BIG CHAIN OF COMMAND

The Big Battle Notes

TOOFAT Lardies
Chain of Command is designed for Platoon “plus” size wargames, with one infantry platoon as the core element in any force and some support to assist them on each mission. So, why even contemplate taking the original rules and expanding the game to cover larger action?

There are, I think, two answers to that. Firstly, one of the reasons why I game is to enable me to get an insight into the issues of command and control on a WWII battlefield. Fielding more than one platoon provides an opportunity to look at how easy, or difficult, a co-ordinated attack is to achieve on the battlefield, and thereby greater appreciate the challenge of battlefield command. The second reason is far more simple: it’s fun!

Like most wargamers, I tend to think if playing with one tank is fun, playing with two will be better and playing with ten... well, I’m sure you get the idea. More importantly, on a club gaming evening, the opportunity to play a game with six or more players is somewhat limited with a platoon sized engagement. With a larger force that more social type of game is once again on the menu.

As part of the initial playtesting of the rules we played a number of games where we used multiple platoons on each side. Part of the design process with any rule set is to test it to the point where it breaks. Interestingly Chain of Command did not break, or at least we found that very few tweaks were required to allow a very significant expansion of the number of troops on the table.

The emphasis on keeping the core rules simple - firing and movement in particular – combined with the robustness of the Command Dice mechanism makes for a very resilient system which can be developed and expanded without changing the essential nature of the game. What is more, the game is not going to bog down with multiple players; a real advantage over games based on a turn draw system.

What follows are a simple set of notes which we have developed to allow us to play large games of Chain of Command with a minimum of changes to the original system. As a result what you won’t find here are pages of additional rules, but simple suggestions which we have found to be all that is required to allow us to play Big Chain of Command.

Richard Clarke
August 2014
There is no right or wrong way to select forces for a wargame; some players prefer to use a system of points to attempt some kind of play balance, whereas others prefer to simply design a scenario using whatever forces they feel will make for a good game.

**Chain of Command** uses a system of force ratings and support lists so as to provide the player with an historically plausible force to game with. The structures used are those used by the troops who fought in WWII; the support options are believable and likely. Selecting forces for **Big Chain of Command** is done using precisely the same methods.

With **Big Chain of Command**, it is recommended that each player fields one core platoon of infantry or armour. Where numbers are uneven the side with fewer players may begin the game with one full Chain of Command dice, 6 Chain of Command points, per player. It is also recommended that Scenarios 3 to 6 are used as these suit a game with a force imbalance.

**Infantry Forces**

It is strongly recommended that at least one platoon on each side is an infantry platoon; **Chain of Command** is, at its heart, an infantry game with armour in a supporting role.

Infantry forces are selected using one of the lists in either the main rules or one of the supplementary lists which we have provided.

Before the game begins we will use the Platoon Strength Rating as normal to help balance out the forces on both sides. This will, of course, be modified by the support available for each scenario, as happens normally in a game of **Chain of Command**.

**Armoured Forces**

Fielding armoured platoons in **Chain of Command** is an interesting and fun option. What we tried to achieve with the rules was a balance between the inherent power of armoured vehicles and their intrinsic weaknesses when faced with infantry forces which are both more nimble and easily concealed.

In the close quarter battle represented by **Chain of Command**, armoured vehicles are not all-conquering monsters, but need to be carefully protected by infantry in order to allow them to use their heavy armaments to best effect.

In **Chain of Command**, armoured forces are treated as support options and, as such, have had a List value as opposed to a Platoon strength Rating. For **Big Chain of Command**, where whole armoured platoons can be fielded, we need to address that so that these can be used.

Making the conversion is not a straightforward process as the comparisons between units are not linear but better resemble rock-paper-scissors. What value does a 2 pounder anti-tank gun have if your opponent does not field any armour? Effectively it is paper when your opponent is fielding no rocks.

