

Battlefront: First Echelon – Ground Weapon Systems

Rules v1.0

Superior Gun Stabilisation

Being able to accurately engage targets while on the move is a very powerful capability of modern tanks. Gun stabilisation has been a feature of tank design since the Sherman, but it is only since the 1970s and 80s that gun stabilisation has made tank gunnery on the move virtually as accurate as gunnery at the halt. Consequently, while most postwar tanks may have stabilised guns to some degree, only a few modern tank designs can be said to have stabilisation good enough to make a difference in game terms (e.g. Leopard 1 & 2, Challenger, Abrams and T-80).

Tanks with Superior Gun Stabilisation will have 'Stabilised' noted on their unit card and will use the following rules:

1. If the tank fired in the Offensive Fire phase and has two actions available in the subsequent Manoeuvre Phase, it may move for one action OR may adopt Overwatch. The Offensive Fire is therefore assumed to use the first action.
2. If the tank has two available actions in its Manoeuvre Phase but did not fire in the Offensive Fire Phase, it may move for one action AND adopt overwatch.
3. Note that Overwatch can be performed as a single action in this instance, whereas it would normally take the full turn to perform.



Superior Fire Control

The tank commander's ability to quickly identify targets and to communicate that targeting information to the gunner and the gunner's ability to quickly engage those selected targets are crucial factors in modern armoured warfare. Many modern tank designs incorporate a variety of often very high-tech fire control aids, which allow an individual tank to engage and destroy many times as many targets than was possible in WW2.

1. Tanks with Superior Fire Control will have 'SFC' noted on their unit card and may fire TWICE in the Defensive/Opportunity Fire phase with their main gun if the target is destroyed with the first round.
2. Secondary weapons such as tube-launched ATGMs may only fire once per phase, regardless of SFC.
3. N.B. Rule 2 above should not be taken as permission to fire once with gun AND once with ATGM! The vehicle may EITHER fire twice with main gun or once with a secondary weapon.



Heavy Weapon Units Mounted On Vehicles

Some dismountable heavy weapon units may be mounted on their transport vehicles, to enable them to fire while mounted and greatly increase battlefield mobility and flexibility. E.g. mortars mounted on mortar carriers, ATGMs and recoilless rifles mounted on jeeps, machine guns mounted on various vehicles, etc. Modern military vehicles are frequently designed with this requirement in mind. Such a capability will normally be listed on the carrier vehicle's unit card and/or on the unit TO&E.

However, mounting a heavy weapon on its carrier vehicle does come with certain limitations:

1. Any mounted heavy weapon unit listed on its unit card as a Gun (e.g. most recoilless rifles, portee AA/AT guns, heavy mortars and heavy ATGM launchers) may NOT attempt to bail out if the vehicle comes under fire. If the vehicle is KO'd, the transported unit will be automatically lost along with the carrier, as it takes an unacceptably long time to detach the weapon from its carrier. This procedure is exactly the same as for towed guns in the standard rules.
2. If the mounted heavy weapon unit is listed on its unit card as Troops (e.g. machine guns, light mortars and light ATGMs), it may attempt to bail out using the normal bail-out procedure.
3. In a very few instances, as noted in the TO&Es, an infantry unit may donate its integral light ATGM to the vehicle crew. For example, a West German Panzergrenadier Squad may leave its integral MILAN ATGM mounted on their Marder vehicle and a US Mech Infantry Squad may leave their M47 Dragon ATGM mounted on their M113. In this instance, if the vehicle is KO'd, the ATGM will be lost along with the vehicle unless there is a mounted unit of the appropriate type that can bail out, thereby taking the weapon with them.
4. A few vehicles have an alternate weapon that may be dismounted in order to enable the unit to fight from a dismounted position. For example, the US Army's M901 Improved TOW Vehicle carries a dismountable TOW launcher in addition to the vehicle's own 'Hammerhead' TOW launcher and some M113 APCs carried tripods in order to dismount the vehicle's HMG. As this weapon requires the services of most of the vehicle crew, it is not possible for both the dismounted weapon AND the vehicle to fight at the same time and common sense must therefore be applied. Treat such weapons as if they are transported Guns, as per rule 1 above.



Exposed Vehicle Weapons

In some cases, weapons mounted on armoured fighting vehicles require a crew or gunner to operate the weapon from a very exposed position, thus denying themselves the protection of the vehicle's armour. These are often dismountable heavy weapons such as recoilless rifles, ATGMs, SAMs and AA Guns. In the case of guided weapons, this also often requires a crew to stay in that position for the weapon's entire flight to the target and is consequently a very hazardous occupation.

