declares op fire on Squad C. Placing the template, it also covers Squad A and Squad B. Do Squads A & B take fire? If they do not, then they cannot be fired at during Defensive fire. But they are in the template and bullets will be firing all round them!

I suppose the optimum might be to fire during defensive but then MG loses the enfilade fire on Squad C.

Opinions?

Bob

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Craig Burnett (144.139.11.---)
Date: 04-23-02 20:06

Bob,

Selecting the right moment to open fire as you demonstrate above is correct - timing, direction and economy. In game terms, say the MG opened up on Squad 'A' in the example above, then the other squads would know it (even if blocked LOS - the noise factor = Suspected). If you're in the zone, you get affected. It's the same as an artillery barrage template.

Craig

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Mark Hayes (---.elkrdg01.md.comcast.net)
Date: 04-23-02 20:14

Bob,

I would say that the template is placed and if squads A & B have an aiming point under it, they receive fire with the -1 modifier. I don't see a problem with that.

Mark

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Bob Hart (144.139.73.---)
Date: 04-24-02 07:49

Mark, Craig,

Thanks. I would have also assumed if any other stands were under the template when placed, they are affected. Nice to sing from the same sheet of music.
Bob

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Jonathan Perry (---.statefarm.com)
Date: 04-26-02 09:21

Have people played a lot with this grazing template? I hope to introduce it soon to my group, but I was going to start with a -2 modifier instead of a -1. Seems obscenely powerful with a -1, but I haven't played with it yet.

comments?

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Craig Burnett (---.tmns.net.au)
Date: 04-27-02 03:31

Jonathan,
Go with the -1. Both adult and minor players here generally use it.

Craig

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Ken Natt (---.server.ntl.com)
Date: 04-28-02 06:58

-1 works well - but remember that the template does not penetrate hard cover - you can get hit if you are conformed to the edge under fire, but not deep in

At least I think that's how it works
Ken

Re: MG grazing fire template
Author: Ken Natt (---.server.ntl.com)
Date: 04-28-02 15:04

John - I tried the -1, -2, -3 idea a while back, but it didn't feel right, as in effect it just allows multiple shots at sequence selected targets rather than the pinning and funneling effect of well placed MMG fire, and the logical conclusion would be that you could keep firing at the same target until you killed the poor SOB.

Ken

Grazing Fire (for Mg?)
Author: Chris Ginn ()
Date: 10-11-04 05:34

Where is the info on this play test rule.

I'm interested in long range area fire as practised by the British. Also German, and I assume American, MG's were used to fire on fixed lines.

I assume this rule is to do with this?

Re: Grazing Fire (for Mg?)
Author: James Baker ()
Date: 10-11-04 05:37

Look on the extras page <http://www.fireandfury.com/extra/mggrazing.shtml>

Re: Grazing Fire (for Mg?)
Author: Chris Ginn ()
Date: 10-11-04 06:48

Thanks James.

Next Question!

At what range do you place the template? I think MMG are limited to 20" in battlefront.

I think the British vickers .303 MMG could reach 4000yds with special streamline ammo, otherwise something over 3000yds. I don't have the books to check with me. Obviously the trajectory of the falling ball ammo would be pretty steep at this range so that the area covered would probably not be that for your template, if firing on fixed lines. However presumably some wiggle would be possible, and the lateral spread may be greater. Any MG experts out there?

Incidentally, I think Churchill crews seem to have used there Besa Turret MG in a similar way.

Re: Grazing Fire (for Mg?)

Author: MudCrab ()

Date: 10-14-04 23:37

I've often wondered the same question.

A MMG is normally listed as having an effective range of something like 2400yards, and like Chris mentioned can reach much further.

I can't speak for other nations but as far as I have always understood a Vickers in Commonwealth service was normally used as a sort of long ranged firesupport role where as in most of the games our group has played they tend to just get placed on the table as a sort of slow infantry stand with better range.

I was thinking that a Vickers stand should be allowed to do indirect fire out to say 60inches (60inches = 2400yards right?). For actual factors I hadn't thought that hard about it - probably one less then the 20inch factors.

Things I have not thought hard about is the relation between IF and cover. IF fire uses difference mods then direct fire and I am not sure that 303 bullets should have the same effect as a bit of high explosive. Comments ?

As for the tactical use I am in a bit of iffy ground. I am assuming most MMG fire was part of a 'fire plan' worked out before battle started. However I cannot see that self observed indirect fire would be that hard to do or that, assuming communications existed, that calling down MMG fire support within the time frame of a game would be impossible.

What I do not know is how other nations used their tripod mounted MG's.

Anyone with more knowledge of firesupport tactics have anything to add ? :)

thanks

Craig

Re: Grazing Fire (for Mg?)
Author: Andy Parkes ()
Date: 02-16-05 07:29

Right seemed to have found the right group heres what i have found out from vickers manuals.

The vickers MG had a folding back sight for ranges upto 400yds 20" (as per the card), it also had a raised tangent sight for ranges upto 2,900 yds or 70". This is also for direct fire. For indirect interdiction fire it used a drum sight similar to the 3" mortar this allowed it to engage targets upto 4,500 yds or 112".

The way they were used was that the whole platoon was given pre-planned set co-ordinates like a pre-planned arty barrage. The target was given and the whole platoon would set the guns to fire on that bearing and elevation for given period. A single section could also preset the gun to fire on set defiles such as roads junctions rivers etc..

So in game terms we treat as a small barrage template with the same modifiers as a shelling mission. due to the setup of the guns it would cover quite a reasonable area and deny passage for infantry and open topped vehicles.

The british army still uses this method and the baeten zone for only four guns is amazing (eye witness) ;-)

They could also be called on like the mortars to lay down area fire. So over all more versatile than a mortar team.

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Grazing Fire 2
Author: Chris Ginn ()

Date: 10-14-04 11:29

I have the Template and the rules, but I'm not sure how to use the template.

Do you just place it in front of the MG, or can you place it at any range up to max Mg range in the rules (20"?)
(see coments in 2nd reply to First Grazing Fire Question)

Re: Grazing Fire 2
Author: Ken Natt ()
Date: 10-15-04 02:41

Grazing fire is meant to represent the firing of MGs from prepared positions on fixed lines, with the barrel of the gun low enough so that the rounds never arc above man height, not long range plunging fire, so the template should be placed next to the gun.

