AFTER ACTION REPORT
DATA COLLECTION PROJECT

Preliminary Report
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June 6, 2007

www.bardsabode.com/aar.html

Introduction

Inspired by discussions on the Flames of War forums, the After Action Data Collection Project (AARDCP) is an effort to collect data on games being played across the globe. The primary goal of the AARDCP is to collect and analyze game-play data in an attempt to reveal various trends within the FoW gaming community. Examples of specific trends include what forces, scenarios, and terrain densities are most commonly being used. Through careful analysis of the data, we can also search for more specific trends, such as revealing if a given scenario is more likely to be won or lost by a particular type of army. While the AARDCP is not affiliated with Battlefront in any way, we have agreed to share this data (and any analysis of that data) with Battlefront. The concept was launched on May 8, 2007 with the first reports being received on May 18, 2007.

At this early point in the project, it is difficult to say how successful we will be in our data collection efforts. The actual database will not be made public. However, we will make every effort to disclose any findings. Certain items, such as the limited personal data requested on the form, will be considered confidential. Please be aware that any analysis of data will be forwarded to Battlefront before any results are reported to provide an opportunity for a response.

With any research project, there comes a question of validity. In the case of the AARDCP, a voluntary effort, validity is a difficult goal. We are only collecting data from volunteers. It is expected that most of the data will be reported by members of the Flames of War forums. Therefore, we expect a very limited sample meaning that our data may not be able to be generalized across FoW players and games as a whole.

While we do not expect any malicious activities, it is difficult to verify the accuracy of individual reports. We rely on you, the individual reporting, to be as open and honest as possible. We also must realize that certain questions, such as Terrain Density, can be considered to be rather subjective (what does 20-40% terrain look like?). Unfortunately, without having "trained" terrain density specialists present at every game to make the proper assessment, the best we can do is ask you to use your best judgment.

There are a number of other issues involved with this type of data collection; the above examples illustrate the point. While the AARDCP strives to gather information, it also realizes that, from a scientific perspective, any resulting analysis will be on shaky ground. Nevertheless, we will press forward, do our best to provide valid data, and, should the need arise; further research can be conducted at a later date. At the very least, I will proudly say that we will have gathered more game-play data analysis than would otherwise be available to the average player.

Commentary on the Data Collection Process

During the creation of the various forms for the AARDCP, those involved raised two specific issues: the form is too long and, the form is too short. One group felt that the form asked too many questions and that this would lead to a lack of participation. The second group felt that the form did not ask enough questions in deep enough detail to arrive at any solid answers. I would like to take a moment to address both of these issues.

The online form is made up of 35 fields of which 19 are drop down selections and one is a date field. The remaining 15 fields cover relatively basic information with the force descriptions and comments box allowing for a large amount of text to be entered. Every one of the 35 fields is designed to capture specific data to identify specific trends or to validate the data itself. The only specific comment I have received is that the form asks for information that is deemed to be too personal in nature. In my opinion, the form asks nothing more than should be expected. A contact e-mail is desired to ask follow-up questions regarding the data as sometimes the responses to certain questions are not entirely clear. The city and country where the game was

played is to help identify trends that may be isolated to a region or may be occurring across the board.

Since there is no required registration to complete the form, there is a need to identify who is reporting. Both a name and forum name are requested to help determine how many times a single player has participated in a game reported to the AARDCP. This may also allow for a baseline for judging the experience levels of players involved in games reported based on collected game data rather than a series of questions (making a longer survey) to determine a player's relative experience. Using the data provided, the AARDCP can report how many games a single player reports, how many unique companies are used by that player, and how many unique players they have faced in the battles reported.

Of the remaining fields, Company Name is the only field that might be arguably irrelevant. However, it can in fact be useful. First, it helps to identify attempts to model a specific historical unit (as opposed to a type of unit). Second, it helps to identify how many players have multiple specific named units. It also helps to identify if a specific unit is being modeled by a large number of individuals. On this one question, I beg your indulgence as I am not only very interested in this superfluous piece of data, but I feel that it can be useful information in the future.

I hope that time will be taken to carefully examine this preliminary report as it is designed not only to establish the format of future reports, but also to demonstrate how the information gathered is compiled. I would suggest that an objective look at this information will reveal a number of ways in which this data can be utilized to illustrate the presence of trends that may be seen as detrimental to the game as well as offering data to help lay any "myths" about non-existent trends to rest.

