

Springtime on the Oder

8th Guards Army on the Road to Berlin

March 1945

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Introduction

March 1945: The death throes of the 'Thousand Year Reich' are being enacted on the banks of the river Oder. The Soviet Winter Offensive partially carried the Oder line off the march at the beginning of February, although the German defenders have been successful in stabilising their position and preventing the 'Fortress' city of Kustrin from becoming encircled. Whilst the Red Army has brought up reinforcements of men and equipment the Wehrmacht has rushed reinforcements to the sector and formed a number of new units, notably the Panzer Division "Muencheberg", with the intention of preventing the loss of the Kustrin garrison. Whilst the newly installed Gotthard Heinrici, commander of Army Group Vistula, ponders exactly when and where the next Soviet thrust will fall, the 8th Guards Army of Lieut-General V.I. Chuikov, and the 5th Shock Army of Col-General N.E. Berzarin are preparing to assault the defences to the west of Kustrin with the intention of consolidating their bridgeheads, and breaking through to Seelow, leaving SS General Friedrich Rienefarth and his beleaguered garrison cut off in the city.....

Soviet Briefing

Situation

147th Guards Rifle Regiment Command Post, 7am, 23 March 1945.

General Chuikov called you and the other regimental commanders of 8th Guards army to his headquarters yesterday morning. He seemed to be under a lot of pressure. Kustrin was mistakenly declared liberated by Berzarin and his 5th Shock Army back in February, and now Front desperately needs it to be taken so that the advance on Berlin can continue. Rumour has it that Chuikov's response to Malinin, Zhukov's chief of Staff had not gone down well with the Marshal ("Did not Kustrin fall a month ago? Surely it will be unnecessary to take it for a second time"), and that the Hero of the Defence of Stalingrad was now fully focused on the task in hand.

The city of Kustrin is already more than 80% encircled, with only a single road to the west still allowing food and ammunition to be brought into its defenders. Our front line positions are 2km apart at the widest point, with only the villages of Golzow and Gorgast providing any cover in the flat, boggy terrain of the Oderbruch. Chuikov's orders are simple: annihilate the Fascist positions to your front and drive the enemy backwards. Golzow must be ours by nightfall.

Your troops are rested and reinforced after the advance through Poland, and whilst you are disappointed that you have not been withdrawn to the rear for "special training" prior to the advance on Berlin along with 8th Guards other crack regiments, you have at least been reinforced with replacements of reasonable quality. Since the Polish campaign drew to a close your veterans have had an opportunity to whip these lads into shape and you are confident that your companies will go into battle with their customary élan.

Your supply situation is of greater concern. Day after day relays of supply trains disgorge ammunition and new equipment along the Oder front. Artillery ammunition, however, is being jealously hoarded for the main offensive and it has been made clear to you that you will not be able to rely on the ferocious fire support to which you have become accustomed. Rather, you will have to make do with the division's own field guns and mortars, and (heaven help you) captured German pieces and ordnance – part of the spoils from the butchering of the reconstituted Army Group Centre during the winter.

To compensate you will be properly supported by the T34s and JSIIs of two full Tank Brigades, and you are confident that, given the increasingly ragged nature of the prisoners your patrols are bringing in each night, these should be more than adequate to allow you to deal with the scratch formations that are manning the lines opposite your positions. The enemy has had time to prepare his defences, but your patrols suggest relatively limited belts of mines and wire, and the high water table makes the construction of deep bunkers as much of impossibility for the enemy as it is for your own troops.

Now, with the watery sun hanging over the horizon, the fire of your batteries has descended on the German positions for a short barrage, drowning out the roar of the tanks that will shortly support your leading infantry units. You scan the desolate expanse in front of you through your binoculars for signs of movement, but to no avail. You watch the second hand of your watch count down to seven o'clock and in the brief silence which falls as the guns re-register their fire deeper into German lines, you hear the "Hurrahs" of your riflemen over the revving of tank engines as they rise from their trenches and head off into the early morning gloom.....

Timing

The game is played over 15 Turns.

Soviet Reinforcements

Infantry MEs – The Russian front line is made up of a trench system and / or improved positions at the player's discretion. MEs can be deployed anywhere in or behind the front line in trenches / improved positions. The front line includes a one deep line of BUS on the southern edge of Gorgast (see the map, the exact number will depend on how you choose to configure the town). There is a buffer of empty BUS one deep, between you and the German forces deployed in the town.

