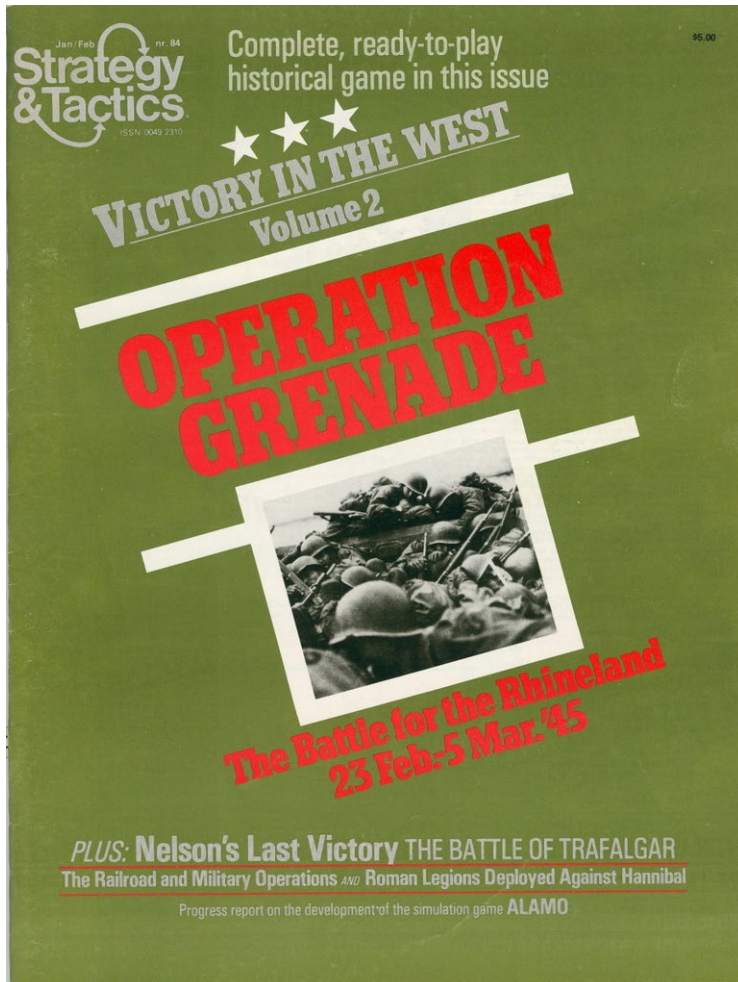


# Operation Grenade

## Victory in the West, Volume 2, SPI Games, 1980

by Nathan Mueller

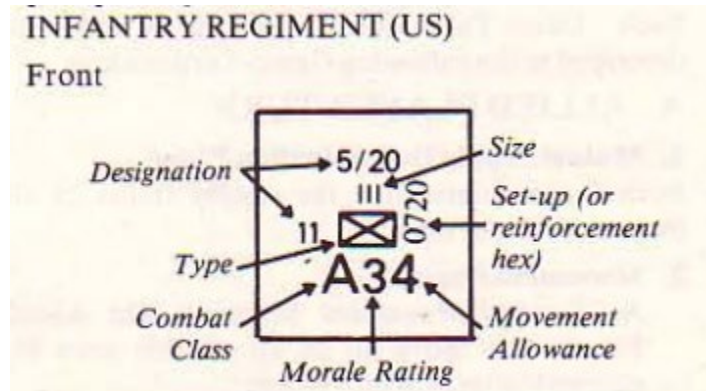


*Editor's Note: I find **Operation Grenade** to be a 'perfect puzzle' to use for solo gaming. The opening setup is fixed, the objectives are known, and the fortified Germans are no pushover. Add in the randomization of the chit draws for strength, and the choice of a 'fast start' or 'slow start' option, it is made for repeat plays. Yet, it gets the least love of any of the Victory in the West (VITW) series of games. I asked Nathan if he would mind giving his thoughts on the trick of getting across the river. Enjoy! – RHG*

For the record, the first time I played **Operation Grenade** the Americans couldn't get their offensive going. Now that I have more games under my belt, it seems hard for the Germans to stop the Americans (though, depending on their reinforcements, they certainly can launch, or threaten to launch, some serious counterattacks).



*Editor's Note: Refresher on Victory in the West -*



In these games, a unit's strength is unknown until their first battle. After committing to the battle, the attackers and defenders draw **strength** chits from a pool based on their Morale rating. (1,2, or 3). The unit uses the strength rating for their Combat Class. (A, B, C)

