

# The Iron Crucible

A Combat-Heavy Military Campaign for *Fate's Edge*

*Tiers II-IV — 6-10 sessions — Siege warfare, mercenary politics, war magic*

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## Campaign Overview

A three-part military campaign emphasizing tactical combat, war magic, and mercenary company politics. Players command a mercenary unit through escalating conflicts where every battle has strategic consequences.

### The Three Crucibles

- **Part I: The Granite Gate** (Tier II) - Fortress siege with positional warfare
- **Part II: The River of Blades** (Tier III) - Mobile river campaign with naval combat
- **Part III: The Citadel of Ash** (Tier IV) - City-wide battle with magical WMDs

## Core Combat Mechanics

### Warfare Position System

Position	Combat Bonus	Tactical State
Dominant	+2 dice, +1 Effect	Flanking, high ground, prepared ambush
Controlled	+1 dice	Standard engagement, cover available
Risky	No bonus	Even fight, exposed position
Desperate	-1 dice, +1 DV	Pinned, surrounded, disadvantage

### Squad Command Rules

Players control their character + a squad of followers (Scale = Tier + 1):

- **Squad Actions:** Move as group, attack as group, take hits as group
- **Squad Fatigue:** Shared track equal to highest Body in squad
- **Morale Checks:** When squad takes first casualty or suffers >50

### Battlefield SB Spend Menu

- **1 SB:** Reinforcements arrive for enemy, terrain hazard appears
- **2 SB:** Enemy war mage intervenes, supply line disrupted
- **3 SB:** Command betrayal, environmental catastrophe (fire, collapse)
- **4+ SB:** Strategic reversal (allies retreat, objective compromised)

## Part I: The Granite Gate (Tier II)

### Strategic Situation

The mercenary company **Iron Phoenix** must breach the impregnable Granite Gate fortress. Three approaches available, each with different combat challenges.

### Approach Clocks

- **Main Gate Assault [6]** - Direct but heavily defended
- **Cliffside Scalers [4]** - Stealth approach with climbing hazards
- **Underminers [4]** - Tunnel warfare with collapse risks
- **Gatehouse Control [8]** - Overall objective clock

### Combat Set-Pieces

**The Killing Ground** Open courtyard with murder holes and boiling oil. **DV 4** to cross without casualties. War magic can create cover (**DV 3** to summon earthworks).

**Arrow Storm Passage** 200-yard corridor under constant arrow fire. **DV 5** athletics check or take squad casualties. Shields provide +1 Position.

**Gatehouse Final Assault** Heavy door with rotating defender squads. **Tactical Clock [6]** - each success rotates defenders, each failure adds enemy reinforcements.

### Special Combat Rules

- **Siege Equipment:** Ballistae (+2 Effect vs structures), battering rams (auto-success vs gates with protection)
- **Defender Advantages:** Murder holes (attack at Dominant), boiling oil (area denial)
- **Assault Disadvantages:** Limited cover, constant pressure on supplies

## Part II: The River of Blades (Tier III)

### Naval Combat Framework

River warfare with unique positional challenges based on current, wind, and vessel type.

### Vessel Types & Bonuses

Vessel	Combat Bonus	Movement
War Galley	+2 dice boarding actions	Slow upstream, fast down
River Sloop	+1 dice ranged attacks	Maneuverable, current advantage
Fire Barge	Area denial weapon	Drifting hazard, one-time use
Troop Transport	Carry 3 squads	Vulnerable, requires escort

## River Battle Clocks

- **Enemy Fleet Strength [6]** - Destroy or capture enemy vessels
- **Bridgehead Establishment [4]** - Secure landing zone for assault
- **Supply Line Security [4]** - Protect logistics from raiders
- **Final Naval Battle [8]** - Decisive engagement

## Naval Combat Actions

- **Ramming:** Risk vessel damage for automatic boarding advantage
- **Boarding Actions:** Close combat between vessels (use squad rules)
- **River Current:** Each round, vessels drift 1 position downstream
- **Fire Ships:** Drifting weapons that create area denial zones

## Part III: The Citadel of Ash (Tier IV)

### City-Wide Warfare

Urban combat with magical WMDs, shifting front lines, and civilian complications.

### District Control System

Seven districts each with unique combat challenges and strategic value:

District	Control Value	Combat Special Rules
Wizard's Quarter	3 points	Magical hazards, teleportation risks
Market Square	2 points	Ambush opportunities, civilian complications
Noble Heights	2 points	Defensible positions, political stakes
Docks	1 point	Naval support access, smuggling routes
Temple District	1 point	Healing sanctuary, divine intervention
Slums	1 point	Guerrilla warfare, mobility advantage
Citadel	4 points	Final objective, heavy fortifications

### Magical WMD Rules

Three city-scale weapons that can be captured and used:

**The Sun-Thrower** Siege laser that automatically destroys one district's defenses. **DV 6** to capture, requires magical specialists to operate.