The Soviet player can start the game with as many infantry MEs on the board as he chooses (other than MEs designated as tank riders which must enter the table with their assigned armoured ME. The Soviet player can, if he chooses, provide the umpire with a reinforcement schedule for Infantry MEs that do not start in the front line trenches, designating the turn and the part of the trench system where the reinforcements will arrive. These units are placed directly into the designated area on the designated turn. Where the designated trenches are occupied (ie the ME can not be physically placed in the trenches in its entirety) any excess units are placed outside the trench and receive a disorder marker.

Armoured MEs – the T34/76 and SU76 MEs commence the game deployed anywhere within the Soviet Set up area. The Soviet Player may start the game with one armoured ME deployed just on the Southern map edge not

more than 20" from the Eastern map edge. Each subsequent turn the Soviet player may, at his discretion, place on further armoured ME in the same area. This completes the movement capability of the ME being placed on the table.

Victory conditions

Soviet Major Victory	As per a minor victory plus gain a foothold (ie an undisordered unit in 1 BUS) in Golzow.
Soviet Minor Victory	Control all BUS in the Old Soldiers Settlement.
Draw	Russians hold the initial frontline positions of the Doeberitz Division (ie all BUS and improved positions / trenches within 24" of the Soviet Front Line.

Losses / kills are disregarded from the Soviet victory conditions.

Boggy Ground

Areas of marshy ground should be randomly placed on the board by the umpire. Vehicles that touch any part of such an area during their movement phase must take one bog down check for each movement action they make during the turn. If failed the vehicle is considered to be bogged down at the point at which it entered the boggy terrain.

In all other off road / track areas any vehicle that makes a rapid advance must make one bog down check. If failed, the vehicle is considered to be bogged down at the end of its first move action.

Hull down

All vehicles apply a negative modifier of "1" to hull down attempts.

Buildings & Trenches

All buildings on the table are considered to be of two stories. The buildings in this area were historically of solid construction. Troops in buildings therefore get a -2 fire modifier from both direct and indirect fire. In addition, troops and guns that occupy prepared positions that exist at the start of the game receive a -2 modifier to all direct and indirect fire. Any improved positions created during the game will provide a -1 modifier to both types of fire.

Troops in trenches may move at normal speed. Such troops do not receive a +1 modifier on the spotting table.

Hedges LOS impact

Each of the tracks running roughly North-South on the map has a hedgerow running along its east side. These were bare at the time of the battle, have no impact on LOS, and do not require a breach action to cross. Troops/guns attempting to improve position whilst conformed to the base of these hedgerows receive an additional +1 modifier.

Gorgast starting positions

The Soviets begin the game with a foothold in Gorgast (see the front line marked on the map). All the adjacent built up areas are vacant and can not be set up as occupied by the German player.

Suspected positions and first fire modifier

The front lines had been stable for around 1 month and the Soviet forces had had plenty of time to reconnoitre the German defences, including mine fields, wire, and the trenches themselves. All German and Soviet positions (but not units – ie) to a depth of 20" are considered suspected for the purposes of direct and indirect fire. German first fire modifiers, however, still apply.

Soviet Artillery

Soviet Artillery is oriented on a South East to North West Axis.

At his option the Soviet player may pre-plan the first three turns of fire from his off board artillery. Pre-planned fire arrives automatically (although a role is still made for danger close. This fire does not constitute a "barrage".

Command Posts

All commanders are considered to be dug in at the start of the games, and until moved have a command radius of 10".