When selecting your armoured force total up the List value of the armour in your platoon and cross-reference this on the table below. It is worth pointing out here that base forces in **Chain of Command** are “cheaper”, in terms
of their Force Rating than additional support units. This is done to encourage players to field their forces in formations which are historically plausible, with support units being an addition as opposed to the bulk of the force. So, when selecting your force you would be well advised to look to maximising the historical formations rather than look to have a wide selection of additional support options.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List Value</th>
<th>Platoon Strength Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or 6</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 or 8</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 or 10</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 or 12</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 or 14</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 or 16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 or 18</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 or 20</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 or 22</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 or 24</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 or 26</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 or 28</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 or 30</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 or 32</td>
<td>+8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 or 34</td>
<td>+9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 or 36</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 or 38</td>
<td>+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 or 40</td>
<td>+12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 or 42</td>
<td>+13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43 or 44</td>
<td>+14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 or 46</td>
<td>+15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47 or 48</td>
<td>+16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 or 50</td>
<td>+17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, a Panther platoon of five tanks, all selected from List 10, would be valued as 50 and rated as +17. This would allow any infantry platoon it faced to get themselves some decent anti-tank support. A British Sherman platoon with three M4 Shermans from List 6 and one Firefly from List 7 would be valued as 25 and consequently rated as +5. We will look at more historical options later in this supplement.

To field an armoured platoon at least two AFVs of the same type should be selected. It is perfectly acceptable to field a variety of AFV types, this could well be an ad hoc force selected for the current mission, but the two or more vehicles are the core platoon with one of these being a Senior Leader commanding the force.

Armoured platoons of more than one AFV will automatically include one Senior Leader. All other AFV commanders are Junior Leaders. There is an option later in this supplement for deploying an Ace with your armoured platoons. Only one of thee may be deployed by either side in a game. See page 12 for details.

Now you should have your infantry and armoured platoons ready to play and know what all of your Platoon Strength Ratings are. The next step is to see what support is available for our forces.

**Checking for Support**

Where a scenario specifies one or more D6 to be rolled to indicate the amount of support available, roll once for each infantry platoon present in the game and add the totals together to give the level of support which is available for the whole force. Armoured platoons operating with one or more infantry platoons do not roll for support; however, armoured Platoons operating without infantry support will roll for support as normal.

Support may be selected for the whole force; you don’t need to roll separately for each platoon. However, any on-table support should be divided up and allocated to specific platoons for use during the game. During play only the Command Dice of that platoon may be used to activate the support attached to it. If infantry and armoured platoons are present then all of the support must be allocated to the infantry platoons. If no infantry are present it will be divided between the armour platoons as the players’ desire.

Off-table support, such as the Adjutant or Pre-Game Barrage, may be used by all the platoons on that side.
For example, two British Motor platoons rated -2 each and a Sherman Troop with a Force Rating of +5 are facing two German infantry platoons rated 0. The British have a net Strength Rating advantage of 1 in total.

As they are playing scenario Three, Attack & Defend, the British attacker normally takes 2D6 of support (rolls of 11 or 12 being counted as 10), with the German defender taking half that amount. With Big Chain of Command the British roll once for each infantry platoon present. They roll 2 and 8, giving them a total a 10 support points. The Germans will get 5 support points. Once that is adjusted the Germans will increase their support points to 6 to reflect the British 1 Point Strength Rating advantage.

The British select a Forward Observer from List 4 which they allocate to the first platoon and a Vickers Machine Gun Team from List 4 which is allocated to the second platoon. Additionally the select a Pre-Game barrage from List 2. Pre-game barrages occur before the game and so are not allocated to any platoon. They affect all of the enemy force, not just one platoon.

The Germans now select their support. They have 1 point due to the British Force Strength Advantage and a further 5 for the scenario. They select two Panzerschreck Teams from List 2 and two entrenchments from List One. These are allocated to the two platoons, one Schreck and one entrenchment each.

As the game in unbalanced, with three players against two, the German players both get a Chain of Command dice with six points on it. Naturally with such a game set up the Germans are defending, the British attacking.
When setting up a game of Big Chain of Command we advise adding an additional 12” to one dimension of the table size per additional infantry platoon. Armoured platoons do not affect the table size.