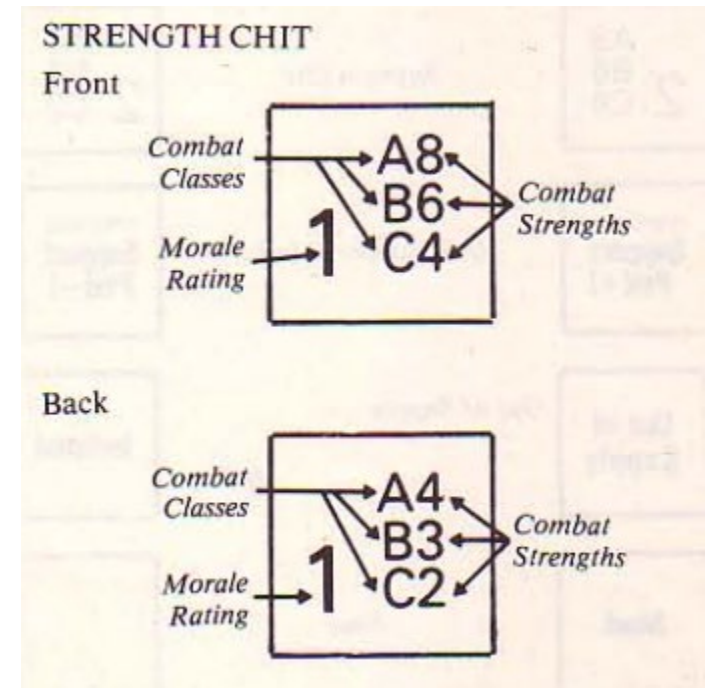
To limit enemy intelligence, the opposing player may NOT

examine the *strength* chit of enemy troops prior to battle.

**Combat losses** are in steps. A Division-size (III) would flip the *strength* chit for the first step loss. And after a second, the chit would be removed, and the Division counter flipped. *Note:* a Unit with an original strength of 3 has 3 steps; Original strength of 2 or less has 2 steps. A 1 strength Chit has *only* 1 step, and the original unit has a step. But - Cadres (CDR), Artillery Brigades (X) and Battalion (II) sized units are only 1 step total.

**Zones of Control** exist in every hex adjacent to a unit. *Exception:* Cadres (CDR), Artillery Brigades (X) and Battalion (II) sized units DO NOT have a ZOC. **Terrain** never affects ZOCs.

**Movement:** Units must end their movement on entry of a ZOC. Units that BEGIN a movement phase in an enemy ZOC may exit by paying an additional MP, but cannot enter another Enemy ZOC in this phase. Mech units out of supply are halved on movement.





## Opening Choices:



I think the best opening for the US is to attack all along the front from the 01XX - 09XX columns, except for 04XX. This will give the US 8 units in position to attack 7 German units (not much of an advantage, but the best the US can get).

Not every attack will succeed of course, but the attack frontage needs to be wide enough to ensure some success. During setup, make sure the mechanized artillery is pushed as far up as possible so it can support the infantry while the US armor is under movement restrictions.

Once the Roer River line is cracked, VII Corps should push as hard and fast as possible (since they will not be available in the last part of the game due to movement restrictions). XIX Corps should take a wide right hook to the Rhine while XIII Corps sidles to the right to protect XIX Corps' flank. XII and XVI Corps should *not* conduct any opposed crossings of the Roer unless the Germans pull back except for the thinnest of screens.

## End Game

### [22.26] RHINE BRIDGE BLOWING

#### Condition

Non-volkssturm German unit occupies the eastern terminus hex.

No non-volkssturm German unit occupies the eastern terminus hex.

US ~~rule~~ is attempted.

#### Bridge Blown on Die Roll...

3-11 (inclusive)

4-11 (inclusive)

5-11 (inclusive)

End game should see the Americans pushing north, with one flank along the Rhine (I don't think I've seen a Rhine River bridge captured intact, but you gotta try).

If the Germans have not pulled back from the Roer, don't worry. Capture Geldern and Rheinburger and you'll pocket them all. (See map below).



Usually, the German panzers will be concentrated around Duisberg, west of the Rhine if they are in force. Krefeld can make a good defensive anchor if the panzers counterattack.

### General thoughts for the US:

1. You have overwhelming force, but still bypass strongpoints. Go for the "big solution".
2. Your goal is to capture the VP cities since the Rhine bridges are a big gamble you can't really influence. A marginal victory is all you can be assured of.
3. Set D-Day at Feb 20 through 22 (better not roll high if you choose one of those earlier days). You'll appreciate the extra days at the end of the game.
4. Keep the Germans on the run. If the front stagnates, you're attacking along too broad a front. (I think *VitW* is best at modeling mobile warfare. It doesn't hold up well as an attritions model; which is why Mark Hinkle had to modify it so much when designing *The Killing Ground*).

### General thoughts for the German:

1. Make the best use of your defensive lines (starting with the Roer River, then moving back successively from Improved Position to Improved Position, and finally the Rhine). Don't let the Americans get in your rear.
2. Do not try to stop the US VII Corps. Make sure you have a unit guarding the only bridge in the VII Corps sector. If that bridge is blown, the VII Corps can do little harm to your formations after they have breached the Roer.

3. Maintain at least a threat of a counterattack. You cannot let the Americans have the initiative uncontested.

## How to Cross the Roer, One Man's Plan in Action



Picture 1: Morning February 21st, 1945. The Americans have moved into their jump-off positions, prior to H-Hour, attacking on a broad front. Though the Roer has been turned into a torrent, the Americans are gambling the extra days to reach the Rhine is worth the risk.