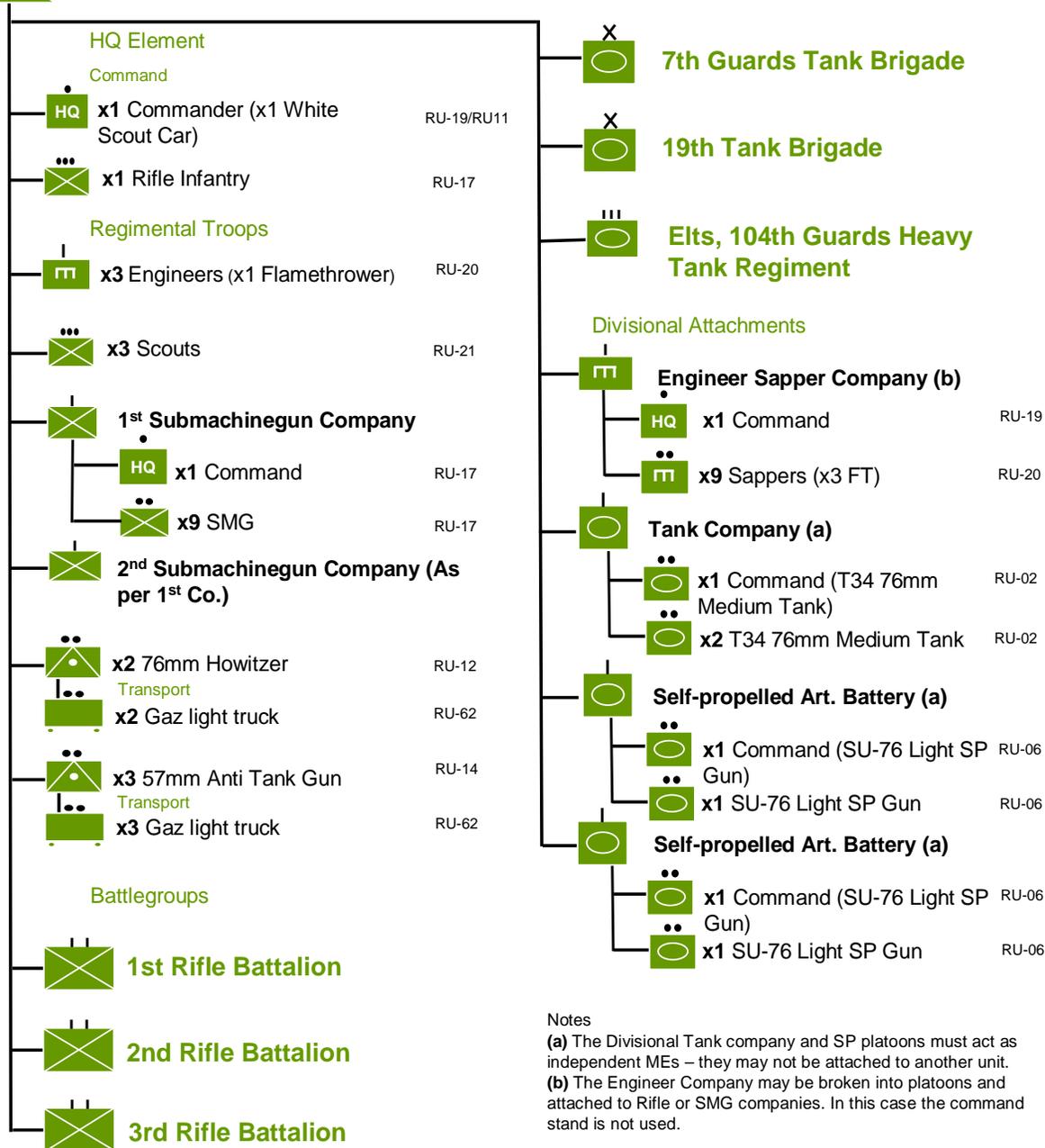
Soviet Order of Battle



Reinforced Elements, 47th Guards Rifle Division, 4th Guards Rifle Corps.

