



# German Tank Tactical Problems series

For Combat Mission Red Thunder

Author: George MC

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## Foreword

I trust you will relish the challenges and opportunities that this series of tank tactical problems offers within Combat Mission. The primary objective was to provide players with a sandbox environment to explore both a doctrinally 'correct' approach to utilizing German armor in Combat Mission, while still working within the game engine's limitations, and to encourage experimentation with their own tactical strategies when confronted with the scenarios' challenges.

I've meticulously designed this series to progressively immerse players in a series of increasingly intricate organizational and tactical scenarios within Combat Mission. Consequently, it is my hope that these scenarios will appeal to both seasoned Combat Mission players and newcomers alike, providing an engaging and demanding experience.

In the first scenario, you assume command of a platoon of armored units accompanied by an engineer section in rolling terrain. The second problem presents the player with more intricate terrain and the command of a reduced tank company, complete with SPW equipped panzer grenadiers. The final challenge will test your combined arms mettle as you lead a full tank company, a SPW panzer grenadier platoon, and receive artillery and engineer support in an assault against a Soviet PAK front in open, rolling terrain.

I value any feedback you can provide, and invite you to engage with me either on the BFC forum through the [dedicated series thread](#), where I go by @George MC, or on the Unofficial CM Discord, where you can reach me as George MC#6111.

Thank you!

George MC



## Acknowledgments

My thanks to those (from both the BFC CM forum and the Unofficial CM Discord) who took the earlier iterations of these tactical problems for a spin, and who's feedback has been invaluable in giving them a final polish. Special thanks to Kuli<3, Monty's Mighty Moustache, Ratdeath, Strv 103, and 37mm. Any errors and omissions are entirely my fault.

## About the Tank Tactical Problems Scenarios Series

This series of three missions is very loosely based on several of the 'Tank Battle Problems' detailed in the Nafziger publication 'the German Tank Platoon in WWII: Its Training and Employment in battle'.

Whilst the series of 'problems' outlined in the book appear to be pre/early war I have updated the fundamental concepts to a later period in the war i.e. 1944.

The key intent of these tank tactical problems is to give the player new to using German armor an opportunity to use them in a more doctrinally 'correct' manner within the limitations of the Combat Mission game engine.

This series complements the [German halftrack \(SPW\)/panzergrenadier training lessons](#) in the CMRT Battle Pack 1 where the main focus is on using SPW in Combat Mission.

For the tactical problem series, the German player uses Panzer IVs. This tank was used in significant numbers during the war and though starting to become outclassed by 1944 by the Soviet T-34/85 was still a significant part of the tank strength of most panzer divisions. Though Panthers were slowly starting to form the main panzer strength in the panzer regiments. The player cannot rely on superior armor/armament to bully through this series as the Panzer IV's armor is comparatively speaking, inadequate.

## German Small Unit Armored Tactics

As an off shoot from this project, I am in the process of creating a series of videos that define and describe the principles, techniques and drills the German armored forces were trained in and the tactical doctrine they operated within. Currently there are three videos completed:

**German Small Unit Armored Tactics on the Eastern Front in 1944: Part 1 What is the difference between formations, drills, principles, and tactics?**

<https://youtu.be/UEu4MrzpURY>

**German Small Unit Armored Tactics on the Eastern Front in 1944: PART 2 German tank formations**

<https://youtu.be/OqTVuP3HxPY>

**German Small Unit Armored Tactics on the Eastern Front in 1944: Part 3 Use of terrain by tanks**

<https://youtu.be/iTGw31W7wJo>

# Tank Tactical Problem (TTP) No1

## The tank platoon as a point platoon (advance guard)

### Aim

This tactical problem aims to allow the player to practice procedures and drills involved in the point platoon conducting tactical reconnaissance.