When playing down the length of the table, we recommend that the table is increased to 6’ by 5’ for a second platoon and 6’ by 6’ for a third platoon. When playing across the width of the table, we recommend 7’ by 4’ for the second platoon and 8’ by 4’ for a third. However, gamers playing in 15mm or smaller can ignore the first increase, with an additional foot for the third and subsequent infantry platoons.

Of course, there is no reason why you cannot play on a truly huge table and leave room for wide flanks; the suggestions above are more for minimum table sizes rather than maximum. The one real caveat here is that games set in close terrain, such as towns or jungles, can often be played on significantly smaller tables, so if you are limited for space, the simplest solution is to pile on the terrain!

Before the game begins you’ll need to provide a means of tracking the Force Morale of ALL of the platoons present; both armour and infantry. Each platoon rolls for its own morale before the game begins. The player controlling the infantry platoon with the highest morale on each side is designated as the overall force commander. Armoured platoon commanders can only command the whole force if no infantry platoons are fielded. Where infantry are present, armour is always considered to be supporting the infantry attack rather than leading it.

If you game with a rabid control freak and are worried about him taking over your force, fear not. Who is force commander will not greatly affect you during play, each player having complete control of his own force, as we’ll see in the next section.

The Scenario & Patrol Phase
Use the scenarios in the main rules just as they are, but adjust the table dimensions accordingly. For example, where Scenario Two allows a 12” deployment zone for the defender, on a larger table this should be increased to 18” or 24” to reflect that.

Now use the average Force Morale rating of each side’s platoons to determine who has the first move in the patrol Phase. Where the average ratings are the same, the side with the highest rated individual platoon goes first. Where this is tied, just roll a D6 to break the deadlock.

Now play out the Patrol Phase as normal but adding one additional Patrol Marker for each additional infantry, not armoured, platoon in the force. The Patrol Markers are controlled by the team as a whole, not with individual players taking a number each. We recommend that the force commander for each side plays the Patrol Phase, although other commanders should feel free to shout advice, encouragement or downright abuse through that phase of the game.

We add one Jump-Off Point to those listed in the scenarios for each additional infantry, not armoured, platoon in the force. Where a scenario allows the players to choose how many Patrol Markers are used, the minimum number that may be selected will be equal to the adjusted number of Jump-Off Points to be used for that scenario.

Jump Off Points
Once the Patrol Phase is complete Jump-Off Points are placed as normal. With this done each infantry platoon should be designated as an attacking platoon or a reserve platoon.
Each attacking infantry platoon must be allocated two dedicated Jump-Off Points. These Jump-Off points may not be allocated to, or used by, any other attacking platoon. If there are insufficient jump-off points for all of the infantry platoons then the remaining platoons are designed support platoons which may be called forward to support the attack once it is underway.

Armour platoons are never designated as support platoons and must enter the table on their friendly table edge according to the normal rules. Where more than one armoured platoon is present, an entry point is designated for each platoon, on a road when multiple roads are available, as the Allied player has on the illustration above, but at any open area of ground the player chooses where sufficient roads are not present, as with the German player illustrated.

Please note; this process will not square up one platoon against its opposite number; we are not attempting to have several one to one games occurring on the same table simultaneously. As we can see on the illustration at the top of the page, it can result in a very unbalanced deployment, which is all part of the fun of the Patrol Phase.

Deploying Reserves
Forces identified as reserves will probably only appear in very large games. That said, they do add something to a scenario and, in a game at a show or convention, taking charge of a reserve platoon will at least allow those players to have a look round and do their shopping!

Reserve forces can only be ordered forward by the force commander using two of his Command Initiatives in any Phase. He must order them to support one of his existing attacking platoons, which will then allow the reserve platoon to begin entering the table in the next Turn using that attacking platoon’s allocated Jump-Off Points.
Once the game begins, the main rules apply in all respects with no significant changes. All of the players on the side with the initiative in the first Phase will roll their Command Dice simultaneously. The resulting playing area is likely to be a busy one, so to keep everyone honest we recommend that all of the players place their Command Dice next to the units they are activating in that Phase. They can then activate these in whatever order they wish, with all of the friendly players doing this simultaneously. You DO NOT wait for each player to take their go in sequence; this would slow the game right down and is unnecessary.