Plunging fire (MG Barrages) is a different situation. I seem to recall we decided on using the arty rules with the small template.

Ken

MG grazing question
Author: jonathan ()
Date: 12-21-02 13:06

is it legit to use this rule for vehicles with HMG's(.50 cal or so)

Re: MG grazing question
Author: R Mark Davies ()
Date: 12-21-02 17:36

Hi Jonathan,

No, I'm afraid not. The only exceptions I can think of are the Carriers of the British/Commonwealth Carrier Platoons (but only when the Vickers MMG stands are mounted on the vehicles).

The grazing fire rule is only normally available to specialist MMG or HMG stands - these represent dedicated, trained sustained fire MG units with specialist gun mountings, lots of ammo, spare barrels and appropriate expertise. A pintle-mount MG on a vehicle is just for point defence of the vehicle and wasn't intended to be a support weapon. Sorry!

Cheers,

Mark

Re: MG grazing question
Author: Ken Natt ()
Date: 12-22-02 04:06

I would go further and ban all vehicle mounts - even the Vickers on a carrier - I know they could fire from the carrier but I was of the understanding that this was the exception rather than the rule. The BZ effect represents a lot of factors, one of which is getting the gun barrel as close as is possible to the ground - not really possible for a vehicle mount.

Ken

Re: MG grazing question
Author: R Mark Davies ()
Date: 12-22-02 17:36

Good point Ken,

Yes - plunging (i.e. indirect) fire missions with MMGs were relatively common from the carrier, but firing on fixed lines was always from the ground mount. Wasn't thinking too carefully and I'll retract that one - you can still fire the MMGs from the carriers, but you can't use the grazing fire rule.

Cheers,

Mark

MG Grazing Fire Template
Author: Eric Feifer ()
Date: 12-05-04 12:45

I am using the x1.5 scale for my 20mm troops. At the risk of sounding stoopid, to make a Grazing Fire template do I simply need to increase the size of the 15mm template to 150%?

Re: MG Grazing Fire Template
Author: James Baker ()
Date: 12-06-04 05:50

The basic size of the MG template is a trapezoid. 10" long (15mm) with a short side 1 infantry base wide and a long side 2 bases wide. If you have increased the rest of your ranges by 50%, the length should also be increased by 50% to 15" Use your base sizes for the long and short sides.

Re: MG Grazing Fire Template
Author: R Mark Davies ()
Date: 12-06-04 07:21

Jim,

I forgot to bring this up - when printing it out last tuesday, it only prints out to about eight inches long!

Mark

Re: MG Grazing Fire Template

Author: James Baker ()

Date: 12-06-04 22:21

Probably some sort of automatic scaling done to "help" you. It may depend on your browser or computer settings. You might be able to save the picture (right-click/save as) and load it into a picture editor, MS-word or powerpoint and play with the size. I will see if there is something I can do here.

Re: MG Grazing Fire Template

Author: James Baker ()

Date: 12-06-04 22:29

I checked the size of it in Paint Shop Pro and it was 9.75 inches long, but still about right. While I corrected it to 10", it looks smaller than than on my screen (which has a high resolution). If it doesn't print to the right size, my suggestion is to copy it locally and put it in some sort program where you can control the size.

Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Paul Elvidge ()

Date: 11-08-06 10:52

Hi

I was just going through my Battlefront cards (as sad people sometimes do!) and I noticed that the MG34/42 in the sustained fire role has better factors against soft targets in the 20inch and 40inch ranges than the venerable Vickers. And that got me wondering why that was. I realise that it's not the difference in calibre, which is not material in game terms. And I realise that it's not a rate-of-fire issue because the MG34/42 could only use its high rate of fire for a very short time, so it's not an advantage in the sustained fire role. So why the difference? Please can someone put me out of my misery ... or explain the answer at least!

Many thanks

Paul

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Andy ()

Date: 11-09-06 09:11

Paul,

Technically, the ammo for the Vickers was designed for long range fire/indirect fire and should really be more accurate at the longer ranges compared to the MG42.

This is down to the boat tail design of the .303 round.

Await the great GURU in the sky to make comment <g>

Andy

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Mark Hayes ()

Date: 11-09-06 10:56

Paul,

You mean the 10 and 20 inch range bands, don't you? I'm not sure, but I think rate of fire was the issue. IIRC, the German machine guns had quick-change barrels in order to maintain a high rate of fire.

Because such a decision would have been made at the time of the British supplement, Rich Hasenauer would be the key person to ask. He has been spending all his time with Fire & Fury the last year, so he may not remember. I'll ask him this weekend at Fall In.

Mark

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Paddy Green ()

Date: 11-09-06 12:20

Sorry to be a real teckie-geek but.....

The Vickers MG had a rate of fire of 450 to 600 round/min and a muzzle velocity of 560 m/s (1,830 ft/s) whereas the MG42 had a rate of fire of 1200 rounds per minute (up to 1800 in some versions) and a muzzle velocity of 755 m/s (2,475 ft/s) and a quick change barrel. So the MG42 had a higher rate of fire, was more accurate and could sustain that fire for longer without interruption.

This on top of the MG42 was most often used in defence with stockpiles of ammo in close proximity whereas the Vickers was most often used in attack and all the ammo had to be lugged forward with it and hence was often used more sparingly.

I think that with out going into barrel length, cordite charge densities, cordite burn characteristics or bullet shape and density etc. this explains the difference in stats.

Paddy

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Brian ()

Date: 11-09-06 19:09

Hello All,

The legendary cyclic rate of the MG 34/42 series (or any other auto weapon) should not be used when determining weapon effects. Cyclic rate is a laboratory evaluation of the mechanism of the gun, and can only be sustained by burning out the barrel and linking 1200 rds together without having a stoppage.

The FN MAG 58 (C6 in Canadian service) is one of the offspring of the MG 42. The sustained fire kit is also very similar to that used by the Germans. Our standard is 3 barrels per gun, with a barrel change every 200 rds. In the SF role, bursts are 20 rds rather than 5-8, with a muzzle velocity of 840 m/s. That is why SF MGs are supposed to work in pairs, so they can alternate bursts. There is no where in our doctrine or training that indicates even trying to achieve the cyclic rate, which is 650-1000 rds/min depending on the gas setting. There never was, is not, and never will be a gun crew that can achieve the cyclic rate in training, let alone in battle.