In summary, while it is recognized that it may take a few minutes for individuals to complete the form, each data field plays a role in both validating the data and providing enough data that a meaningful analysis can be pursued. None of the fields are required to submit the form and participation is completely voluntary. No form attempting to collect this data will be found suitable by everyone. This form is a strong compromise between valid data collection procedures and what could easily be a four page questionnaire. I am open to comments and suggestions as to how the process can be improved, but I do feel that the fields currently present are suitable to this endeavor. I would also like to make very clear that this is an entirely voluntary effort. There are better tools that can be used to collect and analyze the data, but they all take money, time, or knowledge of which I have a finite amount. Your interest and participation in this endeavor is greatly appreciated.

Data Summary Sheets

The Data Summary Sheets at the end of this report provide a more detailed look at some of the data gathered.   The information found here forms the basis of much of the analysis and is included to provide the majority of the supporting data. Further data sheets may be developed for future reporting.

Future AARDCP Reports

Due to the uncertainty of prolonged success of this project, it is difficult to predict how long the project will continue. The current goal is to continue collecting data for at least an entire year (through May 2008). Future AARDCP reports are currently planned as each quarter year ends. Pending changes to this plan, future reports will be compiled following the months of August, November, February, and May. If there is continued interest and support for the AARDCP, the data collection may continue beyond May 2008.

Requests for specific case studies may be sent to *thebard@bardsabode.com.* Such requests will be considered on an individual basis for inclusion in a future AARDCP Report.

BASIC DATA

The data used in this preliminary report was gathered between May 18 and June 5, 2007. A total of 26 games were reported, originating from six nations and involving 35 unique players. Six of the players involved played in at least three of the games reported. One individual was involved in four games, each against a unique opponent and playing a different scenario each time.

General Game Play Data

LOCATION	GAMES	%
Home/Residence	7	27.0
Local Game Shop	6	23.0
Tournament	7	27.0
Wargames Club Meeting	6	23.0

Game Tables were typically 6x4 (95.8% of the tables whose sizes were reported).

As can be expected, terrain tends to cover 40-60% of the board (50%) with the categories of 20-40% and 60-80% making up 33% of the tables reported. Three games were played with No Terrain (tank versus tank battles).

57.6% of the games reported were won by a 5-2 score. Other individual results made up no more than 15.4% of the total. Three draws (11.5%) were reported.

Games were most often won by possession of the objective (34.6%) or company morale check (26.9%).

The average game was six turns in length with 38.0% of the games with turns recorded being six turns. The longest game, a Breakthrough scenario, lasted 10 turns.

Games Reported by Era (Figure 1)

ERA	GAMES	%
Early War	0	0.0
Mid War	15	57.7
Late War	11	42.3
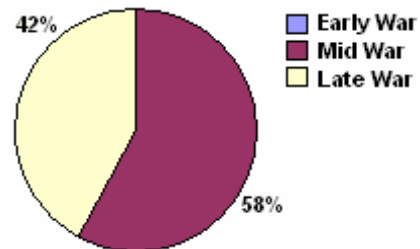
Point Values Played

POINT RANGE	GAMES	%
601-1499	1	4.0
1500	22	85.0
2000	3	12.0

Games Reported by Country (Figure 2)

COUNTRY	GAMES	%
Australia	4	15.4
Germany	1	3.8
New Zealand	3	11.5
Sweden	1	3.8
United Kingdom	2	7.7
United States	15	57.7
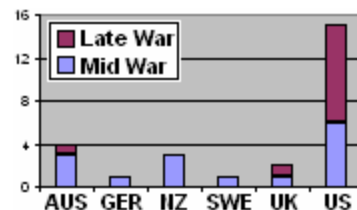
Games Reported by Scenario (Figure 3)

SCENARIO	GAMES	%
Free-for-All	4	15.0
Encounter	2	8.0
Hold the Line	13	50.0
Breakthrough	3	12.0
Fighting Withdrawal	2	8.0
Roadblock	0	0.0
Cauldron	0	0.0
Other*	2	8.0