### Outline of the Problem

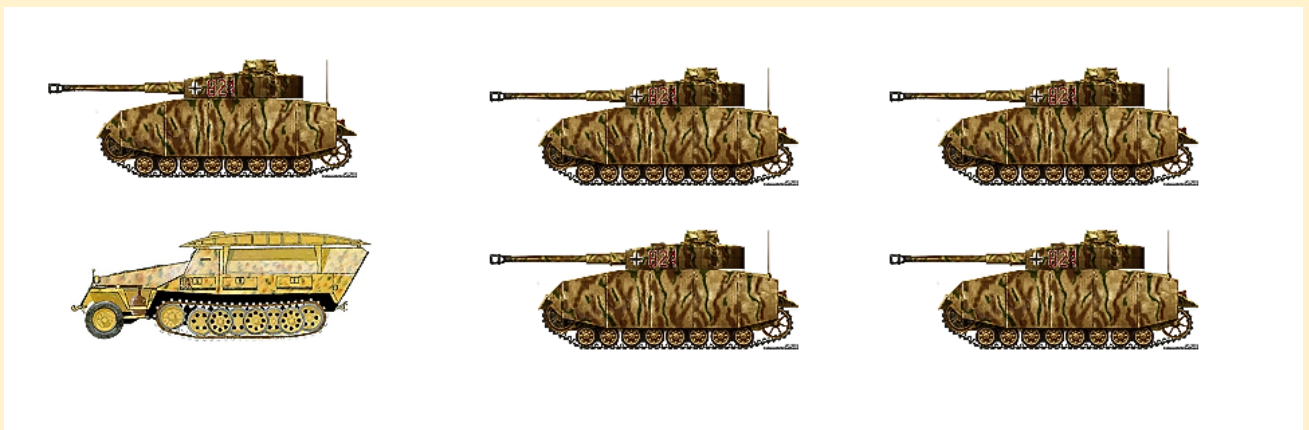
In this scenario the point platoon encounters a series of obstacles defended by enemy infantry, supported by several anti-tank guns and tanks.

The main aim of the point platoon is:

To protect following units from ambush/surprise attack.

- \* To clear any obstacles.
- \* To break weak resistance.
- \* Ensure the undisturbed advance of the main body.

### Your command



1st Platoon/1st Company (5 x Panzer IV); Attached: 1 x armored pioneer section - 1 x SPW.

### Situation

The first company of the 1st Panzer regiment, which is marching from the northwest towards Town 'B' via Village 'A' is advance guard.

The first platoon is the point platoon and proceeds the company by 600m. Two hours ago, armored scouts reported enemy tanks several kilometers southwest of Wood Block 'X'.

### Mission

You are tasked to advance west along the road as far as Bridge 'A'.

Your key tasks are:

- \* To protect following units from ambush/surprise attack.
- \* To clear any obstacles.

