

## **An ASLSK Tutorial (Part 2)**

### **Support Weapons**

This is the second entry in a series of tutorial articles designed to help new players learn the ASLSK rules. Links to other entries in this series may be found at the end of this article. This article assumes that the reader has read, and understood, the previous article. Rules and concepts discussed in that earlier article will be used here with little or no explanation.

In this article I am going to use the tactical situation presented in Part 1 – three American squads attacking a stone building defended by one German squad and a leader – to show how the Support Weapons introduced in ASLSK #1 are used. The primary reason for using the same tactical situation is that this will clearly show the dramatic difference in game play that occurs when Support Weapons are available.

### **Support Weapons**

Support Weapons (SW) are provided as separate counters and represent weapons that are not normally part of any squad's regular equipment. Demolition Charges and Flamethrowers are specialized weapons that were provided only when the tactical situation required them, and medium Machine Guns and heavy Machine Guns were never available in enough numbers to equip every squad.

Some people argue that most, or even all, of these weapons actually required specially trained crews, so that regular infantry squads either should not be able to use them, or should use them only with a penalty. But, regardless of how valid that argument might be, ASL takes the simplified approach of allowing any infantry squad to use any Support Weapon.

The light Machine Gun (LMG) is a special case, in that it was included in most rifle squads' standard equipment, but it is also provided as a SW counter. There are two ways to look at this. Assume a scenario in which the Germans have five rifle squads, each of which has an inherent LMG already factored into its firepower, and two additional LMG counters. The two SW LMGs can be viewed either as additional LMGs provided to the five squads to give them more firepower... or they can be viewed as those LMG-equipped soldiers within the rifle squads that have the potential to perform exceptionally well, and so could have an effect on the battle beyond that of simply being part of a squad's FP, thus warranting the weapons' appearance as separate SW counters (this is exactly how ASL treats leaders, as discussed in the previous article).

SWs cannot attack on their own; they must be possessed by an infantry unit in order to attack.

ASLSK #2 and ASLSK #3 introduce additional Support Weapons, but these will be covered in later articles.

I'm going to cover Demolition Charges first, then Flamethrowers, and finally the Machine Guns. This is the reverse order of their presentation in the rulebook, but I like the progression here: we start with a one-shot weapon with no range, then a slow-firing weapon with a short range, and then finally look at the fast-firing, long range Machine Guns.

### **Demolition Charges** (rule 4.3)

The Demolition Charge (DC) is one of the most powerful weapons you will ever use. You'd have to combine a lot of squads and Machine Guns (MG) together in a Fire Group (FG) to get a 30 firepower (FP) attack.

The front of the DC counter shows "30-1" in large bold numbers. The "30" is the DC's FP, and the "1" is the DC's range, which is not used in ASLSK. (In the full ASL rules, you can throw a DC into an adjacent hex – hence the range of 1 – but this is a dangerous technique in which the DC will attack both the target and the throwing unit. Under the ASLSK rules, throwing a DC is not allowed.)

"1PP" shows the weight of the DC: one Portage Point (PP). A squad or half-squad (HS) has an Infantry Portage Capacity (IPC) of three PP, so up to three DCs could be carried without penalty.

The Breakdown Number of "X12" shows that when a DC attacks, a DR of 12 will result in a dud that fails to detonate. DCs are one-shot weapons: when a DC attacks, it is permanently removed from the game (even if it was a dud).

The final important piece of information on the DC counter is the small triangle that can be seen directly above the "X12" Breakdown Number. This triangle code is not defined in the ASLSK rules, but it signifies that this weapon cannot benefit

from any Leadership Modifier. DC attacks never include a DRM for leadership.

The back side of the DC counter is divided into three sections, corresponding to the three methods of using a DC in the full ASL rules: placed, thrown, set. In the ASLSK rules, DCs may only be placed, so only the top two lines apply. These two lines simply remind you that you place a DC during the Movement Phase (MPH), and its attack is resolved during the Advancing Fire Phase (AFPh).

Using a DC is a classic good news/bad news situation. The good news is that, as mentioned previously, a DC is incredibly powerful. The bad news is that it is very difficult to actually detonate a DC on an enemy position... the defender will do everything in his power to stop you.

Let's see how this plays out using the tactical situation we looked at in Part 1.

Place the following units on board z:

Hex zF5: German 4(1)-6-7, 9-1

Hex zF7: US 6(3)-6-6

Hex zG7: US 6(3)-6-6, DC

Hex zH6: US 6(3)-6-6

The Americans will move first. Both sides have an Experience Level Rating (ELR) of 3. To win this scenario, the Americans must capture zF5 by the end of their player turn, otherwise the Germans win.

I've added a DC to the squad in zG7. Unfortunately, the counters provided in ASLSK #1 do not include an American DC. If you have ASLSK #2, you can use the American DC counter that comes with it, otherwise just use a Russian DC and assume that it is green instead of brown. The only difference between DC of different nations is the color of the counter; the values are always the same.