Without stockpiled ammo, I believe the basic battle load for a MG42 HMG team was 1500 rds. IIRC the Vickers was 800 rds dismounted, but most of the guns were served by a Universal Carrier, which increased the basic loadout. This would indicate to me that the standard that we use now is similar to the WWII standard. Lugging around a 25-40 lb MG, 20-30 lb tripod, and 80-100 lb of ammo, and then expending in 1 to 1.5 minutes would be a monumental waste of time and resources.

One other point, which is a huge advantage for the MG 34/42 IMO, is the fact that the gun was usable as a light LMG while moving, and only became an HMG when set on the tripod. The Vickers is not capable of this, except maybe in the hands of some exceptionally burly squaddie. Cue the Bren...

Regards,

Brian

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Paul Elvidge ()

Date: 11-09-06 20:08

Hi Paddy

No need to apologise for being a teckie-geek; I'm one too. So here's teckie right back at you! :-)

I still think it must be something other than RoF - I don't believe that Rich and the guys would be "seduced" by raw RoF data. The MG42 simply couldn't sustain that rate of fire for any length of time. Bull (World War II Infantry Tactics) quotes the advised maximum rate of fire as 300 to 350 rounds per minute to avoid overheating and excessive barrel wear. The barrel changing was indeed quick - it only took 5 or 6 seconds to change a barrel - but Hogg (The Encyclopedia of Infantry Weapons of World War II) writes that it was advised to change the barrel every 250 rounds! In this case you would not only need stockpiled ammunition, but also a mountain of barrels! And all this is without taking into account stoppages.

As for the Vickers, I'm sure Ken and RMD can furnish stories of its almost legendary reliability and the marathon shoots of which it was capable. Hogg quotes an example (admittedly from the First World War) where 10 guns fired for twelve hours - they fired a million rounds and only used a hundred barrels (an average of ten thousand rounds per barrel). One gun averaged ten thousand rounds per hour over the twelve hour period. There were no failures and all the guns were serviceable at the end. How's that for sustained fire!

All the best

Paul

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Paul Elvidge ()

Date: 11-09-06 20:39

Hi Andy

It's the MG34/42's superiority at longer ranges that has me puzzled - so if the Vickers was more accurate at longer ranges it would be even more puzzling.

However the German heavy spitzer round (7.92mm x 57 JsS) was boat-tailed anyway.

All the best

Paul

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Craig Simms ()

Date: 11-09-06 21:24

On Super Squadies....

Interesting in WW1 at least the Vickers was regarded as a rather light weapon system and many troops at the front were rather annoyed to have their Vickers taken off of them and replaced by Lewis guns. In their eyes they were losing a good 'light' machine gun and getting as replacement a rather heavy automatic rifle.

Comparisons between the weight of 100rds of Vickers belt and 100rds in Lewis drums came into this argument.

It apparently took a fair while for the troops on the ground to realise that while the Lewis wasn't the same as a Vickers it WAS a very useful weapon.

Stubborn buggers squaddies :P You can almost imagine back in 10000BC Pvt Urggg of the Urgg Ogg Cave Bn looking at the new club he has just been issued and complaining that his fist does just as good a job and doesn't need to be carried everywhere...

As for the MG42 outshooting the Vickers at 'longer' ranges I think we are getting back to the 'Vickers as Indirect Fire' argument. On the table we are talking 20inch right? 1 inch = 40 yards so 20 = 800 yards. So with this in mind the MG crew can still (in most cases) see where they are shooting at (just to the left of that tall tree) and can use their tactical skills to use their weapons to best effect.

With this in mind being able to quickly put 40 rounds onto a target in the 2 seconds you have to fire at it IS probably better in real world terms than only putting 20. Hence MG42s outshoot Vickers at long ranges.

(or in Craig logic anyways :P)

However our friend mister Vickers gun is often used to shoot out to a LOT longer than 800yards/20 table inches. Numbers I have been quoted say effect out to 3000.

The relative merits between 'slow firing' water cooled and 'fast firing' air cooled at these ranges I am not sure I am qualified to comment on but we must remember that we are talking about firing ranges outside the scope of the standard card stats.

Or something :)

Craig

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Steve Burt ()

Date: 11-10-06 05:34

I seem to recall a discussion on this forum a while ago about allowing the Vickers to fire indirect at ranges over 20 inches by adding a yellow box or two to reflect this.

You'd need an observer, of course, but it could be a handy feature.

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Brian ()

Date: 11-10-06 08:07

Hi

I agree with Craig that indirect fire with a MG is at very long range. It is usually on fixed lines, using an observer, and using long bursts (20 rds). It is a suppression type of fire, and is designed to deny ground to the

enemy. Dead ground, river crossings, crossroads, openings of defiles, etc...Just another tool in the Battalion Commanders bag of tricks. Yes the Battalion Commander, HMG/SFMG tasks are usually assigned at battalion level to ensure interlocking fields of fire across the battalion frontage.

The C6 GPMG I spoke of previously uses the same sight as the 81mm Mortar in Canadian service (which is more a survey instrument than a sight). This allows for emplaced guns to fire accurately in low visibility on fixed lines. It also allows us to have more than one emplacement position already dialed in using target information sheets. This is not new, these capabilities were developed during WWI by the Canadian Army.

The one factor that enables MG indirect fire is the ballistics of the ammunition. The NATO SS 77 7.62mm rd trajectory has a verticle height less than 2.68 m at 800m. At 2000m that verticle height is 54.33 m. So properly sighted, and using an observer, a pair of SFMGs could effectively fire over a 50m feature, at a range of 2000m and suppress an area until the ammo ran out.

The .303 and 7.92mm trajectories are no doubt different, but not significantly so.

By the way, the 7.62mm ammunition comes in 220 rd belts which weigh 5.4 kg each, not including the metal box. A double battle load weighs 83.2 Kg, and I didn't like it.

Regards,

Brian

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: R Mark Davies ()

Date: 11-10-06 21:28

If I remember, the card factors are specifically for fire against point targets or 'grazing' fire on fixed lines. For both these types of missions, the MG42 was a highly renowned practitioner. The Vickers MMG's long-range area fire was something that was to be added later after much discussion (which is still going on it seems) - it wasn't really worth delaying the British card release for that issue alone.

