

The Iron Crucible

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

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

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