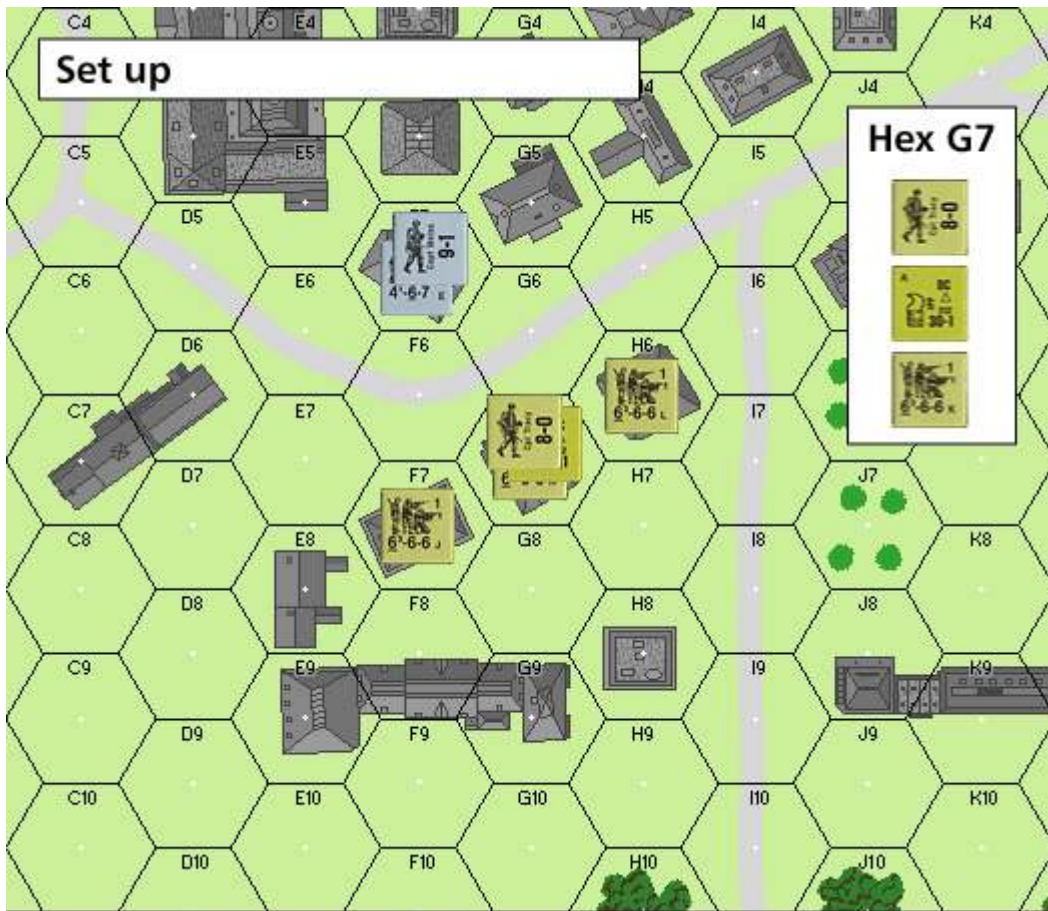
The DC is placed on top of the squad, to show that the squad possesses it. If the DC was under the squad, it would be laying on the ground, unpossessed, and the squad would have to recover the DC before it could carry it or use it in an attack.

The DC is given to the middle squad, because it is the only squad that has two hexes that it could enter using Assault Movement to move adjacent to the German position in zF5. The flanking squads will attempt to place smoke grenades in both of these hexes, so the chances of the DC squad having a smoke screen available are pretty good.

The first move will be the same as in the previous battle: the squad in zF7 will attempt to place smoke grenades in zF6, and then move to zE7-zE6. The squad in zH6 will move next, attempting to place smoke grenades in zG6 and then moving into that hex. Finally the DC squad in zG7 will use Assault Movement to enter whichever hex has a +2 Smoke counter in it. If both, or neither, of these two hexes have smoke present, it will enter zF6 to avoid stacking with another squad.

But now, assuming that at least one Smoke counter is successfully placed, the Americans have a problem: it costs 2 Movement Factors (MF) to enter the smoke filled hex (1 MF for Open Ground + 1 MF for smoke), and 2 MF to place the DC in zF5 (2 MF for a building). This is 4 MF total, equal to the number of MF the squad has available, so Assault Movement could not be used.

It's time, then, to bring in some reinforcements: add an American 8-0 leader to zG7. Place the leader on the top of the stack, so that, from the bottom up, you have the squad, the DC possessed by the squad, and the leader.



If the squad and leader move together as a stack, the squad gets a 2 MF bonus, for a total of 6 MF. With 6 MF available, Assault Movement can be used to enter the smoke hex and place the DC, because 4 MF is less than 6 MF.

Before we play this out, let's review exactly what "placing a DC" means. A unit places a DC by expending the MF necessary to enter the target hex, but the unit does not actually enter the target hex, and any defensive fire triggered by the placement MFs is taken in its current hex (adjacent to the target hex). If the placing unit survives all defensive fire triggered by the placement MFs without breaking or being pinned, then the DC is successfully placed in the target hex and will attack in the AFPh. What is happening here is that, after the squad moves adjacent to the German position, one or more soldiers get the perilous task of carrying the DC right up to the building occupied by the Germans, placing it next to the building, and then running like heck to get away before it detonates.

So why is throwing a DC forbidden in the ASLSK rules? Wouldn't that be easier and safer? Easier... yes; safer... no. The problem is that the blast radius of a DC is much greater than the distance any soldier can throw it, so a thrown DC attacks both the target (with less effectiveness than a placed DC) and the throwing unit. It's entirely possible to blow yourself up and leave the target unharmed (I speak from bitter experience here!). Throwing a DC is an act of desperation. Placing a DC is the most common method of using a DC, so it is the only one allowed in the ASLSK rules.

If the Germans fire on every unit as it moves adjacent to them, as they did in the previous battle, they will have four Final Protective Fire (FPF) shots when the squad with the DC, assisted by the 8-0 leader, Assault Moves into the smoke hex and attempts to place the DC in zF5. The 2 MF that must be spent to place the DC will give the Germans the two extra FPF shots, but let's assume that all four FPF shots have no effect. In the AFPh, the resulting DC attack will be a 30/+3 (+3 TEM DRM for the stone building).

The Breakdown Number of the DC will be 10 instead of 12, because the American squad is not an Elite unit. So on a DR of 10 or more, the DC will be a dud, but on a DR of 9 or less the Germans will suffer at least a 1MC, and could possibly suffer

a 1KIA on a DR of 2. This could well be a game-winning attack for the Americans, so the German player will want to use a different defensive fire scheme...

#### RALLY PHASE

No activity.

#### PREP FIRE PHASE

No activity.

#### MOVEMENT PHASE

##### The First Move

The squad in zF7 spends 2 MF to place smoke in zF6, and succeeds with a smoke dr of 3. Place a +2 Smoke counter in zF6. The Germans decline to fire.

The squad then spends 1 MF to enter zE7, and again the Germans decline to fire.

The squad then spends its final MF to enter zE6, and again the Germans decline to fire... turning down an 8/-3 shot against an adjacent attacker!