Mark

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Luke Willen ()

Date: 11-11-06 05:27

Something you need to remember is that troops will usually only engage at a range they can get sufficient observation of the enemy Although you might be able to see an enemy unit at 1000 + yards you would not usually engage at that range

Well sited machineguns with interlocking fields of fire could be highly effective, particularly if the attacking troops are deployed too close together.

Under the grazing fire rule (which I like) the attacker who attempts to use "wargamer's" as opposed to historical tactics will suffer for doing so. As with artillery the counter measure is to use historical formations and tactics.

Luke

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Andy ()

Date: 11-12-06 03:56

Im going to have to get my ballistics books out and get technical on your ass! <g>

Andy

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Luke Willen ()

Date: 11-12-06 06:02

Andy

While we are at it, if you have any tactical manuals that would shed light on the issue that would also be of assistance.

Luke

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Chris Ginn ()

Date: 11-17-06 09:09

Whilst the ballistics of .303 and .762 might be similar, the .762 is significantly more accurate, I guess with a higher velocity. We shot .762 target shooting rifles (Mauser action with a barrel conversion, I believe) at university. On one occasion we shot against a school team who wanted to use their .303's as they were used to them. The scores we achieved at 200, 400 and 600 metres were significantly higher. We lent them our .762's and they improved their scores significantly. I fired one of the .303s after, and the recoil is significantly less. You would not feel this with a self loading rifle such as the FN.

Presumably, this would mean that the .303 would be able to fire over a higher intervening obstacle than a GPMG with .762, and the 'beaten' area would be wider, but possibly shallower.

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Andy ()

Date: 11-17-06 12:40

I think in we really need some input from Rich, as after having several discussions on several points of game mechanics, after Rich has told me his view in relation to the rules he made sense.

So before i can put an actual real life slant on it i would like to hear Richs views first...

(And yes i am still debating long range IDF for the Vickers)

Andy

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Mark Hayes ()

Date: 11-17-06 14:48

Rich said the decisive reason for the different ratings was rate of fire, as I thought. Others have elaborated on that point.

Mark

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Andy ()

Date: 11-18-06 10:38

Maybe Craig is right having 20 odd rounds down range in 2 seconds at ranges of 800m is the reason at looking at it, then again spraying 20 rounds down range will lead to a hell of a wide grouping and could theoretically miss the target all together.

Having used the 7.62mm GPMG for several years, trying to empty a belt at a figure 11 target causes a hell of a spread, but i will go with Rich's decision BUT only if someone gives the damn Vickers a IDF box at -2/-1

Andy ;-)

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Paddy Green ()

Date: 11-20-06 04:40

Andy,

You started a debate about the Vickers long range fire/indirect fire capability and suggest we introduce an Optional rule to permit it. I'm personally not fully convinced that this is justified (but then as a German player I would say that wouldn't I.) However, just to start the debate on what such an optional rule might look like I propose the following for discussion:

"Vickers Long Range Fire Capability. Vickers MGs can on certain circumstances fire in the IDF portion of the turn. This may be done in the 10" to 40" range scales. The Vickers Long Range Fire template is 2" wide by 5" long and units with an aim point within this box are attacked with at -3/-2 which can be increased by +1 if 2 or more Vickers units combine their Long Range Fire into a single template. Vickers Long Range Fire does not count as barrage nor does it count as IDF for casualty determination. Vickers Long Range Fire cannot be combined with any other form of IDF. All Vickers Long Range Fire must have an unbroken LOS from the firing unit to the target and must be either self spotted or called by an organic spotter."

Any corrections, ammends, disagreements or brickbats? Over to you!

Paddy

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Chris Ginn ()

Date: 11-20-06 07:00

If rate of fire is the explanation, I think you may have made a mistake in that with the required barrel changes, the MG34 overall rate of fire would be lower than the Vickers, which after all was water cooled and probably less prone to stoppages. The Vickers can also feed the next belt straight on, I believe. With the MG34, you could wait for the barrel change and then 'dash' across the beaten zone. The MG 34 may also have had a larger beaten zone as it was designed to spray the bullets around. In the aimed fire mode, I would guess that the Vickers would put a higher % of rounds into the target area. Unfortunately we really need some hard data to make a full judgement. Lacking that, I do not think any difference between the two is justified.

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Brian ()

Date: 11-20-06 08:43

Hi Paddy,

A good start I think, although there are 3 points I debate.

1. It was not unusual in British/Commonwealth use for the 4.2" mortar and the Vickers to combine their fire on suppression tasks, especially in the defense.
2. I don't believe that LOS from firer to target is required, as I posted above. Fire can be called on map coordinates by a spotter exactly as in mortar fire. This of course is more likely in a defensive battle or in a deliberate attack situation.
3. The long range fire from a Vickers should be considered barrage fire for 2 reasons. a) It is intended as a harassing and/or terrain denial tool, and has to fire on a target for a long period of time to be effective. b) The guns must not be allowed to move or conduct any other activity for the duration of the turn.

I'm not sure whether -3/-2 is appropriate, but I'll let Andy address that one.

Chris, good point. Sustained fire, in a tactical setting is what we should be concerned with, not cyclic rate or the number of rounds per 3 or 5 second burst. It is a 10 minute turn after all.

Regards,

Brian

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: James D. Gray ()

Date: 11-21-06 03:42

I should point out that the German MG34 and MG42 *did not* fire 7.62mm ammunition. The standard rifle-caliber round for the German army during the Second World War was their 7.92mm round, which is not the same as the later NATO 7.62mm round.

Yours,

James D. Gray

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Chris Ginn ()

Date: 11-28-06 10:29

Yes, I know that the Germans used a 7.92mm round. I have never fired these, so I have no idea as to their ballistic performance.

The comments re 7.62mm are concerned with judging the effects of .303 vs .762 GPMG.

However, this is probably academic, since my understanding of the design of the GPMG was that it was modelled on the MG34/42, since tactical thinking was that it was better to spray the rounds around with a high rate of fire for maximum suppressive effect, rather than achieve higher accuracy with a lower rate of fire as 'a la Bren'. The barrel is designed to vibrate to achieve this.

Consequently, my guess is that accuracy at long range would be pretty dismal, but if you put enough rounds into the area you may hit something.

However, when it comes to the Vickers, I do not think the 'hose pipe' effect was part of the design concept, although obviously a spray of bullets would be beneficial. However I do not really know the answer to this

question. However, I am fairly sure that in the sustained fire role, where you just want to plaster a patch of ground with fire over an extended period, the water cooled vickers (just like the Maxim) would be more effective and will keep firing for longer provided you keep supplying the ammo.