Picture 2 (Above) Afternoon February 21st, 1945. The results are uneven, with the VII Corps unscathed and across the Roer. Further north (right), the 30th Division managed to cross the Roer, but the 29th and 102nd Divisions were repulsed. It is interesting to note that the Americans won every combat where the German defender drew a 1 strength hit. The broad front paid off in that four Germans drew 1 strength hits, which allowed the Americans to cross at two locations successfully.

*Editor's note: Time for a review of how combat works now!*

**Combat:** In the Combat phase, non-phasing units in the ZOC a phasing unit must be attacked by someone.

**SUMMARY OF SHIFTS TO RATIO COLUMNS**

**A. Shift one column to the right** (if employed in the attack) **or one column to the left** (if employed in the defense):

1. Divisional Integrity (see 9.4)
2. Artillery "Support Bonus" (see 9.62)
3. Hilltop Combat Bonus (see 9.3)
4. Ground Support (see 13.1)

**B. Shift one column to the right:**

1. Combined Arms Combat Bonus (see 9.5)

**C. Shift one column to the left:**

1. If Mud Game-Turn is in effect (see 24.2)

**Divisional Integrity (Attacker):** *If at the moment of attack, if the attacking unit has all the regiments of his division adjacent to the defending unit, shift the attack one to the RIGHT on the CRT. (If the attacking units are from 2 divisions, and all the regiments are adjacent, they could get a second shift – but that is the maximum.) [9.44].*

**Divisional Integrity (Defender):** *IF the Defending Unit is stacked with or adjacent to ONE other regiment of his Division, shift the combat odds one column to the LEFT.*

**Combined Arms:** *For each attacking STACK that has a tank*

*and non-tank unit, it gets a shift to the right on the CRT. UNLESS the DEFENDER has a tank and non-tank unit. Then there is NO Combined arms shifts. [9.51-9.54]*

**[9.88] COMBAT RESULTS TABLE**

**Defender's Terrain**

HILLTOP	1-3	1-2	1-1	2-1
WOODS, TOWN, SWAMP	1-4	1-3	1-2	1-1
CLEAR	1-5	1-4	1-3	1-2
DICE				
2	A2(3)	D1(1)	A2(3)	A2(2)
3	A1(2)	A1(1)	D2(1)	D1
4	A1(2)	A1(2)	A1(1)	D1(1)

**Terrain** is integrated into the combat table. *Exception:* Units in Entrenchment hexes OR Attacked solely across river hexsides have their defense strength DOUBLED. If both cases are true, they are TRIPLED. [9.32]

**Combat Retreats** through an Enemy ZOC require a step loss. If it is a stack retreating, this loss may come from any unit in the stack

CRT Results: (#) is the number of steps that must be lost by the units involved (A or D as noted.) while a non-parenthesized # must be satisfied by step losses, before any retreat.

Example: A2(2) means the attacker would lose 2 steps, and THEN could retreat 2 hexes, or lose 1 step and retreat 1 hex, or lose 2 steps.

Victorious units can follow the line of retreat, but must stop if they enter an enemy ZOC.

**NOTE:** *If the result is in BOLD, it is a "Breakthrough" attack. The retreating units lose their ZOC for the phase, and the attacker can move an added hex.*



18 Feb +1  
19 Feb +1  
20 Feb 0  
21 Feb  
22 Feb  
23 Feb Sur -3  
24 Feb -4  
25 Feb  
26 Feb  
27 Feb  
28 Feb  
1 Mar  
2 Mar





Picture 3 (Above): Morning, February 22nd, 1945. The Americans seek to expand their bridgeheads in the ensuing combat phase. First, the failures are not reinforced. Instead, the units already over the Roer conduct attacks to assist the regiments still on the far side. In fact, no Germans receive the multiplier for defending behind a river. Additionally, the 413th Infantry (104th Division) and the 119th Infantry (30th Division) are able to infiltrate forward because the German cadres opposing them have no ZOC.

Picture 4 (Left): Afternoon February 22nd, 1945. In only two days, the line has been penetrated by the Americans. Already the American right hook to the north is forming, threatening to cut off any Germans still defending their initial positions. The only remaining objective for the Americans is to capture the bridge in hex 0709 in order to maintain supplies and reinforcements during the drive to the Rhine.

### Conclusion

By the way, **Operation Grenade** gets the least love of the **VitW** games, but I find myself drawn to it again and again. A very straightforward game with clearly defined objectives for the US. It's fun for the US because of their overwhelming force but tense because of the limited time available.

*Thank you for the great pictures and commentary, Nathan! All- if you would like to share your thoughts on strategy and tactics for a game you enjoy playing, play the game, send me a note at [rgifford@russgifford.net](mailto:rgifford@russgifford.net)!! If you have pictures, great, but I can usually add those. Just send me the text! -- RHG*