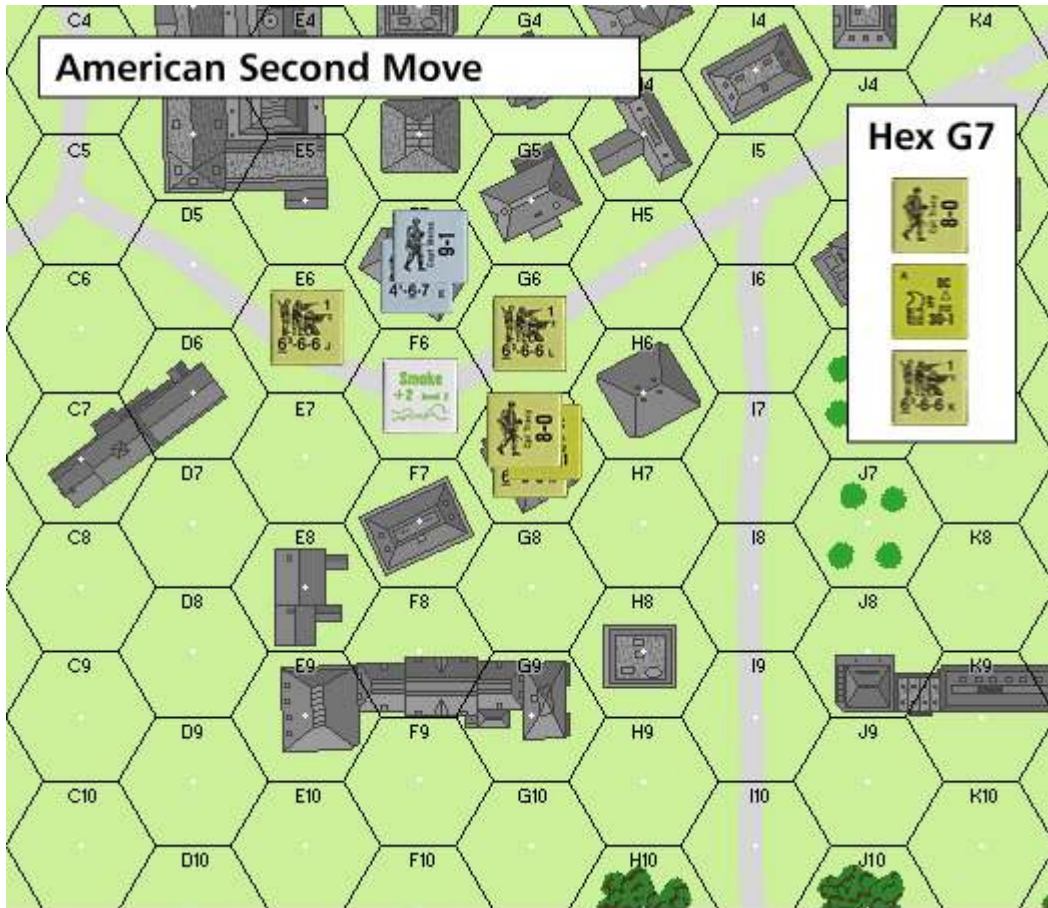


##### The Second Move



The squad in zH6 spends 2 MF to place smoke in zG6, and fails on a smoke dr of 5. The Germans decline to fire.

The squad then moves into zG6, and again the Germans decline to fire at an adjacent enemy squad.



What's going on here? The German player has decided that the squad with the DC is the greatest threat, so he is holding his fire in order to put maximum firepower on the DC squad. The American player, on the other hand, is going to move the DC squad last of all, because he wants to tempt the Germans into firing early.

The analysis of this situation, assuming that all DRs are 7s (neutral luck), goes like this: if the Germans fire as they did in the previous battle, breaking the first two squads but failing to break or pin the third squad, the DC attack will result in a 2MC (DR 7 + 3 TEM is 10 on the 30 FP column of the IFT). Both German units will roll a 9 (DR 7 + 2) for their Morale Checks (MC), which will pin the 9-1 leader and break the 4-6-7 squad. The broken squad will rout away, and the Americans will win when they kill the pinned leader with a 6-1 (7 FP vs 1 FP) Close Combat (CC) attack (DR 7 is less than the CC Kill Number of 10).

But, if the Germans concentrate all of their fire on the DC squad and break or pin it, preventing it from using the DC, the Germans will instead be hit with two 7 FP AFPh attacks from the first two American squads resulting in no effect (DR 7 + 3 TEM on the 6 FP column of the IFT). Then those two American squads will advance into the German hex to initiate CC, and (assuming no ambush occurs) the American CC attack will be at 2-1 odds (12 FP vs 5 FP). A DR of 7 will match the 2-1 CC Kill Number of 7, and the resulting Casualty Reduction of one of the German units will not eliminate all of the German defenders, so the Americans lose.

Thus it is clear that DC is the greatest threat to the Germans, and that they will increase their chances of winning by concentrating all of their fire on the DC squad.

Now, don't be misled by the above analysis... playing ASL/ASLSK does not normally involve making such detailed analyses of situations on every single turn. A veteran player would take one look at our situation here and immediately identify the DC as the biggest threat to the Germans, just on the basis of his past game experience, with no "analysis" required. As you gain experience in playing ASLSK, you will increase your ability to take in a complicated situation at a glance and immediately know what move you want to make.

### The Third Move

The American player announces that the squad and leader in zG7 will move together as a stack, and use Assault Movement. The stack spends 2 MF to enter zF6.

The presence of the 8-0 leader provides both a benefit and a risk to the Americans. The benefit, of course, is the additional 2 MF that the squad gets when accompanied by a leader. The risk is that, if the 8-0 leader breaks, the squad will have to take a Leader Loss Task Check (LLTC, rule 3.2.1) which could leave it pinned and unable to place the DC. So the American player is hoping that both the squad and the leader can withstand the German defensive fire.

The Germans now announce a Defensive First Fire. The FP is 4, doubled to 8 because of Point Blank Fire (PBF). The DRMs are -1 for the German 9-1 leader and +2 for the smoke (the smoke cancels FFMO, and Assault Movement cancels FFNAM). So the shot is an 8/+1. The DR is 6, which results in a 1MC (7 on the 8 column of the IFT).

The 8-0 leader passes his 1MC with a DR of 6 (6 + 1 is less than his Morale of 8). The squad rolls a DR of 5 and is pinned (5 + 1 equals their Morale of 6). Place a First Fire counter on the German stack, place a Pin counter on top of the American squad, but under the 8-0 leader, to show that the squad is pinned but the leader is not, and place a 4 Residual FP counter on top of the American stack.

The Germans could now take a second shot, this time as Subsequent First Fire, because the American stack expended 2 MF to enter zG6, but they decline to do so. With the DC squad safely pinned, their concern now is with the first two American squads.