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Brian ()

Date: 11-28-06 15:21

Hello All,

After a little research, I am even more convinced of the value of the Vickers long range fire.

The muzzle velocity of the 7.62mm NATO and the 7.92mm (Mauser) rounds are similar at around 2700-2900ft/second. The Vickers .303 round muzzle velocity is only 1970 ft/second, which means that the ballistic trajectory of the Vickers is much greater than the MG 42. See above.

The Vickers MG was essentially unchanged from the one used in WWI, where it was used to fire "barrages" out to 4000-4500m, over the heads of advancing troops. This capability was part of the training of the MG battalions in the British/Commonwealth armies in WWII.

The accessory equipment for the WWII Vickers included aiming posts, lamps, and sights similar to those I have used in Canadian service with the FN MAG 58. The techniques of observed indirect fire have not changed since WWI, since they are mathematical constants.

Regards,

Brian

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Craig Simms ()

Date: 11-28-06 21:58

Hey Brian,

ballastic trajectory re muzzle velocity - am I right in assuming you are saying that due to being slower the rounds drop off and plunge better at the end of their arcs?

I think from my readings that the MG units got MOST of the accessories. I have a book at home that I got during one of my regular book buying orgies (and then never get around to reading) about the Aust 2/2 MG Bn. It seems they recieved issue of the newer boat tail 303 rounds that promised better range... but not the range tables to go with them. Being in Syria at the time on garrison the RSM fortunately had the time to work out some from scratch and drew up his own on a sheet of goat skin parchment.

Craig

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Brian ()

Date: 11-28-06 22:46

Hi Craig,

How are things down under?

Yes, that was what I was trying to say. I re-read my post and I did leave that unsaid didn't I? Apparently the rounds are falling almost vertically at the end of the trajectory.

I was interested to find out that the energy delivered to the target (a nice way of saying stopping power) was not significantly different between the 2 calibres (.303 and 7.92mm).

Regards,

Brian

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Paddy Green ()

Date: 11-29-06 04:18

Guys,

Having graduated from a number of ballistic courses during my engineering career with the military, and although I am no expert, I think that there are a lot of urban myths being discussed here:

"...being slower the rounds drop off and plunge better at the end of their arcs." and "...apparently the rounds are falling almost vertically at the end of the trajectory...." It should be realised that a bullet fired from a horizontal rifle 4 ft off the ground will hit the ground at exactly the same time as a bullet dropped from the same height. Gravity doesn't change in the vertical axis because of movement in the horizontal. It is just that the bullet fired from the rifle will hit the ground a few thousand meters away! It is just with lower muzzle velocity the rounds will drop off at a shorter distance from the firer than with a higher muzzle velocity. They will never fall almost vertically unless fired straight up into the air!

Muzzle velocity gives a bullet 2 things. First is momentum, which is required for penetration, incapacitation effects and stopping power. A bullet moving 50% faster has 50% more momentum and bullet weighting 50% more has 50% more momentum. As the .303 and the 7.92 are roughly equivalent in size their weight may not be an issue but their muzzle velocities are dramatically different. A slow moving bullet may hit a target but will it incapacitate? Second is accuracy, a higher the muzzle velocity (generally) gives a bullet more spin and a flatter trajectory. This means that the bullet will go where it is aimed rather than somewhere else - hence the more accurate it is. When the velocity of a bullet begins to fall off due to air friction other issues take effect which can cause the bullet to topple etc. This causes the accuracy of a bullet to decline rapidly at the end of its trajectory.

Lastly is the suppressive effects of a machine gun. Here it is a matter of conjecture but there are generally 2 psychological effects at work. First is the noise and threat of bullets streaming over your head and the second is the sight, sound and feel of your buddies next to you getting hit and ripped apart. Now I'm no infantryman but I suggest that even with a little experience they will get familiarised with the first effect but will never get totally hardened to the latter. Given this I consider that spraying bullets around only really works if there are enough of them to generate a high probability of serious injury and effectively link these 2 psychological effects together in the mind of a Tommy Atkins.

This leads me back to the comments I made in my earlier post. The MG42 had a higher rate of fire, a higher muzzle velocity, a quick change barrel and often had stockpiles of ammo close by. This explains the difference in stats.

I will concede that the Vickers was tactically employed in an indirect fire role whereas the MG42 wasn't. I also consider that if this use was tatically significant it should probably be represented in WWII. However, I can't see any rationale for increasing the Vickers direct fire effectiveness of the basis of this tactical use. Why wasn't the MG42 used in this way - possibly because this was not a very effective use of an MG. Surely indirect fire could be done a whole lot better, more effectively and cheaply using artillery or mortars?

Paddy

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG
Author: Mark Hayes ()
Date: 11-29-06 10:40

Excellent post, Paddy. Just to piggyback on some of what you wrote, another issue to consider is the larger danger space created by rounds with a flatter trajectory. It is easier to hit somewhere on a 6' tall target with a high velocity round because range estimation is less important. There is a larger area along the line of fire that the target can be in and still be hit. This is a principle in naval gunnery and is the reason why the Krupp 11" gun was so deadly, even when engaging ship's with larger caliber guns. Add the fact that the MG42 puts more rounds down range in the same period of time, and I think it is reasonable to conclude that it was inherently more dangerous to be in an MG42's beaten zone at 800 yards than a Vickers; at least enough to justify the one factor difference in the ratings.

As Paddy points out, IDF with a Vickers is another issue. This was a useful technique in WWI because of the relative lack of mobile mortars. The Vickers' remarkable capability to fire almost continuously and exceptional reliably meant that it could sustain its beaten zone for long periods and thus create machine gun barrages. We have explored this technique in the past on the forum and there is an optional rule to cover it.

Mark

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG
Author: Andy P ()
Date: 11-29-06 10:43

im off to sulk ;-)

Just cos Paddy likes the Germans... damn you Fritz

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG
Author: James Baker ()
Date: 11-29-06 10:45

Maybe we need a prototype IDF zone for the Vickers. Allow it to fire barrages beyond its normal DF range.

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG
Author: Evan Allen ()
Date: 11-29-06 13:54

I thought you guys might like to read this article on Vickers usage

<http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2-27Ba-b1.html>

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Brian ()

Date: 11-29-06 15:21

Hello,

Thank you Evan for that. Most educational.