*One unidentified scenario reported. One "Deep Battle" scenario (Cantwell – FoW Forums) reported.
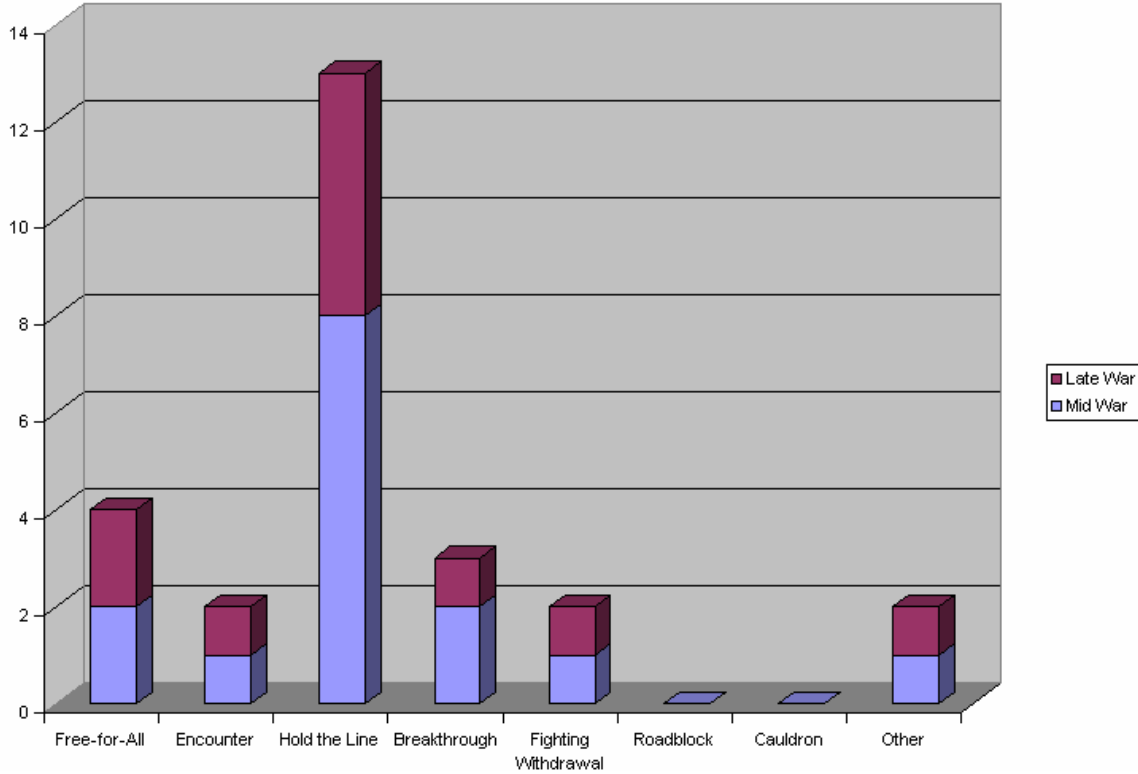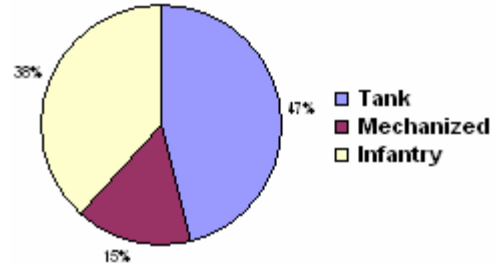

Forces Reported by Nation (Figure 4)

NATION	OCCURENCE	%
German	22	42.3
Italian	3	5.8
Finnish	1	1.9
Romanian	1	1.9
American	11	21.2
British	6	11.5
Russian	7	13.5
Minor Allied	1	1.9
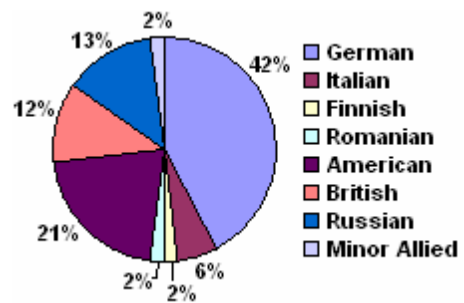
Forces Reported by Type (Figure 5)

| TYPE	FORCES	%
Tank	24	46.2
Mechanized	8	15.4
Infantry	20	38.5

See Figure 5b for a visual summary of forces reported by type for each nation. Currently, Figure 5b only reflects those nations for whom more than one force type has been reported. The following nations only have one force type reported: Italy (tank), Finland (infantry), Romanian (infantry), Minor Allies (infantry).