This ends the MPh, as the 8-0 leader can do nothing useful with his remaining 3 MF (remember that he must limit his MF expenditure to 5 MF or less because he is using Assault Movement). Remove the Smoke and Residual FP counters.



#### DEFENSIVE FIRE PHASE

The Germans are marked with a First Fire counter, so they can only fire at an adjacent target with one-half of their normal FP. They choose to fire at the American squad in zE6.

The FP is 4, cut in half to 2, doubled back to 4 by PBF, with a -1 DRM from the German leader (FFMO and FFNAM never apply in the DFPh), so the shot is 4/-1.

The DR is 6, which is a 1MC (5 on the 4 FP column). The American squad fails its MC with a roll of 6 (6 + 1 is greater than its Morale of 6), so it is flipped over to its broken side and a DM counter is placed on top of it. Flip the First Fire counter over to the Final Fire side.

No other defensive fire is possible, so the DFPh is over. Remove the Final Fire counter.



#### ADVANCING FIRE PHASE

Remember that all shots taken in the AFPh are at one-half of their normal FP.

The squad in zG6 has 7 FP (6 FP, cut in half to 3, doubled back to 6 by PBF, +1 for Assault Fire bonus) and the pinned squad in zF6 has 4 FP (6 FP, cut in half to 3, cut in half to 1.5 because of the pin, doubled to 3 by PBF, +1 Assault Fire bonus). They will form a FG to attack at 8/+3 (11 FP and a +3 TEM DRM). The DR is 7, which has no effect (10 on the 8 FP column).

#### ROUT PHASE

The broken American squad routs to zC7 via zD6. It must rout to zD6, as that is its only legal rout destination. It could stop there, or continue to rout to zC7, zB6, or zB7.

#### ADVANCE PHASE

The American squad in zG6 advances into the German-occupied hex zF5, followed by the 8-0 leader in zF6. The pinned squad in zF6 may not advance. Place a CC counter on zF5. The order in which these two units move is not important, as there is never any defensive fire in the Aph, and ambush is not checked until the start of the CCPh.





## CLOSE COMBAT PHASE

The American ambush dr is 4. The German ambush dr is 2, but the Germans also get a -1 drm from their 9-1 leader, so their final ambush dr is 1. This is 3 less than the American ambush dr, so the Germans have ambushed the Americans and will attack first.

The American player declares that his 8-0 leader will be attacking with the 6-6-6 squad, so both American units will defend together and cannot be attacked separately. If the Americans wanted their leader to attack by himself, then the Germans would have the option of attacking the squad alone, the leader alone, or both squad and leader together... so the American player must declare whether or not his leader will be making a combined attack with the squad, even though the Germans will attack first because of their ambush.

The German CC attack will be 5 FP vs 7 FP, which is 1-2 odds, with a -2 DRM (-1 leadership, -1 ambush). The DR is 10, which is reduced to 8, but that is greater than the 1-2 CC Kill Number of 4, so the German attack has no effect. If the German attack had been successful, the results would have been applied before the American CC attack, because of the ambush. Had the Germans eliminated the American units, there would have been no American CC attack at all.

The American CC attack will be 7 FP vs 5 FP, which is 1-1 odds, with a +1 DRM because they were ambushed. The DR is 7, which is increased to 8, and that is greater than the 1-1 CC Kill Number of 5, so their attack also has no effect.

Flip the CC counter over so that it becomes a Melee counter, remove the Pin counter, and the turn is over. If the scenario were to continue, the units in zF5 would have to continue to battle each other in CC each turn, but all subsequent CC attacks would be simultaneous and without the ambush DRMs, because the ambush condition ceases once the Melee counter is placed on the hex.

The Americans have lost once again, because they did not capture zF5 by the end of the turn.

That makes three losses in a row now. Are these Germans simply unbeatable? Why didn't the DC make more of a difference?

Well, the DC didn't change the outcome of the battle because the Americans didn't use it effectively! The Americans can make one tiny change in their set-up that will completely change the way this scenario plays out. This battle showed the "obvious" way to use a DC... now let's look at a better way.

Reset all of the units to their starting hexes. In zG7, we have a stack consisting of (from the bottom up) a 6-6-6 squad, a DC, and the 8-0 leader. Change this stack so that it is: squad, leader, DC... so the DC is on top of the 8-0 leader, which means that he is the one carrying it, and not the squad.

A DC can be legally carried, and placed, by a leader, and his IPC of one PP is enough to carry the 1PP DC with no penalty to his movement. What does giving the DC to the leader accomplish?

\* All leaders are Elite (rule 1.2.1), so the DC's Breakdown Number remains 12, instead of the 10 it has if a non-Elite squad uses it.

\* The leader's Morale is 8, instead of the squad's 6, so he is going to be much tougher for the Germans to break or pin.

\* With the leader handling the DC, there is no need for him to move along with the squad... the third squad can now move into zF6 before the leader moves, so the German player is probably going to have to hold his fire while ALL THREE American squads move adjacent to him, in order to have maximum firepower available to stop the DC. The German player will NOT be having fun at this point!

On the map, this situation would be (assuming the same smoke drs as previously): 6-6-6 squad in zE6, 6-6-6 squad and +2 Smoke in zF6, 6-6-6 squad in zG6, 8-0 leader and DC in zG7, ready to start his movement. The Rule of 7 suggests that, if the leader Assault Moves into the smoke, the Germans are going to need some luck to stop him from placing that DC: their best shot will be an 8/+1, so a DR 7 is a NMC which the leader will pass with a MC DR of 7. Their Subsequent First Fire and FPF shots will be 4/+1 which will have no effect on DRs of 7.

If those three squads remain unbroken and unpinned, they will form a FG to hit the Germans with a 20/+3 Advancing Fire shot (7 FP each), and if that has no effect they will still have a CC attack at 3-1 odds (18FP vs 5 FP) where a DR of 7 or less will eliminate the German defenders. Thus the Americans now have an excellent chance of winning this scenario, even if the Germans are able to prevent the 8-0 leader from placing the DC.

And all because we made one small change in the American set-up!

It is often better to let a leader handle a DC, especially for the Americans and the Italians, whose squads have low Morale ratings. And a leader with a Morale of 9 or 10 carrying a DC is a terrifying sight to any defender.