As to relying on the Artillery or Mortars to accomplish suppression, I have 2 points.

1. Artillery shoots are often restricted due to future plans or logistics issues (Sept-Oct 44 as an example). MGs employed in long range harassment or interdiction fire are a viable low cost alternative to Artillery. The Mortars in use late war (3", 4.2", 81mm, 82mm, 120mm) are also subject to logistics issues, though to be fair less often than artillery. The other issue is range, as MG fire can outrange mortar fire. The beaten zone engaged by 2 MGs firing continuously can deny ground very effectively for a long period of time, longer than mortars and artillery can, except possibly in the case of preparatory barrages for deliberate attacks.

2. The MG platoon attached to the Brit Battalion is a bird in hand (as is the 3" Mortar), while artillery support can sometimes be worth 2 birds in the bush. Most commanders, especially those whose commands are not the main effort, will have to rely on organic weapons, and will use them as much as possible.

We must also not confuse cone of fire (which the MG42 wins hands down) with a beaten zone (which the Vickers excels at).

Excellent discussion and debate, I am enjoying it thoroughly.

Regards,

Brian

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Paddy Green ()

Date: 11-29-06 17:08

Mark,

When you say "We have explored this technique in the past on the forum and there is an optional rule to cover it." have I missed some previous posts?

Is there already an optional rule in force - if so where? Their existence kind of makes my earlier suggestions fairly redundant.

Paddy

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Andy P ()

Date: 11-30-06 03:34

Mark,

This is the point i tried to make previously, a large amount of bullets(ROF) in a small space of time wil give a deadly cone of fire and will spread further with range. So the beaten zone will be bigger but not as effective, but the only way to prove it would be to see a manual or try in which i can do neither.

The Vickers with its slower fire will have a smaller but more effective beaten zone. I wonder do we need to alter the factors for the MG beaten zone for the MG42 with a +1??

In summary the MG42 is great along fixed lines and point fire, where as the Vickers is good at area denial?

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Paul Elvidge ()

Date: 11-30-06 09:11

Paddy - great post! So good in fact that I feel compelled to reply. :-)

Like you I'll make my observations about the processes involved and then summarise by giving my views on the way that this should be incorporated into a set of rules.

I too am no expert, but your grasp of External Ballistics (trajectories and stuff) and Newtonian Mechanics seems pretty strong to me. I agree with your second paragraph wholeheartedly.

However our views diverge in paragraph 3 - Terminal Ballistics. Incapacitation and Stopping Power (quite an elusive concept in a scientific sense) are definitely linked to momentum and your observations about momentum are certainly on target. But momentum is not the only issue in this contentious area. Another consideration is how much of that momentum is tranferred to the unfortunate target. It is this energy that, at least in part, determines the amount of damage to the target. Therefore a fast bullet that passes straight through a target (and doesn't hit anything vital) will often cause less damage that a slower bullet which embeds itself in the target and consequently tranfers all its energy to causing damage. So, even two bullets with the same momentum may cause different amounts of damage if one is a fast, light one and the other is a heavy, slow one. This is why musket wounds could be so severe. The critical effect of modern small calibre/high velocity rounds (5.56mm) is derived from their fragmentation upon impact at high velocities, which allows for significantly more of that damaging energy being tranferred than from a whole bullet (as opposed to the original theory of "tumbling" inside the target). Then there is also the issue of Temporary Cavitation, but that's too big a topic to be addressed here. Suffice it to say that there have been attempts to produce a general formula to model incapacitation. One of the simplist and most well known is the Taylor Knockdown Formula that simply multiplies the momentum by a coefficient of the calibre. But whatever method you use I believe that there is not enough difference between the Stopping Power of .303" and 7.92mm bullets fired from the weapons in question to warrant an advantage either way in a set of wargames rules.

In paragraph 4 (psychological effects) I agree that there was an effect that we might call "Spandau Fright" amongst the Allies (just as there was a thing that might be called "Tiger Fright"). However I don't believe that this was a debilitating effect and I don't believe that it was significantly worse than the dislike of any troops to being under machine gun fire.

And that brings us back to the old nutshell - rate of fire. The cyclic rate of fire of the MG42 (the massive 1200 rpm) is a red-herring. In under a minute you could actually fire off 750 rounds and make the three barrel changes that this would necessitate. So far so good, but then what? How many spare barrels do you have? What is the practical rate of fire? The answer is that this high rate of fire could not be sustained. Bull quotes the common rate of fire as being 300 to 350 rounds per minute and says that firing 250 rounds without pause was forbidden. So the MG42 could not put many more bullets down per minute over a prolonged period than most other MGs. This advantage was marginal and is easily offset by the innaccuracy caused by the heavy recoil. And this is without taking into account the comparative likelihood of jamming and other failures.

As for other people's argument of it having a flatter trajectory, this must be true as it had a higher muzzle velocity, but at the ranges that we are talking (60" is 2,400yds) I do not believe that this would have made a significant difference to its relative effectiveness either. I don't have the stats to back this up, but no doubt someone else will.

And the most telling argument of all, in my opinion, is the scale of the rules. If it was a skirmish set of rules I could understand an advantage being given for a more bullets being delivered over short periods. But at the level at which Battlefront is supposedly pitched (each turn representing ten minutes of "simulated" time and with battalion-sized or bigger commands) I don't think that there is any sustainable reason for turning this marginal advantage into an actual difference in stats. This process is similar to (but the reverse of) basing a pike's stats in a set of skirmish rules on the effectiveness of a pike phalanx in of massed-combat.

One final question deserves addressing if what I have written is correct. Why do so many well-informed, intelligent people want to give a German MG better stats than a British one (or any other nation's for that matter)? I believe that one reason is the erroneous belief that the Germans and their equipment were always superior to their enemies' (a bit like the Francophiles in the Napoleonic period). It would be interesting to know how many of those arguing the MG42's case don't actually use German armies. I will start the ball rolling by confessing that my interest in the debate is that I have a British Army, so I am only too well aware that bias is something we need to guard against. But, rightly or wrongly I also perceive other "injustices" exist in the rules - almost always in the Germans' favour e.g. their stats allow for the use of APCR even when it wasn't available, the Hetzer not being penalised for its cramped fighting compartment, the German 128mm gun not being penalised for slow-firing despite its bulky, two-part ammunition, etc. (Whoops, where did they come from?) :-)

And another reason is a tendency to rely on raw data as a basis for rules rather than processed information. And again that's something we all need to guard against.