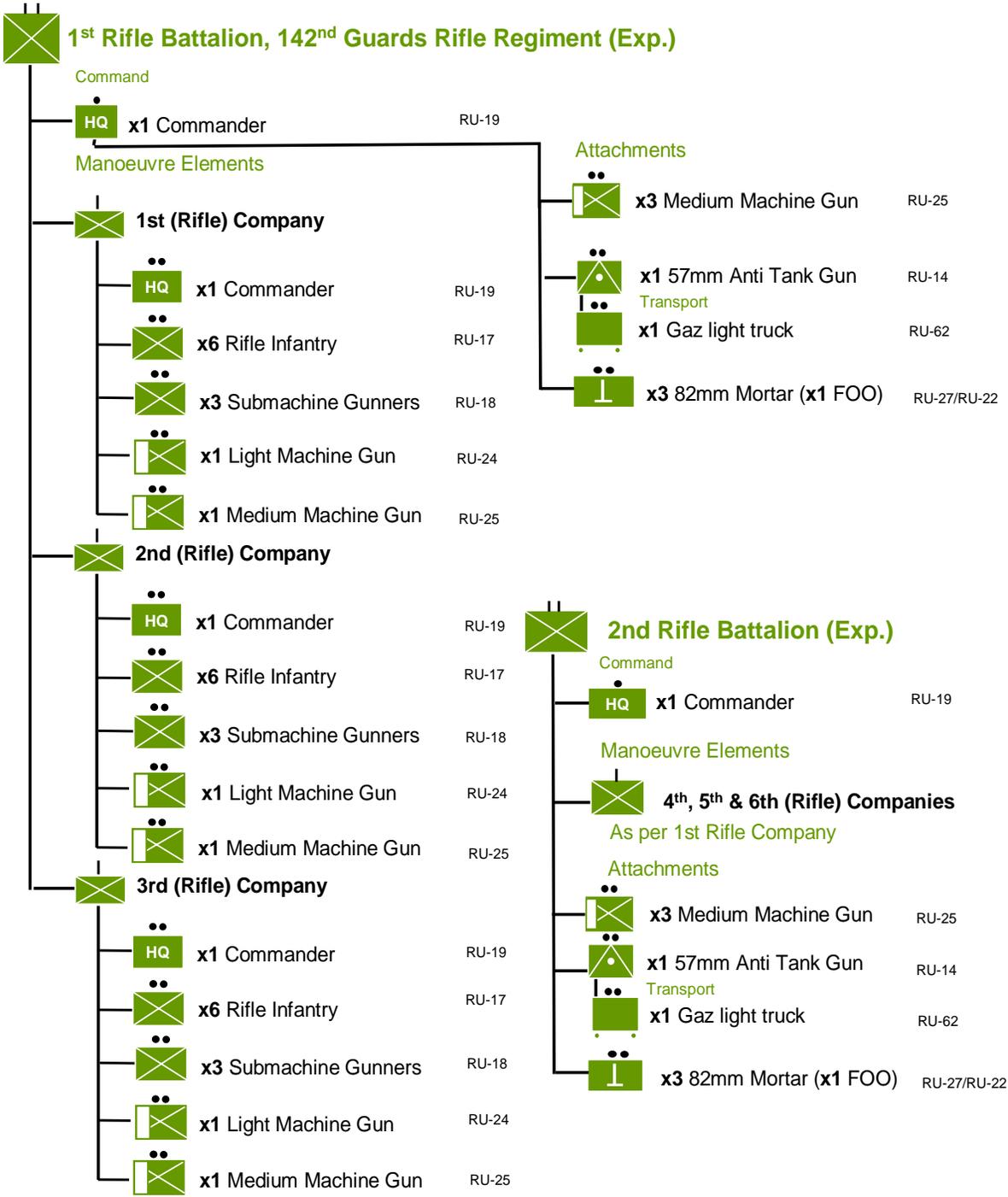


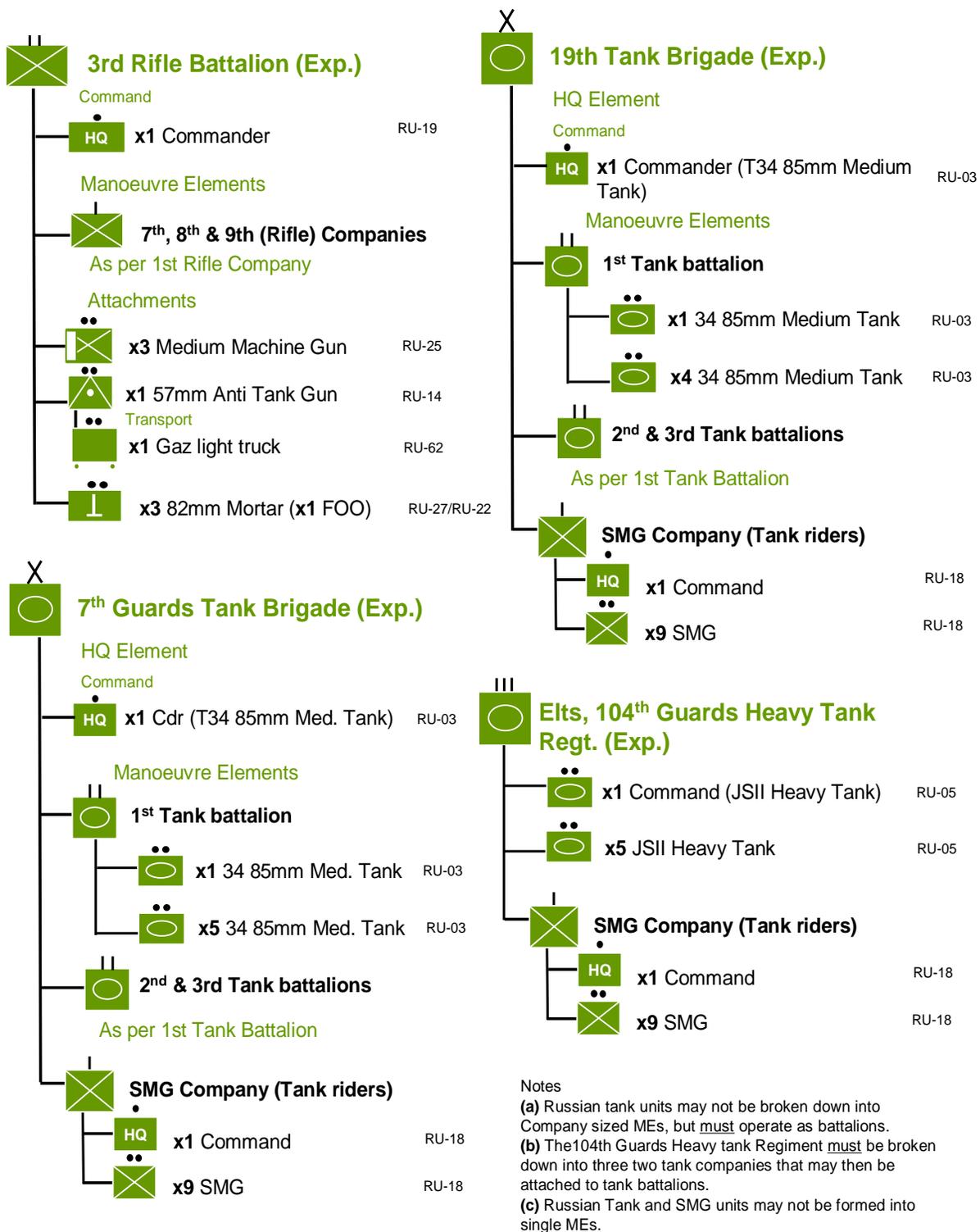
142nd Guards Rifle Regiment (Exp)



