

A TACTICAL MANUAL for Open General players

By Blitstoper (Jul 2012)

Open General(OpG) is a turn based strategy game. The main goal of the OpG is to have fun and satisfaction (and to learn a history a little).

The most important feature of the OpG is, that players take care of their armies throughout the whole campaign. Developing of the army is crucial - the point is not only to win the single battle, but to do it at the lowest cost, without the unnecessary losses.

THE GOAL

The most important thing in the warfare (and in the OpG), is to know the goal. The goal of the battle determines the tactics. The goals of the battles can be - for instance - to survive, to get as much prestige as possible, to get as much experience as possible, to field fancy units, and the most important: to win.

To win the battle we have to fulfill the terms of the battles. These terms can vary, but the most often are: to take Victory Hexes (VH), to hold VHs, to evacuate, to eliminate enemy units... These terms are specified in the briefing, so reading scenario briefings is a key to victory.

It is better to focus on the one goal, than trying to reach all of them. If we have to take all the VHs, we don't need to destroy all the enemy units. If we have to destroy a specified enemy unit, we have to find it as fast as possible, not wasting the time on chasing other enemy units or taking VHs. It is not good to waste time and resources on the secondary targets.

Also every campaign have specific goals, but these goals are usually defined be the players. Some want to win, some want to win with a style: not losing units, fielding fancy units, wearing their men in the different uniforms... (That's only few examples.)

THE SUPERIORITY

If we want to reach all the goals, that we intended, we must be superior to the enemy. Sometimes our enemy will be the other player, but most of all our enemy is the guy hidden in the PC, called Artificial Intelligence (AI). Basically AI is not so clever as the human player, so we are superior anyway.

The superiority is a matter of managing the player's army (called "the core"). The prestige points (pps) must be spent effectively. Headquarter (HQ) report helps a lot. It shows the value of the core, prestige available at HQ (and during the next battle), and the prestige cap. The prestige cap is a tax, which doesn't let us to be rich. Players won't get extra prestige, if his possessions will exceed the prestige cap, so the value of the core and the number of the pps gained during the battle must be lower than the prestige cap after this battle. If we exceed the prestige cap, we waste valuable pps!

The trick is, that the filthy prestige cap doesn't see "original core units" (the units given at the start of the campaign and as prototypes), so we can invest the surplus pps in them. These "original core units" should be most expensive, while the units bought by the player should be cheap. Player can learn the structure of his army in the HQ reports, so reading HQ reports is another key to victory.

Our core should be as numerous as possible and as strong as possible. So we have to buy units and win as a prototypes, while existing ones can improved by upgrading to better units or by over-strengthening (OS - i.e. allocating extra strength points). The optimal solution is to keep the core's value just a little bit below the prestige cap.

THE ECONOMY OF FORCE

No matter how good we manage the core, we will always have too few forces. The core - also the auxiliary units sometimes available during the battles - must be used in the most effective way. Players have to focus on the primary goals (and send minimal combat power to any secondary goals) and have to remember, that every unnecessary expenditure of time and resources is a waste.

There are many tasks at the battlefield, which seem to be valid, so we have to judge, what forces must be allocated for those tasks (if any). Strong units should be used for destroying AI's units, mobile forces should be used as mobile reserve, partially damaged units should be used as garrisons and patrols.

There is no need to refit or resupply after every engagement. Sometimes there is no time to waste, sometimes there is no pps to waste. No part of a force or resources should ever be left without purpose.

THE LEEWAY - THE SECURITY

The advance is much easier, when there is no fear of enemy. Players have to know, what is in front of the troops to prepare a proper action. All the means of reconnaissance must be used, not only recon cars and planes, but also fighters and bombers, and the other available units. The rear and the flanks can be guarded by the units not well suited for the warfare: damaged, slower, not-combat units. Those garrisons and patrols don't need to fight, they must alert, when AI tries to attack from surprising direction

But the real security of the army is granted by the reserves. The tactical reserve can be created by dividing forces in two echelons. One echelon attacks from the very beginning of the turn, while the other waits for the results. When everything is OK, the second echelon exploits the success; when something goes wrong, the second echelon tries to save the day. Strategic reserve consists of damaged units (which were left behind and can be refitted) and mobile forces. Notice, that maneuvers can be done by both forces and fire, so not only fast bomber is a part of a mobile forces, but also long range guns.