If any player rolls two 6’s then he should take the next Phase as quickly as possible in order to keep the game moving along. In practice this is not too difficult as with two 6’s rolled he should only have a maximum of three dice to use immediately before rolling the next Phase.

When the force commander on either side rolls three or more 6’s, the turn will end, as is normal in Chain of Command, and all friendly forces will take the first Phase in the new Turn. When any subordinate player rolls three or more 6’s, any random events happen as normal and any bonus Chain of Command dice are allocated to that player, as normal; however, the Turn does not end. That player simply takes the next Phase and the Turn continues.

Any Chain of Command points generated are tallied up by the individual players. They are NOT shared between the force as a whole. Any resulting Chain of Command Dice may only be used by the player who has generated it. They may not be shared, traded, borrowed, swopped or purchased by any other player.

During play, each player commands his own platoon plus any supports allocated to it. No player may activate, rally or influence in any way troops belonging to another player.

**Force Morale**

All of the main rules in Chain of Command are used without change. The only addition is to the Force Morale Table in order to reflect the fact that troops are affected by the attitude of those around them and to reflect the fielding of armoured platoons.

The loss of a friendly platoon, either being destroyed or withdrawing due to a collapse of morale, will not necessarily end the game - the game only ends when all of one side’s forces can no longer continue - but it is likely to have a significant impact on other friendly forces.

The following lines, shown below, should be added to the Force Morale Test Table. If an AFV explodes it is also presumed that the Leader in it is lost, so also dice for of a Leader killed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setback</th>
<th>No Effect</th>
<th>-1 Point</th>
<th>-2 Points</th>
<th>-3 Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendly platoon loses a Command Dice</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly Platoon destroyed/withdraws</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>3 4 5 6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFV immobilised</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFV main gun out</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFV Knocked Out</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platoon Command AFV Knocked Out</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 3 4</td>
<td>5 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We have already looked at how we ascertain Platoon Strength Ratings for armoured forces in *Chain of Command*. Now let us have a look at some historical organisational structures and some typical armoured platoons which could be fielded with *Chain of Command*.

As already stated, there is no reason why the gamer cannot field a platoon of any AFVs which happen to be in his or her collection, but to my mind there is nothing better than to see a real historical formation on the table.

**German Force Examples**

Typical German armoured platoon organisation was the five tank Zug, with five tanks of the same mark forming a Platoon.

Five Panzer IV H selected from List 7 are be valued as 35 and have a Platoon Force Rating of +10. Reducing the platoon to an understrength four or three tanks would bring that rating down to +6 or +3 respectively.

German Tank-destroyers platoons were made up of four vehicles as opposed to five.

The Jagdpanzer IV from List 7 would be rated the same as the Panzer IV H platoons. The Marder III on List 6 is a more economical option, with four tank-destroyers valued as 24 and rated +4. Fielding just three of these would reduce this to just +1.
A German Heavy Tank Zug, fielding Tiger I or Tiger II tanks, was made up of four tanks.

Four Tiger I selected from List 10 are valued as 40 and rated as +12. Reducing the numbers fielded to three or two would make the Platoon Force Rating +7 or +2 respectively.

German armoured cars and reconnaissance forces tended to operate in platoons of six vehicles. A platoon of for SdKfz 222 and two SdKfz 232, all from List 6, would be valued as 36 and rated as +10. Just three armoured cars would rate as +1.

**British Force Examples**

The British divided their tanks into two types, infantry tanks which were designed to support an infantry attack, and armoured formations which they envisaged performing in a broader, sweeping role reminiscent of cavalry in earlier days. In reality both types of force found themselves co-operating with the infantry at all levels.

The standard British tank Troop was three tanks of the same type; a structure which was to remain the same for infantry tank formations throughout the war.

Infantry tanks tended to be better armoured, and consequently slower, than those within the armoured formations. The three

Churchills here, selected from List 7, are valued at 21 and have a Force Rating of +3. If just two were fielded they would be rated -1.