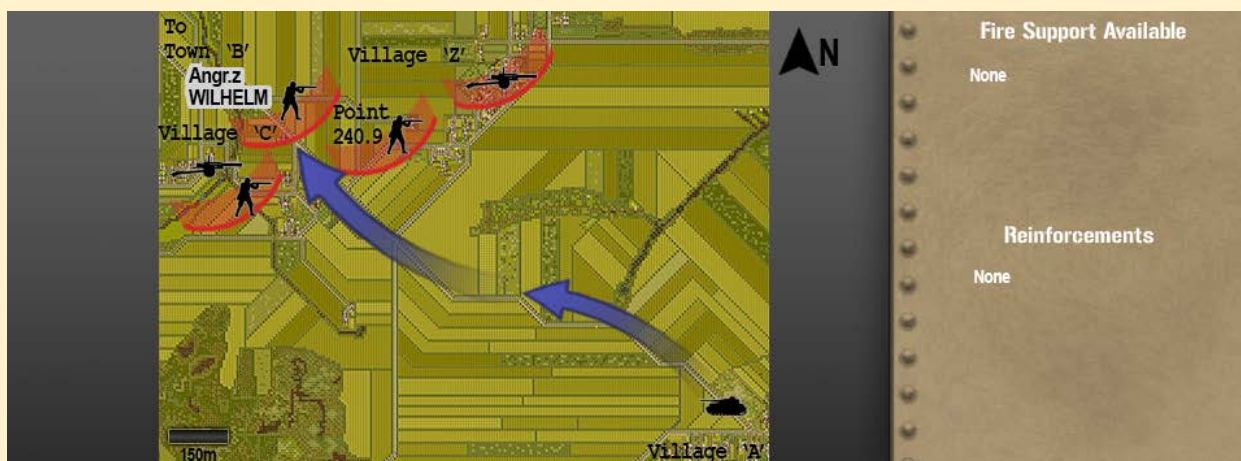
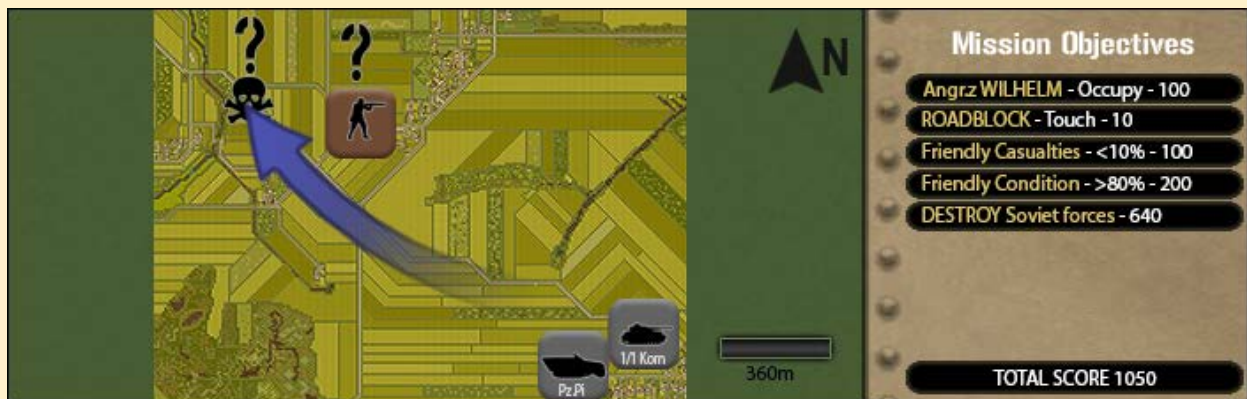


\* To break weak resistance.

\* Ensure the undisturbed advance of the main body.

Secure Bridge A (OCCUPY - Angr.z WILHELM) no later than 1300Hrs, allowing the main body to pass through your positions and maintaining the tempo of the advance.

Your platoon should ensure it remains operationally viable – taking no more than 10% casualties and remaining at 80% or more combat effective.



### Enemy Situation

The enemy has posted a screen of infantry with anti-tank guns and supported by several tanks on the line Village 'Z'/POINT 240.9/Village 'C', with the mission of blocking all roads and ways coming from the southeast.

Several hundred meters southeast of Bridge 'A', an improvised barrier of tree trunks has been established, protected by infantry (most likely supported by heavy weapons) to block the road from the southeast.