**Quake Engines** Cause building collapses across multiple districts. Create area denial zones and positional hazards.

**Plague Cauldrons** Biological warfare that affects both sides. Control provides strategic leverage but moral complications.

## Urban Combat Challenges

- **Rubble Navigation:** Difficult terrain that slows movement
- **Ambush Alleyways:** Risk of sudden enemy reinforcements
- **Civilian Complications:** Non-combatants create moral and tactical dilemmas
- **Shifting Front Lines:** Control changes create new positional challenges

## War Magic Integration

### Combat-Focused Magic Paths

Path	Siege Applications	Battlefield Risks
Casters	Earthworks (cover), fire barriers (area denial)	Backlash creates hazards for both sides
Runekeepers	Ward gates, bless troops (+1 morale)	Obligation to war patrons escalates
Invokers	Sanctify ground (position advantage)	Symbols attract enemy magical attention
Cantors	Battle hymns (+1 squad effectiveness)	Songs reveal position to enemies
Summoners	Combat spirits (flanking assistants)	Spirits may turn on stressed summoner

### War Magic Specializations

#### Siege Magic (Caster/Runekeeper)

- **Wall-Breaching:** DV 5 ritual, requires protection during casting
- **Siege Ward:** Protect assault troops from above attacks
- **Logistics Magic:** Create food/water for prolonged sieges

#### Battlefield Control (Invoker/Cantor)

- **Position Rituals:** Sanctify ground for tactical advantage
- **Morale Magic:** Counter fear effects and rout risks
- **Command Auras:** Extend command range for squad leadership

## Mercenary Company Management

### Company Resources

Track these resources between missions:

- **Manpower [10]:** Mercenary troops (replenish via recruitment)
- **Supplies [8]:** Food, ammunition, repair materials (replenish via purchases)
- **Morale [6]:** Company spirit (affects combat performance)
- **Reputation [4]:** Mercenary prestige (affects contract offers)

## Between-Mission Activities

- **Recruitment:** Spend gold to replenish Manpower
- **Training:** Improve squad capabilities (unlock special abilities)
- **Intel Gathering:** Learn about next mission's challenges
- **Gear Upgrades:** Purchase better equipment for squads

## Advanced Combat Rules

### Squad Specializations

As company gains experience, squads can specialize:

Specialization	Unlock Cost	Combat Benefit
Shock Troops	3 XP	+1 Effect on charge attacks
Skirmishers	2 XP	Ignore difficult terrain penalties
Archers	2 XP	Ranged attacks at +1 dice
Engineers	4 XP	Siege equipment expertise
Medics	3 XP	Reduce squad casualty severity

### Tactical Maneuvers

Squads can attempt special maneuvers with appropriate positioning:

- **Flanking Attack:** Requires Dominant position, target fights at Desperate
- **Shield Wall:** Squad gains +2 armor but cannot move
- **Fighting Retreat:** Withdraw without opportunity attacks
- **Ambush:** Set up requires preparation, automatic first strike

## XP Progression & Milestones

Milestone	XP Award	Strategic Impact
Breach Granite Gate	+15 XP	Company reputation +2, new contracts
Secure River Crossing	+12 XP	Control strategic supply route
Capture Sun-Thrower	+10 XP	Gain WMD advantage in final battle
Liberate Citadel	+20 XP	Major reputation boost, political favors
Squad Specialization	+5 XP	Per specialization unlocked
Mission Survival	+8 XP	Per major mission completed
Session Base	+6 XP	Per session (combat, strategy, roleplay)

## Adversary Roster

### Enemy Commanders

Each with unique tactical styles:

Commander	Tactical Style	Special Rules
General Vorlag	Defensive expert	Fortifications gain +1 DV
Admiral Kessel	Naval ambush master	River attacks at +1 Effect
Archmage Theron	Magic superiority	Enemy spells at +1 dice
The Bloody Baron	Psychological warfare	Morale checks at +1 DV

## Elite Enemy Units

- **Iron Legion:** Heavy infantry with superior armor
- **River Pirates:** Fast attack boats with boarding expertise
- **Mage Hunters:** Anti-magic specialists with dispel capabilities
- **Siege Engineers:** Defensive construction and trap experts

## Session Planning Guide

### Sample Combat Session Structure

1. **Pre-Battle Planning (30 min):** Intelligence, squad deployment, magic preparation
2. **Initial Engagement (45 min):** Position establishment, first clashes
3. **Mid-Battle Crisis (60 min):** SB spends, reinforcements, tactical dilemmas
4. **Climax Resolution (30 min):** Objective completion, aftermath
5. **Between-Mission (15 min):** Resource management, XP awards

### Combat Balance Guidelines

- **Tier II:** 2-3 combat encounters per session, simple tactical options
- **Tier III:** 3-4 encounters with complex positioning challenges
- **Tier IV:** 4-5 encounters with strategic resource management