Oh, and one last point - the Battlefront stats for German "Heavy" MGs doesn't just apply to the MG42, but also includes the MG34 (if memory serves) so any real advantage to be reflected through stats would have to apply to that weapon as well.

All the best

Paul

(If you've got this far, my apologies for the long post. And I would like to emphasize that this isn't an attack on either the writers or rules. It's just me airing my opinions - which, according to some people, I'm more prone to do than most).

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Luke Willen ()

Date: 11-30-06 12:26

By and large I tend to agree with Paul on this one. At the level BF operates at we are more interested in the result rather than the exact process by which that result was obtained. We are operating in the role of a battalion or maybe a regimental commander and are aware of what our companies are doing. I want to know that A Company is largely pinned down (i.e. its stands are suppressed or disordered. What I do not want to know (nor do I have any business knowing) is the detail of how 2nd Section 1st Platoon of A Company got pinned down by that machine gun. A battalion commander simply would not get that far forward in a battle and he usually has no business being there if he does (Colonel H Jones at Goose Green being an exception to this.

In regard to Paul's comments about the Hetzer and ammunition I rather suspect that these factors have already been taken into account when the fire factors were worked out.

I don't think the Germans are unduly favoured in the rules where they should not be so favoured. For example tanks such as the T34 are faster than its German opponent and are actually better gunned and better armoured as well depending on which phase of the war we are talking about. In the Western Desert many of the German tanks outrange British tanks. All this as it should be and BF brings it out better than most rules I have seen.

Regards
Luke

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG
Author: Paul Elvidge ()
Date: 11-30-06 13:08

Hi Luke

Don't get me wrong, I agree about Battlefront being a really good set of WW2 rules; in fact they're the best I've played.

I don't have the stats to hand but my view is that the Hetzer should be worse than a PaK40; is it? And the 128mm should be worse than the KwK43 L/71 (the King Tiger's gun); is it? Apologies in advance if I've got it wrong. And I'm sure the APCR ammo is included in the German stats, even though it was discontinued in '43. I'm not saying it's a conspiracy, just that it's hard to be objective, even if you try really hard.

All the best

Paul

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG
Author: Mark Hayes ()
Date: 11-30-06 14:49

Paddy,

I like the idea of giving the Vickers a -3/-2 IDF rating, which can be improved to -2/-1 by a concentration. Other limitations on using the Vickers in the IDF role are mentioned on the forum links above.

There are also some interesting comments on grazing fire at:

Paul,

In particular, the comments by Charles Sharpe and Dallas Gavan in the last link include some facts about trajectory that provide insight on the creation of danger space. I think it does vary (because of muzzle velocity) enough at the ranges we are talking about to consider it in the ratings.

I don't want to give the impression that Rich's decision to give the MG42 better ratings at long range was made casually and your comments about creeping German bias are well-taken. However, I have not seen any German bias from Rich, and I don't think I have any either. In fact, we tried hard to keep national bias of any kind from getting into the game design or ratings. Of course, we make mistakes and sometimes rely too heavily on sources that may, themselves, be biased.

Regarding your specific examples, I can relate a couple of things that may help explain the ratings. Rich has explained that the ratings for the Panzer IVH in the original card set does consider APCR while the Panther does not. I didn't see the research, but as I understand it, stocks were much less available for the 75mm/L70. When rating the vehicles for the Blitzkrieg and North Africa card sets APCR was considered when it became available. The same standards were applied when considering the use of high velocity rounds for American, British, and Russian guns.

Regarding the Hetzer and 128mm gun, there is an easy remedy for the slower rate of fire. When rating the French vehicles I considered their slower rate of fire and the issue of the single-man turret. The weapons ratings themselves must allow the vehicle to be capable of knocking out an enemy vehicle at the appropriate range. However, when designing the French Tables of Organization, I calculated the number vehicles more closely on ratio a 1 model for 3 actual vehicles, whereas the Germans (like the Americans and British) are more on a ratio of 1 to 2.5. This reduces the overall effectiveness of the ME while still giving individual vehicles a realistic chance of knocking out an enemy vehicle. You could do the same thing for Hetzer and Jagdtiger units by following a 1 to 3 ratio when creating the BF organization for the particular scenario.

"And another reason is a tendency to rely on raw data as a basis for rules rather than processed information. And again that's something we all need to guard against."

I couldn't agree more, and despite some disagreements on specific ratings, we hopefully have done a reasonably good job of following that goal with BF.

Mark

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG
Author: Paul Elvidge ()
Date: 11-30-06 19:55

Hi Mark

You've not just done a reasonably good job, you've done a really good job. As I've said they're the best WW2 rules I've ever played. All I'm saying is that I don't agree with every decision that you've had to make - and I've just pointed out some of the things I don't agree with and given my reasons. I hope that's not unreasonable.

As for the APCR/APDS I don't think you've used exactly the same standards for Axis and Allies. The Allies can't use it when it wasn't available (because it's on a different stats line with a date restriction), but because it's use is actually built into the Axis base stats they can continue to use it even after it was discontinued in 1943.

All the best

Paul

BTW, another thing you should be congratulated on is giving us all the chance to air our opinions. Thank you. Judging by the number of posts it seems several people have enjoyed the MG42 debate. :-)

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG
Author: Mark Hayes ()
Date: 11-30-06 21:16

Cheers Paul,

I enjoy reading posts that present arguments buttressed with historical information. I always learn something new.

My understanding is that while production of APCR ammunition was discontinued in 1943, stocks were still available in 1944, although they were issued on a strictly limited basis. One thing I read was 4 rounds per tank. My guess is that because the Panther was deployed in large numbers about the time manufacturing APCR ended, Rich and Greg decided to take it out of the ratings. Because larger quantities of APCR were produced for the 75mm/L48 before production ceased, they decided to increase the rating for the Panzer IVH at close range, where it would most likely be used for a killing shot.

I wish I had been involved with the design at the beginning. I could probably give a better explanation. Would it have been better to have a line with a date line with lower ratings? Perhaps so. I have no idea where you would draw the line, however.

I appreciate all your supportive comments and hope you will continue to enjoy our great hobby.

Mark

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Paddy Green ()

Date: 12-01-06 03:57

Paul,

Good counter arguments! I really enjoyed reading your comments!