Placing a DC is a dangerous operation, and you may be reluctant to have a valuable leader exposed to the kind of defensive fire that a DC attracts... but remember that nothing forces you to use a DC. As we have seen here, the mere threat of a DC is enough to make a defender pass up defensive fire shots that would normally be devastating. If you don't actually use a DC, you can continue to threaten the defender with it in future turns. Sometimes, the best way to use a DC is to not use it at all!

A DC attacks in the AFPh at full FP because it is an instantaneous attack that is not reduced in effectiveness by movement of the placing unit. This ability to attack at full FP in the AFPh is one of the many traits it shares with the next support weapon we will look at: the flamethrower.

### **Flamethrowers** (rule 4.2)

A flamethrower (FT) is a powerful weapon that will terrify any defender. It can fire in the AFPh at full FP, just like the DC does, because a short burst is usually all that is necessary, and careful aiming is not required.

A FT also ignores all TEM DRMs! A stone building, for example, normally has a TEM of +3, and its stone walls can't be harmed by a FT... but the burning liquid fuel will pour through any open window or door and quickly turn the interior of the building into an inferno.

The front of the FT counter shows "24-1" in large bold numbers. The "24" is the FT's FP, and the "1" is the FT's normal range (PBF does not apply to a FT). A FT can also make a long range attack at a range of 2 hexes with 12 FP.

"1PP" shows the weight of the FT.

The low Breakdown Number of "X10" does not represent a high probability of a mechanical breakdown, but rather the limited amount of fuel that a FT carries.

The triangle code above the Breakdown Number signifies that this weapon cannot benefit from any Leadership Modifier. FT attacks never include a DRM for leadership.

The back side of the FT counter reminds you that it can attack at full FP in the AFPh, and that all attacks made against a unit carrying a FT receive a -1 DRM to their resolution roll on the IFT.

In a game a FT is used in much the same manner as a DC. Ideally, you would like to move adjacent to your target and hit it with the full 24 FP in the AFPh. Here are the ways in which using a FT differs from using a DC:

- \* A FT firing into an adjacent hex (range: 1) is actually better than a DC when attacking targets in high TEM hexes, because it ignores all TEM DRMs. With TEMs of +2 or +3 the FT is clearly better than a DC; with a TEM of +1 they are about equal; and with no TEM the DC is better.

- \* A FT can fire more than once, although with the low Breakdown Number it probably won't last forever. Note that if the FT is used by a non-Elite unit, the Breakdown Number is only X8!

- \* A unit carrying a FT is more vulnerable to enemy fire, because of the -1 DRM that is applied to any shots aimed at it. On the other hand, a unit using a DC will draw more defensive fire shots, because of the need to spend extra MFs to place the DC.

- \* A FT is much more flexible than a DC. It can fire from a range of 1 or 2 hexes; it can fire in the PFPh instead of in the AFPh; it can fire in the DFPh; it can even be used for Defensive First Fire shots if any enemy unit is crazy enough to try moving within range of the FT!

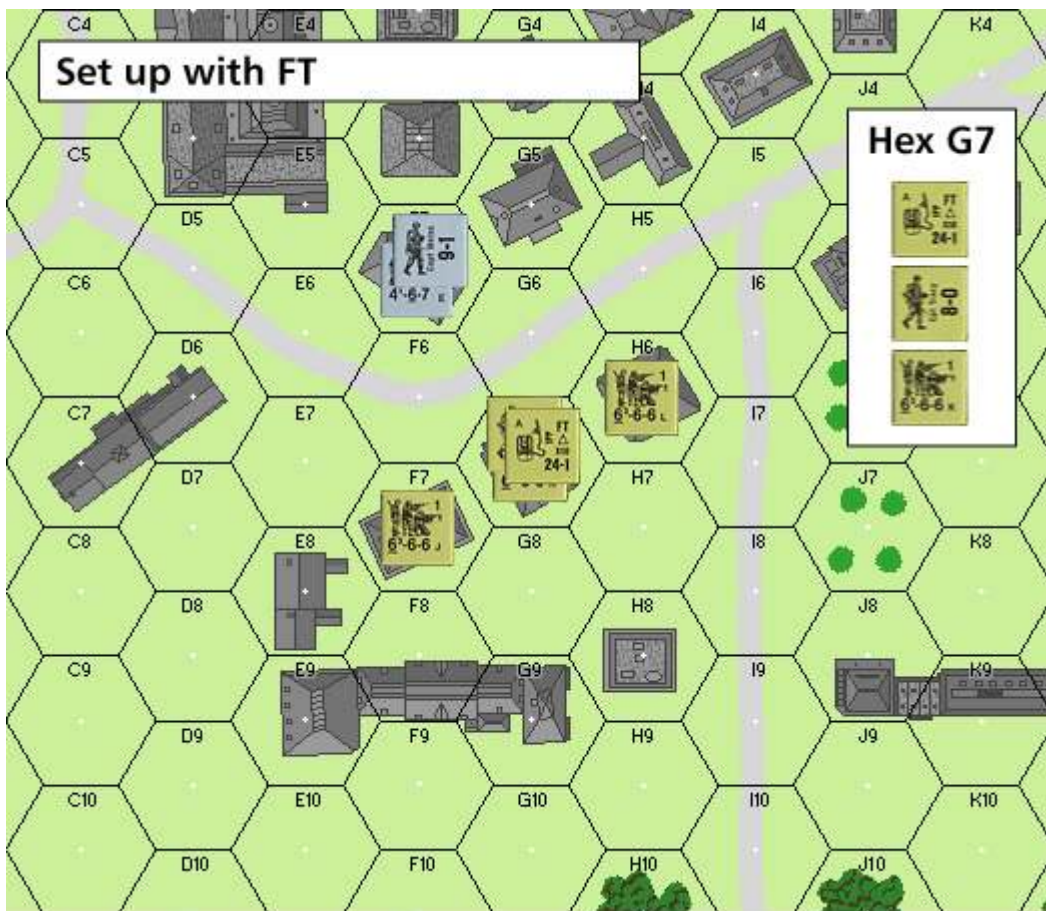
Let's reset our tactical situation and look at a couple of things.

Hex zF5: German 4(1)-6-7, 9-1

Hex zF7: US 6(3)-6-6

Hex zG7: US 6(3)-6-6, 8-0, FT

Hex zH6: US 6(3)-6-6



Note that the American 8-0 leader could simply fire the FT in the PFPh at a range of 2 hexes... before the Germans have a chance to do anything at all. This shot would be a 12/+0, with a 1MC occurring on a DR of 7. Remember how hard the Americans have worked to try to get an attack this good on the Germans? A FT gives it to them with no effort at all.