Encounters with heavy German armour saw the Allies seeking a better armed tank to provide some tank-killing capability for their armoured forces. The British developed the Sherman VC, or Firefly (a nickname not actually used during the war), by adding their impressive 17 pounder gun to a Sherman with the turret redesigned to house the much larger gun. The Firefly was added to their tank platoons just in time to see action on D-

As we have already mentioned, this British Sherman platoon with three M4 Shermans from List 6 and one Firefly from List 7 would be valued as 25 and consequently rated as +5. Reducing the number of M4 Shermans to two would see the rating fall to +2, whereas removing the Firefly for an earlier force, in Italy for example, would leave the three M4 Shermans rated as +1.
The British deployed their tank-destroyers in Anti-Tank Troops of four vehicles.

This Troop of four M10 Wolverines from List 6 is valued at 24 and rated +4, whereas just three of them would be rated +1.

**United States Force Examples**

The United States deployed its tank platoons with five tanks of the same model. The classic tank platoon would be the Sherman M4 as shown here.

Selected from List 6, this platoon is valued at 30 and rated +7 and is suitable for North Africa, Italy and France.

The lighter M5 light tank from List 5 would be valued at 25 for a full platoon of five, with a Strength Rating of +5. With four tanks this would drop to +3 and just three M5 tanks would be rated 0.

Even before D-Day the US forces were attempting to upgrade their armoured forces to the 76mm Sherman in order to take on the heavier German armour. This was an ongoing process and in some units the old and new models served alongside each other.

The platoon shown above, with four 75mm Shermans from List 6 and one 76mm Sherman from List 7 is valued at 31 and rated +8 whereas the one below, better equipped with four 76mm Shermans and just one 75mm model is rated +9.

A platoon fully equipped with 76mm tanks is rated as +10.

US forces fielded tank-destroyer platoons with four AFVs in each.

This platoon of four M10 Wolverines from List 6 are valued at 24 and rated +4, the same as the British Troop. Three of them would be rated +1.
**Soviet Force Examples**
The Soviets tended to operate with smaller platoons, with three tanks being the norm.

The three T34-76 from List 6 are valued at 18 and rated at just +1. With just two tanks this rating would fall to -1.

Their Heavy Tanks, such as the ISII with the Guards Tank formations, were deployed in two-tank platoons, as below.

From List 11 these are valued at 22 and rated +3. No smaller platoon can be fielded.

Soviet Armoured cars were deployed in platoons of six vehicles. However, these were then divided into sections of three cars, so a Section of BA64 armoured cars from List 4 would be valued 12 and have a Platoon Strength Rating of -2.

Assault Gun platoons in Soviet service were organised in platoons of four.

Four SU-76s from List 5 are rated as +2, whereas the four SU-122s shown above from List 8 are rated +8.
Introducing armoured platoons to the game gives us room to embellish our gaming even further by adding some optional rules to cover those tankers who have achieved a level of success and notoriety to qualify them as Aces.

It is possible to add a whole raft of plusses and minuses in order to reflect crew ability, even going so far as to rate each individual crew member. In Big Chain of Command I would suggest that this is best avoided as it just serves to a level of complexity which usually gets forgotten in play. As a result, the Ace rules are very simple to bolt on.

Aces

When fielding an armoured platoon any Ace present must be the platoon commander. This is a well-respected and successful soldier and he has been promoted to a position of command as a result. He can only command a tank or tank-killer platoon; no reconnaissance platoons or armoured car platoons may be commanded by an Ace.

An Ace may also command a single AFV tank or tank killer which is selected as support for an infantry platoon. In either case the Ace will be selected from two Lists higher than normal for the AFV he is commanding. For example, a Tiger Ace commanding a Tiger I which is normally selected from List 10 will count as being from List 12.

An Ace rolling to hit an armoured target adds +2 to his dice roll. As well as being more likely to hit a target he is also more likely to be able to identify and target weak points on the target vehicle. Therefore, any roll of 10, 11 or 12 counts as hitting a weak spot and three additional D6 are added to his AP strike factor roll.

When under fire the crew of an Ace’s tank gain no benefits in terms of armour, but they do have an enhanced morale factor using the elite crew morale rating of 5.