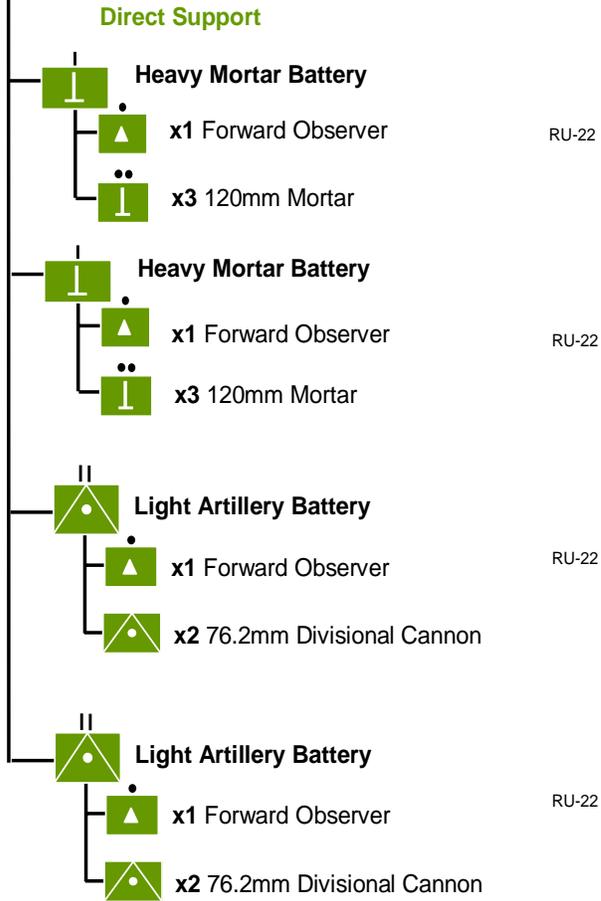
Notes

- (a) The Divisional Tank company and SP platoons must act as independent MEs – they may not be attached to another unit.
- (b) The Engineer Company may be broken into platoons and attached to Rifle or SMG companies. In this case the command stand is not used.





 **142nd Guards Rifle Regiment, Artillery Support**



Notes

- (a)** On the first turn all calls for fire are automatically successful. On turns 2 and 3 calls continue to be automatic providing that the Soviet player provided the umpire with a fire plan prior to the game commencing. Danger close rolls must still be made.
- (b)** No smoke rounds are available to the Soviet player.
- (c)** Soviet FOOs are unable to call for fire in the turn they move, or the subsequent game turn.