But the question facing the American player is: should he take this long range 12 FP shot in the PFPh, or should he try to move adjacent and get the 24 FP shot in the AFPh? That would be a 24/+0, with a 3MC on a DR of 7... a shot that would be nearly impossible for the Germans to withstand.

I think it comes down to a judgment call as to how much risk the American player is willing to take. The 24 FP shot would be awesome, but there's no guarantee that he'll successfully get into position to take it. The 12 FP shot is guaranteed to occur, but it might not have any effect.

I'd go for the 24 FP shot in the AFPh, myself, if only because I want to put as much pressure on the defender as I possibly can. And, win or lose, it would be much more fun to play it that way!

### Game or Simulation?

ASL is widely regarded as being one of the most realistic wargames ever designed... but what about the situations discussed above? Would the German defenders really just sit around and do nothing – while the American troops calmly walk up to their building – only to open up with everything they've got when the guy carrying the DC/FT finally appears?

First, remember that moving units one at a time is just an abstraction that makes the game playable. In reality, all of the American forces would be moving at once, and the Germans would start firing on them as soon as they started moving, but, upon seeing the DC/FT coming their way, they would concentrate their fire in that direction.



ASL is a "design for effect" game, rather than a rigorous simulation. A simulation will try to use the most realistic game mechanics possible, but such games can sometimes be tedious to play as a result. A design for effect game will use abstracted game mechanics to keep the gameplay fast and easy, as long as the results of each turn are reasonably realistic. That is the situation here: without a DC or FT, the Americans are unlikely to capture that building, and they will often suffer more casualties than the defenders when they do capture it. This is a realistic result for this situation, regardless of how "gamey" the actual moves may have seemed.

This, I think, is a major part of the reason for ASL's success. It contains more historical detail than any other competing WWII tactical game system – a wealth of detail that can seem almost overwhelming at times – but it uses many abstractions to incorporate all of that detail while still keeping the game playable and fun. And, in the process, it generates very realistic results.

### **Machine Guns** (rule 4.1)

By far the most common SW in ASL is the Machine Gun (MG). MGs come in three types: light Machine Gun (LMG), medium Machine Gun (MMG), and heavy Machine Gun (HMG). As you compare these types, moving from light to medium to heavy, you see increased FP, increased range, more weight (higher PP numbers), and higher Rate of Fire (ROF) numbers.

MG counters show their FP, range, and PP number just like the DC/FT counters do. Some models may have a Breakdown Number printed on them, such as "B11", but if no Breakdown Number is present they are assumed to have a "B12". The "B" prefix means that, unlike the DC and the FT, when a MG breaks down it can possibly be repaired and used again. When a MG does malfunction it is flipped over so that the "R" (repair) and "X" (permanent breakdown) dr numbers are visible.

The main difference from the DC/FT counters is the boxed ROF number, which signifies that these weapons may be able to fire multiple times in a single fire phase, without penalty.

Unlike DCs and FTs, MGs are usually assigned to squads rather than leaders. When a MG is fired by a leader it is limited to Area Fire (FP halved), the leader's Leadership Modifier cannot be used to assist anybody, and a MMG or HMG possessed by a leader is going to really slow him down, since he only has an IPC of one PP. Note also that MGs do not suffer a reduction in their Breakdown Number when they used by a non-Elite unit.

MGs are excellent defensive weapons that will pose many problems for attacking troops that are facing them. They are less useful on offense because MMGs and HMGs cannot fire in the AFPh if they have moved that turn. MGs also enable you to concentrate a tremendous amount of FP in a single stack, which is important when you have a good leader. For example, if the Americans stack three 6-6-6 squads with a 9-2 leader and fire at a stone building, the shot is 16/+1, but if each of those three squads also has a 4-10 MMG, the shot becomes 30/+1... a tremendous shot that is roughly equivalent to firing a FT from an adjacent hex, but this shot could be taken from up to six hexes away from the target.

Let's return to our tactical situation one final time, adding some MGs to the forces involved to see how they change the game play.