Generally speaking - we must have both forces and resources, which aren't committed to battle. Keeping some unspent pps is important, because when dangerous situation is spotted, we can use these reserve pps to refit damaged units or buy brand new.

THE SYNERGY

There are many classes of units in OpG. Each has its own virtues and attributes, which make specific classes optimal for specific actions. Doubtlessly the tank class is the most important, the most valuable, and the most effective. Usually units can do one attack during the game-turn, but tanks can do overruns, i.e. destroy weak AI's unit and then attack again. Perfectly commanded tanks can do multiple overruns in single game-turn.

In fact the units, which aren't the tanks, have only one task to fulfill: prepare AI's unit for own tanks attacks (overruns). AI's units have to be spotted, weaken, separated from artillery, moved to open terrain. Those task can be done by recon units and planes; artillery or long range anti tanks (AT) and flak units; air units; infantry.

A lot of this dangerous work can be done by auxiliary units, which fought only in single battles, and that means, they are expendable. They can be use for every role, especially for preparing AI's unit for our overruns.

THE SURPRISE

Enemy can be easily shocked and confused by the introduction of the unexpected. In OpG it's quite easy - AI doesn't react, what he doesn't see.

Players must keep own units out of the spotting range of the AI. To do this, we have to learn the AI's spotting range by our recons or planes. Once we learn this, we should move our forces close to this line, wait for AI's game-turn, and then attack him with all the power we can use surprising him and destroying.

Surprise works perfectly also during the defence. The easiest victory occurs, when AI's unit moves blindly into the hex occupied by our unit. The more difficult tactics is to set ambushes, when one of our units serves as bait, but is augmented by - unseen by the AI - command support or fire support of artillery and air defence.

THE MANOEUVRE

Only crude and brutal commanders attack the enemy, trying to smash him in the direct battle. More sophisticated leaders - and more effective - maneuver and fiddle the enemy, until he smashes by himself.

This is vital especially in the OpG, as the density of units at the field is restricted to one per hex, so it's hard to find advantage by simply assault in mass. The AI's units have to be outflanked by the aerial strafing, the artillery fire and the force of assault units. To make it possible, army must consist of different units with different range of fire. This rule is even more important, as the maneuvers are very often restricted by the terrain. Traffic jams are also a problem, so - in general - it is better to field smaller army of stronger units, than bigger army of weaker units.

The most mobile part of the army are the air units. Although they may seem expensive, sensitive and not so useful in melee, they are very important part of the battle - just because their mobility. Air units are the most important part of the reserve - both tactical and strategical. They can attack enemy deep into his lines. And finally: this is the only branch of the army, which can fight in the one part of the map, and then be in time to fight in the other side of the battlefield.

THE MORALE

Strength of the forces could be easily counted, if it weren't for the morale factor. But among other hard statistics of units, there is no such thing in OpG.

Morale depends on the virtues of the leader, what means it solely depends on the virtues of the player. Of us. When we are unsure, our forces are unsure either. When we are afraid, the whole army afraid and our units' advance won't be satisfying. We can increase our morale by the same means, how the real esprit the corps is increased: by keeping the core in a good shape, taking care of supplies, modern equipment and OS. Our morale is higher, if we know the AI and especially if we know ourselves.

We should avoid playing OpG when we are tired or ill. We should play only if we are in the proper mood for OpG. If we feel like victors, victories will be ours.

The more advanced tactics are cleared in the Playing Tips done by MG43:

<http://www.panzercentral.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=132&t=45093#p631305>

THE PURCHASES

The composition of the core units depends on many things. The e-file, the campaign, the player's taste. But even the impact of the personal tastes shouldn't be serious. Although there are players, who like close combat, we must remember, that the humans spent centuries to learn how to eliminate the enemy from a safe distance.

But the basic tool in OpG is a TANK, a unit that can overrun. Playing without tanks means very slow elimination of the enemy units: one by one, instead many overruns in a single turn. Only proper usage of the tanks gives brilliant victories. Army without tanks is doomed. When core is getting bigger and can attack in multiple directions, at least one tank for every task force is important. Tanks must be bought as early as possible.