## Principles of training aka Tactical Top Tips for TTP No 1

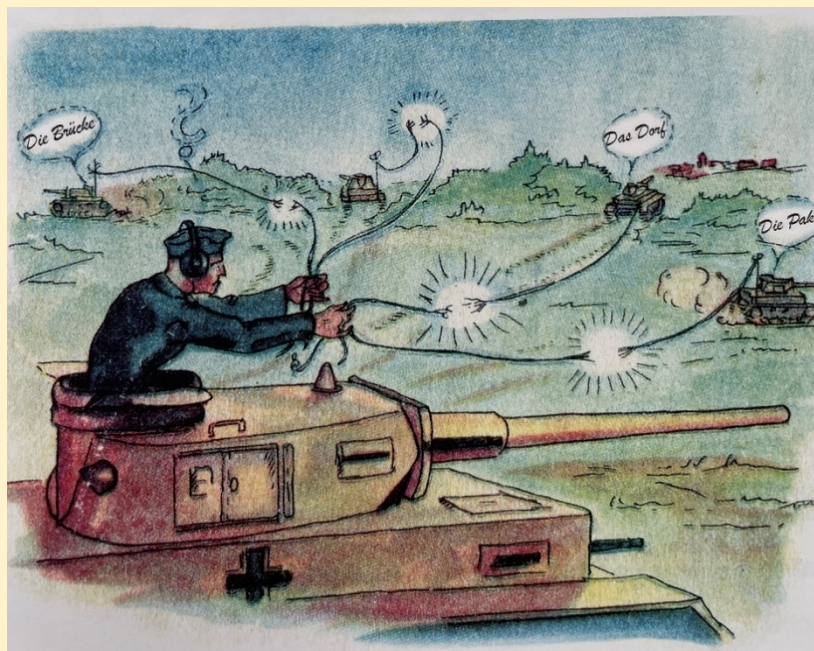
Moving into enemy held close terrain with its resultant poor line of sight with no infantry support is sub-optimal for a tank platoon. This scenario is purely to allow the player to explore tactical movement and drills on contact with enemy forces. You will inevitably take casualties in this scenario. Use this scenario to explore what tactics and actions you can take to minimize your losses.

### Unbuttoned tank commanders spot better but die quicker.

- In Combat Mission (as in real life) your tanks will spot better if the commanders are unbuttoned and observing out of their cupolas. Though be aware this makes them more susceptible to being wounded/killed due to incoming enemy fire, especially small arms fire.

### C2 = sharing spotting info = quicker spotting

- Your tanks will share spotting information. This might take a turn or so depending on the quality of the radio link (sometimes your tank radios will lose comms when moving). This shared spotting information is vital as it will help your tank crews to locate more quickly a previously spotted and reported enemy contact.



### Engineers can mark mines and blow wire.

- You can use the engineers to clear the barbed wire by approaching the obstacle slowly (use the 'slow' command for the dismounted pioneer section as this gives a higher chance of them identifying any mines) and then using their satchel charges to blow the wire (and hopefully) any mines there as well.

The advice given to German platoon commanders<sup>1</sup> at the time contained the following key points:

- Careful combat reconnaissance can protect you from surprise(s) so ensure you protect/observe your flanks as well as the front.
- Use of observation halts. Example - before leaving woods and covered terrain, and upon reaching hills the leading tank must halt briefly under cover, to reconnoiter the terrain ahead.
- If, according to the situation, the platoon leader expects the enemy in a certain direction, then make use of other tanks from the platoon to provide covering fire (overwatch) if enemy appears.
- Ideally at least two tanks must be forward, and the trail half-platoon must be held far enough forward to support the lead half platoon. The more guns that fire in the first minute, the quicker the enemy will be defeated and the fewer losses you will suffer.
- When breaking cover, do it quickly and together. The more targets the enemy is shown simultaneously, the harder his fire control and distribution will be, and the more guns you will have in effect on the enemy.
- When your attack must pass potential enemy anti-tank (or tank) positions, for instance a wood line, you should either pass by them so closely that you are inside their minimum range or remain so far away that you are outside their maximum effective range.



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<sup>1</sup> Panzer Vorwärts! Aber mit Verstand!