Figure 5b – Forces Reported by Type by Nation
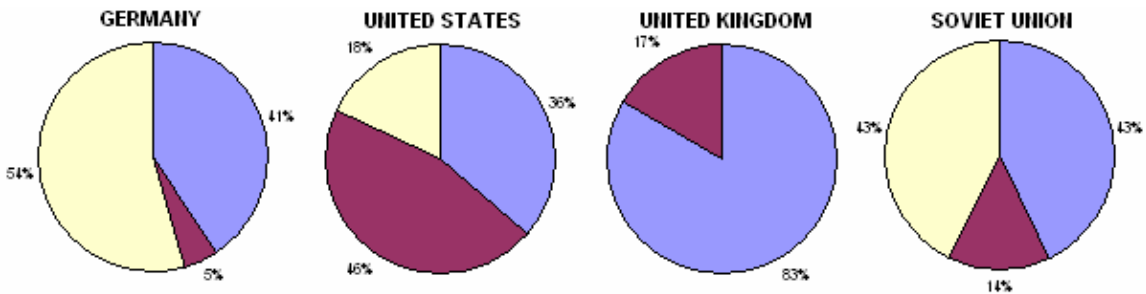
As further games are reported, an additional figure to illustrate the range of company lists used for each nation within each type of force may be included. Figure 5c is an example of how such an illustration would appear.

Figure 5c - Company Lists Reported by Nation, Germany (reference sample)
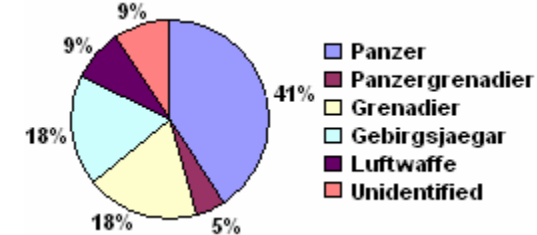
NOTES OF INTEREST

One report of Air Support (Sporadic) being used was received. Air support was utilized by the attacker in Hold the Line. The attacker, a tank company, lost to the defending infantry 4-3.

Five (19.2%) "field exercises" (two forces from the same nation battling it out) were reported.

Match-ups between force types favored Tank v. Infantry battles (38.5%) followed by Tank v. Tank and Mechanized v. Infantry (each at 23.1%). (See Figure 6 at right)
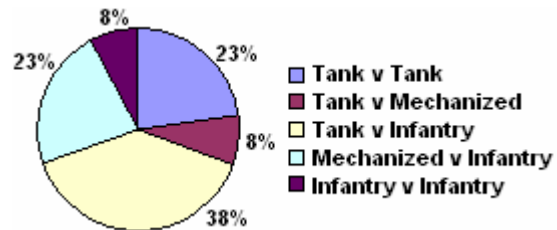
Match-ups between nations favored clashes between the US and Germany (23.1%) or Soviet Union and Germany (15.4%).

Three games reported from the United States included an American force (all played by the same player). The other seven games with American forces reported hail from the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Germany was the only other nation that reported a force from their own country.

CASE STUDY – HOLD THE LINE
(in progress)

The discussion surrounding possible flaws in the Hold the Line scenario was one of the primary motivations for the AARDCP. The data collected thus far includes 13 Hold the Line scenarios played (50% of those reported). The following case study is highly preliminary and is meant only to illustrate the possible scope of the AARDCP and should not be considered accurate or decisive due to the limited data collected at this point. This case study will provide basic information regarding the specific scenario and attempt to shed light on trends that may illuminate any flaws perceived by players.

QUICK OVERVIEW

Of the 13 Hold the Line games reported to AARDCP:
- 61.5% (8 games) were Mid War era (3 US, 2 Australia, 2 New Zealand, 1 Germany)
- 38.5% (5 games) were Late War era (3 US, 1 Australia, 1 United Kingdom)
- 84.6% (11 games) were played at 1500 points on 6x4 tables
- 15.4% (2 games) were played at 2000 points on 6x4 and 8x6 tables

Terrain Density
- 53.8% (7 games) were played with a terrain density of 40-60%
- 15.4% (2 games) were played with 20-40% terrain
- 15.4% (2 games) were played with 60-80% terrain

Reported Outcomes
- 53.8% (7 games) were decided by possession of the objective
- 30.8% (4 games) were decided by a player concession
- 7.7% (1 game) was decided by company morale check
- 7.7% (1 game) was a draw
- 61.5% (8 games) were decided with a 5-2 score
- 23.1% (3 games) were decided with a 4-3 score
- 38.5% (5 games) were won by the attacking player
- 53.8% (7 games) were won by the defending player