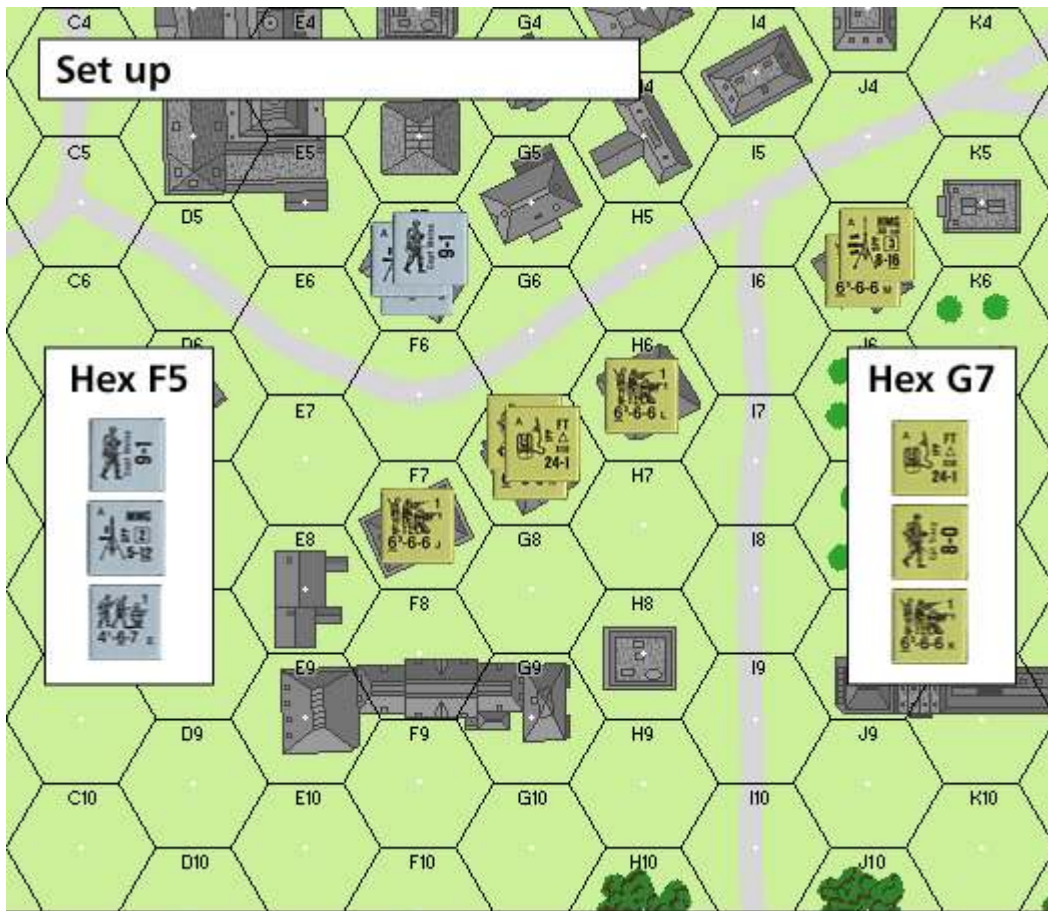
Hex zF5: German 4(1)-6-7, 5-12 MMG, 9-1

Hex zF7: US 6(3)-6-6

Hex zG7: US 6(3)-6-6, 8-0, FT

Hex zH6: US 6(3)-6-6

Hex zJ5: US 6(3)-6-6, 8-16 HMG



## RALLY PHASE

No activity.

## PREP FIRE PHASE

The squad in zJ5 will fire on the Germans in zF5 using the HMG and its own inherent FP, for a total of 14 FP. The shot is 12/+3, and the DR is 5 (colored dr is 2) resulting in a 1MC (8 on the 12 FP column).

The 9-1 leader passes his MC with a DR of 7 ( $7 + 1$  is less than his Morale of 9). The 4-6-7 squad passes their MC with a DR of 4 ( $4 + 1 - 1$  is less than their Morale of 7).

The HMG has a ROF of 3, so it has the chance to shoot again because the colored die in the original IFT DR was 3 or less. Place a Prep Fire counter on top of the squad in zJ5, but under the HMG. Strictly speaking, both the squad and the HMG should be marked with the Prep Fire counter, but it is a universal convention among ASL players that when a weapon retains ROF it is not marked until it either loses ROF, or the end of the PPh is reached.

The HMG now shoots again. The shot is 8/+3, and the DR is 8 (colored dr is 5) resulting in no effect (11 on the 8 FP column). The HMG has now lost ROF and cannot shoot any more, because the colored die was greater than 3. Move the Prep Fire counter to the top of the stack.

The potential for MGs to fire multiple times if they retain ROF, especially with the powerful HMGs that have a 50% chance of getting another shot (ROF 3), recreates the ability of a MG to fire a large number of bullets at multiple targets in a short period of time. In particular, infantry attacking over Open Ground can take heavy casualties if even a single defending MG retains ROF a few times.

You can think of a MG that retains ROF as one that scored some hits in only a short burst, leaving it time to fire again or even engage a different target. A MG that fires and does not retain ROF was less successful, so it had to fire throughout the entire fire phase in order to score some hits on its target.

The Americans decline to fire their FT in the PFP.



## MOVEMENT PHASE

Note that if the squad in zJ5 had elected to move instead of Prep Fire, it would only have had 2 MF to spend, because the 5PP weight of the HMG exceeds the squad's IPC by 2 (they lose 1 MF for each PP over 3). To have had more than 2 MF to spend, the squad would have to either declare Double Time movement, or they would have to abandon the HMG.

### The First Move

The squad in zF7 spends 2 MF to place smoke grenades in zF6, and succeeds on a dr of 1. Place a +2 Smoke counter in zF6. They then spend 1 MF to enter zE7, and their final MF to enter zE6, at which point the Germans announce a Defensive Fire shot.

The German player is in a tough spot: he knows he will probably lose if that American FT is able to attack in the AFPh, but he also doesn't like his chances if three American squads advance in for CC. So he is going to take a chance and fire the MMG only, with the 9-1 leader directing, in a First Fire attack on the squad entering zE6. He's hoping that the MMG breaks or pins the American squad and retains its ROF.

The MMG's 5 FP is doubled to 10 FP by PBF, so the shot is 8/-3 (-1 leadership, -1 FFMO, -1 FFNAM). The DR is 3 (colored

dr is 1) resulting in a 3KIA! The American squad is completely eliminated, and, since the MMG retained its ROF, it is NOT marked with a First Fire counter. Remove the American squad. Normally a 4 Residual FP counter would now be placed in zE6, but, because the MMG retained its ROF, no Residual FP is placed at all (short successful burst = no Residual FP).

The German player has the option to voluntarily lose ROF on the MMG, in spite of the colored dr, by putting a First Fire counter on it, in which case he would place the 4 Residual FP counter in zE6... but, of course, he does not want to do this. His concern now is stopping the FT, rather than preventing anyone else from entering zE6.



### The Second Move

The squad in zH6 spends 2 MF to place smoke grenades in zG6, but the dr is 6. Not only does the smoke placement attempt fail, but the squad must immediately end its move and remain in zH6.

ASL is often criticized for unrealistically giving players too much control over their troops – which is true enough – but events such as covering, SW breakdowns, and rolling a dr 6 on smoke placement attempts insure that there are unexpected things that can happen that will mess up even the best plans. So while ASL/ASLSK may fall short of recreating the true chaos and uncertainty of a WWII battlefield, those elements are present, and are handled in a way that does not decrease the playability of the game.

### The Third Move

Now it's the American player who is in a tough spot. With one squad eliminated, and a second one unable to move, only one squad remains. Why is this a problem? The Americans must control zF5 to win, and only a MMC can gain control of a hex (a leader can prevent an opponent from gaining control of a hex, but he cannot capture a hex by himself). So the last American squad must move adjacent to zF5, and must remain unbroken and unpinned, for the Americans to have any



chance of winning.

The squad in zG7 announces that it will use Assault Movement, and spends 2 MF to enter zF6.

The German player, realizing that the Morale 6 squad will be an easier target than the Morale 8 leader with the FT, declares a First Fire shot against it. If this squad breaks or pins, it won't matter what the FT does, because the Americans will have no squad left to take control of zF5 and win the game.