The second most important weapon is the ARTILLERY. Artillery allows to destroy the targets beyond the range of the tanks and prepare the enemy units for overruns done by tanks. But the most important reason to buy cannons and howitzers is, that artillery adds dignity to what would otherwise be an ugly brawl. Leaders gained by artillery unit increase its power dramatically, although guns gain experience rather slowly. That's the reason to buy artillery very early in the campaign.

Then came INFANTRY, the most versatile and diverse class. Infantry units can spot the enemies, can guard the artillery, are excellent fighters in the urban, forest, or mountainous terrain. Sometimes infantry units can attack from the distance, can move very fast, or attack from the skies. There are even infantries as deadly as tanks! But usually such sophisticated units are very expensive, while the low price is the best advantage of the infantry (and the worst curse of infantrymen, who are used as a cannon fodder). Infantry is useful especially in the first stage of the campaign, when more specialized units aren't available.

Usually player - when he have just fielded an army of tanks, artillery and infantry - starts to think: "what next?" FIGHTERS should be next! It's not an obvious choice at the first impression - because fighters are expensive - but it will really pay off. Fighters can do recon duties, can attack from the distance, can repel aerial attacks, and can destroy enemy planes. Single fighter can do, what recon car, artillery, tactical bomber and air defense can do together. But fighters don't stuck in traffic jams and are the most mobile units at the battlefield. As experience has great influence on the air battles, and the fighters' leaders are valuable it's good to buy fighters rather early.

And here is a room for the choices based on players' tastes.

Recons are fast, but usually weak and expensive, so sometimes it's better to invest prestige in the other units able to do recon duties.

Air Defence artillery (AD) is usually cheaper solution than fighters, but it's hard to cover the big army with the cheap AD guns, so the value of AD decreases during the campaign (unless the AD units gain leader, which is awesome).

Anti Tank weapons (AT) - especially self propelled ATs (SPAT) - have almost the same stats as tanks, but can't overrun. That's the main drawback, but if the price is right (i.e. low enough), it's worth to buy some.

Flak is AT unit with limited AD ability. A compromise unit. Some players see all the cons of AT and AD and no pro at all. Some see all the pros of AT and AD and no drawback...

Tactical bombers are powerful. This class is as diverse as infantry: there are assault bombers, recon bombers and fighter bombers. Everybody find something useful here, although the price may be too high.

Level bombers can force enemy to withdraw (i.e. suppress) in a single attack, but are extremely expensive.

Ships and forts are - generally speaking - artillery units with very limited mobility. That's why nobody wants them.

THE UPGRADES

Upgrading is important part of the campaign, it allows keeping below the prestige cap, and keeping the army in good shape. Upgrades can be done in HQ and sometimes in supply hexes (SH). Basically upgrades depend on available prestige, available equipment and the turns of the campaign. If the prestige is limited and the campaign is long, it's good to upgrade units according to some rules.

It's good to remember, that upgrading costs the price of the new unit minus half of the price of the old unit. If unit is over strengthened, the cost is higher.

The cost-effect factor is very important, but hard to count, so the best solution is to plan the upgrades. There is no need to upgrade unit every time, when new equipment becomes available. Don't upgrade Your units, unless it is necessary. Necessity is, when the units is obsolete and easy to lose. Necessity is, when the best available units become available. Finally, upgrades are necessary, when the prestige cap is low. It is also necessary to upgrade units, when they have been awarded with some leaders (For instance towed AD which got a leader must be upgraded into self propelled AD (SPAD)).

Units shouldn't be expensive (because it can affect the prestige cap, and it makes refitting costly), but sometimes it's good choice, to "over upgrade" unit, when temporarily there is a lot of prestige, but there no interesting weapon is available. As the prestige cap is one of the most important factor in the core development, player should upgrade their original core units first - then the units purchased during the campaign. Why would we lose even a single penny if it could be saved with an upgrade? Sometimes it is a necessity, sometimes it is only a good habit, but it is always a matter of elegance.