You are of course totally correct about your comments on Incapacitation. I had left them out of my earlier post because I felt that if I had gone into the subjects of Temporary and Permanent Cavitation then it was getting too far into the weeds - many of these properties are determined by the bullet - but when considering them can you ever really separate the bullet from the rifle when considering the overall effect. (Much like your discussion of APCR/APDS) Also it gets rather unpleasant when you realise that these are effects that happen inside a human body! Lastly, I am fairly sure that if Temporary or Permanent Cavitation occurs then within the BFWWII level of abstraction we are talking about at least a "Disorder" or more probably a "KO."

I can't fault your comments about "Spandu" fright. During the Cold War it is well known that all Russians were 10ft tall supermen! I also can't fault you on your comments about the "myth" of the MG42 rate of fire.

You are also spot on when it comes down to the level of abstraction in the rules. Does this really make a difference? Here I think both sides of the argument are right. However, we are not arguing as to whether or not it makes a difference but whether that difference sufficiently large to generate a difference of a +1 factor? It depends where the line is drawn. I like you feel that the Fire and Fury guys have done a really good job and that BFWWII are the best WW2 rules I've ever played. However, I don't agree with every nuance in them - unarmed Universal Carriers counting as armour for Manoeuvre rolls example - Grrrr! HUMPH!!!! However, if we didn't have these differences in opinion then the rules would be so over-complicated as to be unplayable - so I for one can live with them and enjoy the discussions they generate!

Mark - I'll revise my optional rule proposals in light of previous posts. Thanks!

Paddy

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Luke Willen ()

Date: 12-01-06 12:00

Paul

It is not just the gun that makes a difference. It is also the ergonomics of the turret design and whether certain crew members had to perform double duty (eg command the vehicle and load the main gun).

Paddy

I agree that BF are the best set of battalion rules on the market and of course I don't agree with every nuance of them either - in my case, as you know I like to emphasise morale a bit more and take a more detailed look at accumulated casualties at section level. House rules like this, or indeed not counting universal carriers as armour are of course up to individuals. Out of interest, if you do not count a universal carrier as armour does it not follow that a German halftrack should also not be counted as armour?

Luke

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Paul Elvidge ()

Date: 12-01-06 17:32

Hi Luke

Yes, you're absolutely right; it's ergonomics, not the guns. And that's what I was trying to say, although I didn't explain it very well. Sorry, I'll try again.

The PaK40 is the same weapon as the gun in the Hetzer and so could be considered to have the same stats. However, given the extremely cramped fighting compartment of the Hetzer I would expect the Hetzer's stats to be worse than those of the PaK40 (to reflect the Hetzer's relative disadvantage in ergonomics).

Similarly, although the 128mm gun of the Jagdtiger and the KwK43 L/71 of the King Tiger were different guns they had a similar theoretical performance. However the extremely heavy and cumbersome two-part ammunition of the 128mm gun should, in my opinion, give it a relative disadvantage in ergonomics when compared to the King Tiger and I would expect this to be reflected in the stats.

In neither case are the disadvantages that I would expect apparent in the stats.

Sorry I didn't explain myself properly in the first place.

All the best

Paul

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Paddy Green ()

Date: 12-04-06 05:34

Mark,

I've read through the past posts and with this comment I consider that a consensus optional rule would be:

"Vickers Long Range Fire Capability. Vickers MGs which are emplaced or in an IP can on certain circumstances fire in the IDF portion of the turn. This may be done in the 10" to 60" range scales. The Vickers Long Range Fire template is small and aligned lengthways along the direction of fire. Units with an aim point within this box are attacked with at -3/-2 which can be concentrated by +1 if 2 or more Vickers units combine their Long Range Fire onto a single template. Vickers Long Range Fire cannot be combined with any other form of IDF; if they are overlaid then effects are worked out separately. Vickers Long Range Fire does counts as a barrage but does not count as IDF for casualty determination. All Vickers Long Range Fire must have an unbroken LOS from the firing unit to the target and must be either self spotted or called by an organic spotter."

You will note the following changes from my earlier suggestion (people who made persuasive argument identified in brackets):

Maximum range increased from 40" to 60" (Andy Perry)

Template changed from 2" wide by 5" long to small and restricted alignment. (RMD)

Added the restriction that to use Long Range Fire Vickers should be emplaced or in an improved position. (Joe)

Now counts as a barrage for manoeuvre roll purposes. (Brian)

My outstanding concerns are:

Should this only be permitted for Vickers or should all MMG and HMG's qualify?

Does it require an unbroken LOS?

Any Comments?

Paddy

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Luke Willen ()

Date: 12-04-06 07:44

A rule of this nature would also simulate the practice of indirect fire with machine guns during WW1 trench warfare. The Over the Top version of Command Decision had a similar rule.

I would have this apply to all HMG and MMG but I would only apply the rule when the side is in a defensive or emplaced position at the start of the game and the weapon has never been moved during the game.

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Mark Hayes ()

Date: 12-04-06 09:50

I agree with Paddy's proposal except I think the IDF range should start at 20", where DF range leaves off. This is in keeping with the way we make other cards.

I'm inclined to limit the practice to the Vickers only. I have not read about anyone else using this technique in WWII. I'm especially skeptical of the U.S. M1917 being used in this role. Of course, I'm open to evidence of this.

Mark

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Paddy Green ()

Date: 12-04-06 11:02

Mark - Agree we'll keep it for Vickers only and start at 20". I'll put this up for playtesting in the games I play with Richard and include it my our list of optional rules if it proves valuable.

James - do you wan't to cut and paste from this web-string onto the Free stuff as a optional rule for playtesting?

Paddy

Re: Sustained fire: MG34/42 v. Vickers MMG

Author: Brian ()

Date: 12-04-06 12:02

Hi Paddy,

Excellent work.

I am not convinced that a LOS from gun to target is necessary, but for the life of me I can't give you an alternative that won't be too cumbersome. Calling for fire (organic support only) is the same as a 3" mortar, with the observer having LOS to the target is the easy part. The trajectory over intervening terrain is another kettle of fish, and will probably complicate the issue.

I agree that the Vickers is likely the only gun to use this technique, but I wonder about the M1917 in it's early water cooled version. I don't have any data to argue either way.

What about SOS targets and pre-registered targets?

Regards,

Brian