Forces Involved
- 46.2% (12 companies) – German, evenly split between tank and infantry
- 19.2% (5 companies) – American, 3 mechanized, 1 tank, and 1 infantry
- 11.5% (3 companies) – Soviet, 1 each tank, mechanized, and infantry
- 11.5% (3 companies) – British, 2 tank and 1 mechanized
- Remainder include 2 tank and 1 infantry company from other nations

NOTES

"Possession of the objective" was used above to describe results reported for both attacker and defender as "Win: Possessing Objective" or "Win: Objective not Captured". Two games won by the defender were reported for each of these results. By the scenario, the defender does not win by possession of the objective. The defender wins if the attacker fails to capture the objective. The defender does not need to possess the objective to win. It must be assumed then that there are actually four "Win: Objective not Captured" results.

Unfortunately, given the limitations of the current reporting forms, there is no data validation structure based on the scenario identified. This would involve a more structured database linked directly to the form which, at this point, is beyond the skill and patience of this author. This may demonstrate a tendency to focus on the possession of an objective over and above the specific details of a given scenario, a possible topic for future research.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Does an infantry company with more than one fully armored platoon have an advantage over another infantry company?
To date, only one battle between infantry companies has been reported. Neither infantry force involved would be considered as having more than one fully armored platoon (defined as having top armor of 1 or more). Due to lack of data, no conclusions can be made.

Does an infantry company with more than one fully armored platoon gain a significant advantage when defending that suggests it should be treated as mechanized for purposes of the Defensive Battle rule?
Only two infantry companies meet the criteria and both of these battled against tank companies, so data to respond to this question is lacking.

OK, so what data regarding infantry companies with more than one fully armored platoon do you have?
It has been suggested that an infantry company with more than one fully armored platoon should be classified as mechanized for purposes of the defensive battle rule. Thanks to the detailed force lists sent in by some of the participants, two infantry companies have been identified that had more than one fully armored platoon in support. Obviously, this is too small a sample (4% of all forces and 34.6% of all infantry forces reported) to arrive at any conclusions. However, a qualitative analysis of these two forces does provide the following information.

A Mid War tournament battle was reported between infantry and a tank company which resulted in a 4-3 victory for the defending infantry. The infantry included an assault gun platoon and a single tank for a total of two platoons with four fully armored vehicles. Terrain was described as 20-40% density. The tank company included sporadic air support.

A Late War tournament battle was reported between infantry and a tank company which resulted in a 4-3 victory for the defending infantry. The infantry included four tanks and two assault guns for a total of two platoons with six fully armored vehicles. Terrain was described as 40-60% density.

In all other cases (7 games) involving infantry in Hold the Line, infantry companies defended with the exception of a single infantry v. infantry battle. 5 games (71.4%) were won by a 5-2 score, 1 game (14.3%) by a 6-1 score, and the final game was a draw. Two of the 5-2 results were losses to mechanized and tank companies.

Of these games, three infantry forces included only one fully armored platoon in defense. One of these lost to a tank company (5-2). In the sole infantry v. infantry game, the player with a fully armored platoon (3 tanks) won while attacking.

Two games in which the infantry defended and won did not have force lists provided in the report. These were won with 6-1 and 5-2 scores respectively.

Self-propelled anti-tank guns with no top armor were included in two forces that only had one fully armored platoon while in defense.

SUMMARY

When examining the impact of fully armored platoons in a defending infantry force, our very limited sample arrives at the following conclusions:

These conclusions are a sample only and should not be construed as anything more than a preliminary summary of the data currently available. Do not cite this report as evidence that the

Infantry companies with one fully armored platoon while in defense win the Hold the Line scenario at a rate of 50% (2 of 4 games inclusive) with a 5-2 score.

Infantry companies with two fully armored platoons while in defense win the Hold the Line scenario at a rate of 100% (2 of 2 games inclusive) with a 4-3 score.

Infantry companies with more fully armored platoons than opposing infantry win the Hold the Line scenario at a rate of 100% (1 of 1 game inclusive) with a 5-2 score.

Regardless of the number of fully armored platoons, infantry companies in defense win the Hold the Line scenario at a rate of 66.7% (6 of 9 games) with a 5-2 score (50%, 3 of 6 games). For those games in which infantry defended and lost (22.2%), the score was 5-2 (100%).

Infantry companies attacked 11.1% of the time in Hold the Line. If the suggested "mechanized" rule for infantry with two fully armored platoons is applied to these games, this number would remain unchanged as both qualifying forces fought against tank companies.