Tanks are the most important units in the OpG. Although Soft Attack (SA) and Hard Attack (HA) values define strength of the tanks, the other stats are more important: resilience, speed and initiative. Tank has not only to survive the whole battle, but also play active role from the start to the end. That's why tanks must have high values of Ground Defence (GD) and Range Defence (RD). Tanks must also attack as many targets as possible, so the second most important thing is speed. Tanks are for overruns, and - generally speaking - it depends rather on initiative (and resilience) than SA/HA. Besides tanks are not for head-to-head encounters, so SA and HA are not so important. The same with the range of the fire, because overruns can't be done from the distance. It's better to have TWO 1-range tanks, instead of a SINGLE 2-range tanks. During the long campaigns - which last the whole World War - one upgrade is necessary for sure: in the middle of the war, when light tanks are replaced with the medium tanks. Another upgrade can be done, but that one should depend on the leaders gained by tanks: 2-range heavy tanks or very fast airborne tanks can make the game more interesting.

Artillery should have the highest possible SA/HA values, the best available range of fire, and a lot of ammo. It's wise to buy many cheap guns at the start of the campaign to get leaders. Artillery leaders increase the gun's range of fire, so upgrade must be considered every time, when artillery gains leaders. Although guns should provide support fire (and heavy guns don't provide and are very expensive), the guns with leaders, who increase fire-power must be upgraded into long-range heavy guns. Such guns are able to destroy enemy target with a single blow. It is also good to upgrade gun, when more mobile version is available - it makes the fire support easier. Self Propelled Artillery (SParty) is the most mobile. Most of the SPARTies are armored, so they are hard targets - more resilient to most of enemy attacks. It's worth to remember, that guns rarely differ much from each other, so there is no real need to upgrade them without important cause.

Infantry is a cannon fodder, which is fragile for tanks attacks, aerial bombings, artillery barrages, cavalry charges, machine gun fire and torpedoes (when on boats). They also suffer from cold, hunger and diseases. The best choice is not to use them at all. Unfortunately it seems to be impossible. But it is possible, to went through the whole World War without any upgrades. Especially if infantry is used properly - for garrison duties. Of course some of the infantry units can be upgraded into highly specialized and sophisticated units: battle pioneers, mountaineers, marines (and many others)... Unfortunately it's easy to learn, that every time when army need to cross the river, bridge engineers are on the other side of the battlefield. Of course leaders gained by infantry should make the players to think about reinforcements. Some upgrades are a must: for instance players, who don't upgrade infantry with recon-movement leader into airborne unit, should explain their decisions at higher HQ.

Fighters and their upgrades are easy to understand, because the most important value is the initiative. AI attacks all the fighters which have lower initiative than the AI's fighters, so it is easy to lose the unit. Fighters must have higher initiative than enemy units. That's all, folks.

Recons are also the most favorite target of the AI. So should be as resilient as possible. The mobility is also important, but depends on the e-file settings and battles to fight: sometimes it is better to have slower recons with better terrain capability.

Air Defence at the start of the campaign usually means small 2-range AD guns able to walk 1 hex. They can be upgraded into heavier 3-range AD guns which can cover area two times bigger, but those ADs usually can't move without the transport and - most of all - are expensive. So it's better to have fighters... Generally speaking... Because AD which gained leader is the powerful weapon and must be upgraded into Self Propelled unit, able to chase enemy planes.

Anti Tank weapons (AT) are pretty useless, unless they are cheap and have increased range. AT units may be handy, for instance when enemy units (mainly tanks) are superior in face-to-face combat, and there is a need to knock them down from the distance. AT units - especially those with leaders - should be upgraded into SPATs, which are not only more mobile, but are also more resilient (as armored hard targets). Unfortunately such units are usually too expensive.

Although Flak has air defence abilities, should be treated as AD - at least concerning upgrades.

Tactical bomber class is very diverse, so there is no easy rule for them. In fact there is no real need for expensive upgrades, because TBs will be effective and safe with proper tactics (and proper number of fighters). Nevertheless some leaders should force the changes. For instance All Weather TB should be able to do air attacks, while Combat Support TB should have ability to do recon movement.

Level bombers are so expensive, that upgrades are very rare. But all the rules about tactical bombers can be used for level bombers too - especially, that almost all depends on the chosen tactics.

Ships and forts have mobility so much limited, that there is no use to upgrade them at all.