The following rule applies to such weapons:

1. Where a unit card has the note 'Exposed', 'Exp' or simply 'X', the weapon concerned may not be fired if the unit is Disordered (though other vehicle weapons may be fired as normal).

Note that softskinned vehicles are vulnerable by the very nature of them being softskinned and the crew don't have any armour to duck behind, so this rule does not apply to weapons mounted on softskinned vehicles.

I've arbitrarily decided not to apply this rule to pintle-mounted MGs, even though they could often be in exposed positions. Feel free to disagree – the intent of this rule is to reduce the ability of vehicle-mounted heavy weapons to claim the benefit of armour protection, even when in reality, they are not mounted within that armour protection. It also then gives an advantage to those vehicles where the weapon is fully integrated into the vehicle design and can be operated from under armour (e.g. M901 ITV, M113 TUA, M2/M3 Bradley, BRDM & BMP-1 with AT-3 'Sagger', BRDM & BMP-2 with AT-5 'Spandrel', Jaguar 1 and FV-438).

Examples of vehicles with exposed heavy weapons are:

MILAN mounted on Marder, M113, VAB & Fuchs.

M47 Dragon mounted on M113.

TOW mounted on M150, AMX-13 VTT, YP-408 PWAT, Wiesel & Jaguar 2.

AT-4 'Spigot' mounted on BMP-1P and BMD-1P.

Recoilless Rifles mounted on FV-432, SPz-Lang, M113 and BTR-50.

SAM mounted on NM-195.



Large Firing Signatures

In the standard spotting rules, units that open fire attract a +1 shift on the Spotting Table. This is sufficient for conventional guns and smallarms, but some post-WW2 weapons such as Recoilless Rifles, Surface-to-Air Missiles and Anti-Tank Guided Missiles often have unusually large firing signatures. Apply the following rules for these weapons:

1. Weapons that have unusually large firing signatures have a note such as '+2 spot ATGM' or '+3 spot SAM' marked on their card. This means that when these weapons are fired, they attract a +2 or +3 shift on the Spotting Table **INSTEAD OF** the usual +1 (NOT in addition to the +1).
2. Weapons such as 105mm+ Recoilless Rifles, first-generation ATGMs and most SAMs will get the +3, while smaller Recoilless Rifles (e.g. US 75mm or Soviet 82mm) and more modern ATGMs (e.g. MILAN, AT-5 or TOW) will get +2.

Note that common sense needs to be applied. For example, a BMP or Bradley would only attract the additional spotting modifier when firing their ATGM – when firing their gun they would get the normal +1 modifier. Similarly, a SAM team firing smallarms in self-defence against infantry would only attract a +1 spotting modifier and not the +3 for firing their SAM.



Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (ATGMs)

In *Battlefront: First Echelon*, ATGMs are largely handled in the same manner as any other direct-fire weapon. However, there are a few exceptions to the rule:

1. As discussed in the Superior Fire Control rules, a vehicle with Superior Fire Control may only fire its ATGM once per phase and may not fire the gun AND ATGM in the same phase.
2. Wire-guided ATGM targets will gain an additional +1 cover bonus if the line of sight crosses Orchard or Swamp terrain types, as well as any large bodies of water such as wide rivers, lakes or sea or any power or telephone lines. This is due to the risk of the guidance-wire getting snagged on trees or disrupted by water. The vast majority of ATGMs during the 1980s were wire-guided, though a very few, such as Hellfire, 9K114 *Shturm* (AT-6 Spiral) or 9K112 *Kobra* (AT-8 Songster) were laser or radio-guided and were not affected by this problem. Note that ATGMs fired by fixed-wing aircraft are not affected by this problem and helicopters will only be affected if they are flying at Nap-of-Earth altitude.
3. Some units have ATGMs as a secondary weapon and/or carry a very limited supply of ATGMs. Consequently, the number of ATGMs is limited for these units, as specified on the unit cards.
4. Some Troop units may leave their organic ATGMs mounted on their transport vehicle after they dismount, as detailed in the TO&Es (e.g. US infantry may leave their M47 Dragon mounted on their M113 and West German Panzergrenadiers may leave their MILAN mounted on their Marder, M113G or Fuchs).
5. Top-attack missiles such as the Swedish BILL and Israeli Spike NLOS attack the flank armour rather than the front armour. They are not affected by ERA, Chobham armour or target cover such as being hull-down or dug-in.