The Germans fire using both the 4-6-7 squad and the MMG. The 9-1 leader cannot assist this shot with his Leadership Modifier. Once a leader uses his Leadership Modifier to assist a shot in a player turn, he cannot then assist any other firing units/SW for the rest of that player turn. The 9-1 leader already assisted the MMG by itself in the previous First Fire shot, so for the remainder of the player turn he can assist only that MMG, and only when it attacks by itself.

The squad and MMG have a total of 9 FP, which is doubled to 18 FP by PBF. So the shot will be 16/+2 (+2 smoke, no leadership, smoke cancels FFMO, Assault Movement cancels FFNAM). The DR is 12. This is a doubles roll (6,6) that causes the Germans to cower because there is no leader to prevent it. The shot is thus resolved on the 12 FP column of the IFT, where 14 has no effect. In addition, 12 is the Breakdown Number for the MMG, so it malfunctions and is flipped over. The MMG will not be able to fire again until it is repaired. And finally, because the attack covered, the squad is marked with a Final Fire counter rather than a First Fire counter.

The Residual FP will be calculated using only the squad's FP, because a malfunctioned MG cannot leave any Residual FP. So the squad's 4 FP, doubled to 8 FP by PBF, would have been on the 8 FP column, shifting one column left for cowering gives the 6 FP column, half of 6 is 3, and the largest Residual FP counter that is equal to or less than 3 is 2, so a 2 Residual FP counter is placed in zF6.

Why didn't the Germans hold their fire? If they had declined this shot and waited instead until the DFPh to fire on this last American squad, the shot would have been 16/+0, rather than 16/+2, because the +2 Smoke counter is removed at the end of the MPh. This would have been a much better attack, but it also would have been an all-or-nothing attack: they would have only made one full power attack on the squad, and no attacks at all on the leader/FT (unless the MMG retains ROF).

But the Germans fired here because they were hoping to fire twice: a First Fire shot followed by a Subsequent First Fire shot (the American squad spent 2 MF to enter the hex, so two shots are allowed). But the unexpected breakdown of the MMG, and the cowering of the squad, has completely ruined the German plan.

The Germans are still able to fire again, although this second shot will now be a Final Protective Fire (FPF) shot because the German squad is already marked with a Final Fire counter. There's no question as to whether or not the Germans should take this shot: facing a high probability of an American victory, the Germans will take every shot they can get... and hope for a miracle.

The FPF shot is 2 FP, doubled to 4 FP by PBF, with a +2 DRM from the smoke, and no leadership. The DR for the 4/+2 shot is 6, resulting in no effect (8 on the 4 FP column). The DR is also a NMC roll for the German squad, which it passes (6 is less than its Morale of 7).



#### The Fourth Move

The leader/FT in zG7 now has an interesting decision to make: should he Assault Move into zF6 or zG6? The Smoke counter in zF6 will provide more protection from the PPF shots that the desperate Germans will surely take, but moving there will expose him to two PPF attacks and an additional attack from the Residual FP that is already present. Here's the analysis:

zF6, 2 MF to enter

RFP: 2/+1 (+2 Smoke, -1 FT) - no effect on DR 7

FPF: 4/+1 (+2 Smoke, -1 FT) - no effect on DR 7

FPF: 4/+1 (+2 Smoke, -1 FT) - no effect on DR 7

zG6, 1 MF to enter

FPF: 4/-2 (-1 FFMO, -1 FT) - 1MC on DR 7

The choice appears obvious. The protective value of the +2 Smoke counter is worth taking the risk of three attacks, especially since two of those three attacks require the German squad to take a NMC as well.

The leader/FT declares Assault Movement and expends 2MF to enter zF6. The defensive attacks will not affect the squad that is already in zF6, because Defensive First Fire attacks only affect the moving unit(s) that triggered them.

The Residual FP always attacks first. The 2/+1 shot has a DR of 6, resulting in no effect (7 on the 2 FP column).

The first PPF shot at 4/+1 has a DR of 7, resulting in no effect but the German squad is pinned because the 7 is also a NMC DR for them (7 equals their Morale of 7). Place a Pin counter on top of the German squad, but under the 9-1 leader.

The stack in zF5 now looks like this, from the bottom up: 4-6-7 squad, malfunctioned MMG, Pin, Final Fire, 9-1.

The German squad's FP will now be halved again for the second FPF shot, because they are pinned. So, 4 FP halved to 2 FP for FPF, halved to 1 FP for pinned, doubled to 2 FP for PBF, and +1 DRM for smoke and FT.

The second FPF shot at 2/+1 has a DR of 9, resulting in no effect, but the German squad is broken (9 is greater than its Morale of 7). Flip the German squad over to its broken side, remove the Pin counter and replace it with a DM counter.

Remove the Smoke counter and the Residual FP counters.



#### DEFENSIVE FIRE PHASE

No activity. Remove the Final Fire counter.

#### ADVANCING FIRE PHASE

The 8-0 leader fires the FT at zF5. The attack is 24/+0, and the DR is 4, resulting in a 1KIA. The broken German squad is randomly selected to suffer the KIA, and the 9-1 leader is broken.

Remove the German squad, flip the 9-1 leader to his broken side and put the DM counter on top of him. A subsequent dr of 1 on the 24 FP column of the IFT results in another KIA, so the malfunctioned MMG that was possessed by the eliminated German squad is also destroyed and removed (rule 4.0, 3rd para).



At this point, the German player concedes. His broken leader must rout away in the RtPh, and then the American squad will advance into zF5, capturing the hex to win the scenario.

### Final Comments

Well, I had thought that Part 2 would shorter, and easier to write, than Part 1, because I was "only" going to cover the Support Weapons. How wrong I was! This second part is not appreciably shorter than the first one, and was far more difficult to write. I had to completely redo the first battle after discovering that I had used a badly flawed setup, and sorting out the complexities of last battle, with two MGs and a FT, was a real challenge.

My tentative plan for Part 3 is to present a small encounter that lasts for several turns. The forces involved will continue to be much smaller than found in a typical scenario, in order to keep things manageable. A multi-turn battle such as this will allow demonstrations of such topics as maneuvering for both the attacker and the defender, stacking, LOS, the break-rout-rally sequence, and it will illustrate the flow of a typical ASLSK game better than a short half-turn scenario can.

Part 4 will probably cover the Guns and mortars of ASLSK #2, with Part 5 then starting the topic of tanks and ASLSK #3. However, I remain open to any suggestions as to what should be included, or ways in which this tutorial series could be improved.

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