## Tank Tactical Problem No.2

### Attack against town

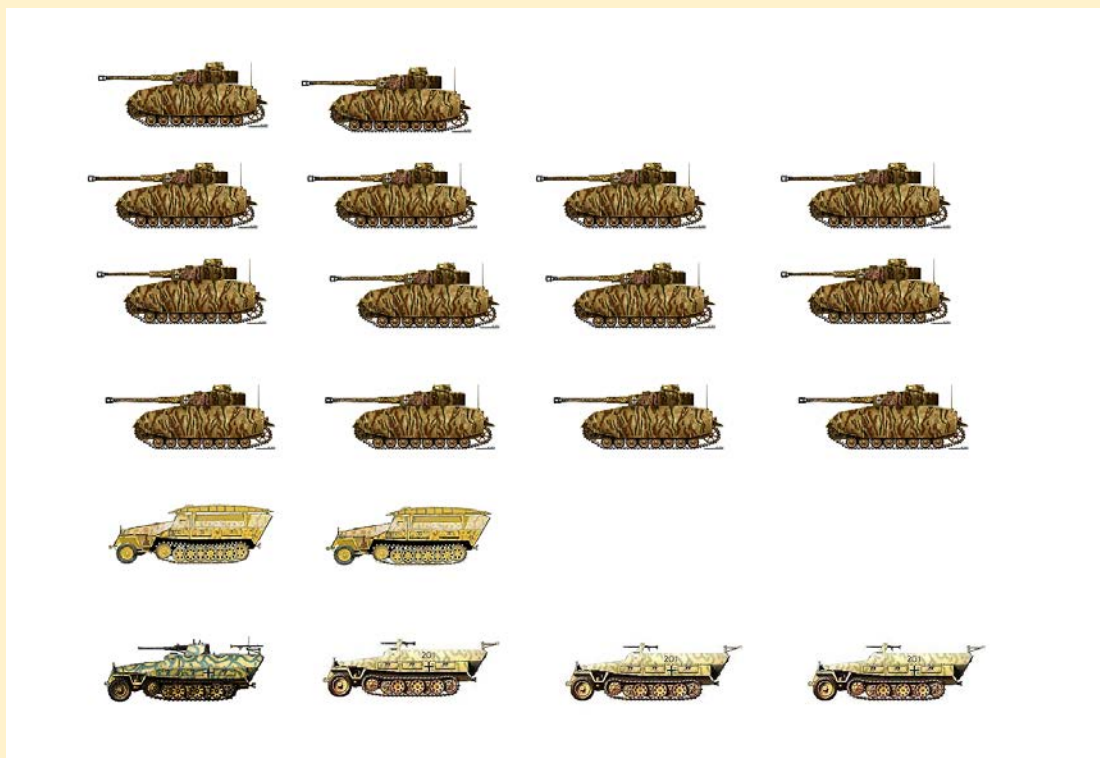
#### Aim

This lesson aims to provide a clear understanding of how the point tank platoon, tank company, panzer grenadier SPW platoon, and off-map artillery collaborate in conducting tactical reconnaissance and overcoming enemy defenses in difficult areas like rolling hills, wooded regions, and built-up zones known as "close terrain."

#### Outline of the Problem

The point platoon in co-operation with attached armored panzer grenadiers encounters a series of obstacles situated in 'close terrain' defended by previously identified enemy infantry, supported by several anti-tank guns and tanks.

#### Your Command



The advance guard comprises:

1 x panzer kompanie (14 x Pz IVH)

Attached:

1 x panzer grenadier SPW zug (1 z 251/17; 3 x 251/1)

2 x panzer pioneer section (2 x 251/7)

You have priority of fires from:

2 x 81mm mortars

2 x 120mm mortars

## Situation

An advance guard, consisting of the first company of the 1st Panzer Regiment, supported by an attached half-track (SPW) panzer grenadier platoon and two SPW mounted panzer pioneer sections, is advancing towards Town 'Z.'

The task organization involves the first company of the 1st Panzer Regiment forming the core of the advance guard, with support from the attached SPW panzer grenadier platoon for infantry support and enhanced reconnaissance capabilities.

## Mission

Your mission is to advance towards Town 'Z,' establishing a forward presence, destroying enemy forces in this sector, seize and occupy the two marked road junctions (Angr.z WILHELM and Angr.z FRIEDA) no later than 1400Hrs, allowing the main body to pass through your positions and maintaining the tempo of the advance.

### Phase 1: March and Reconnaissance

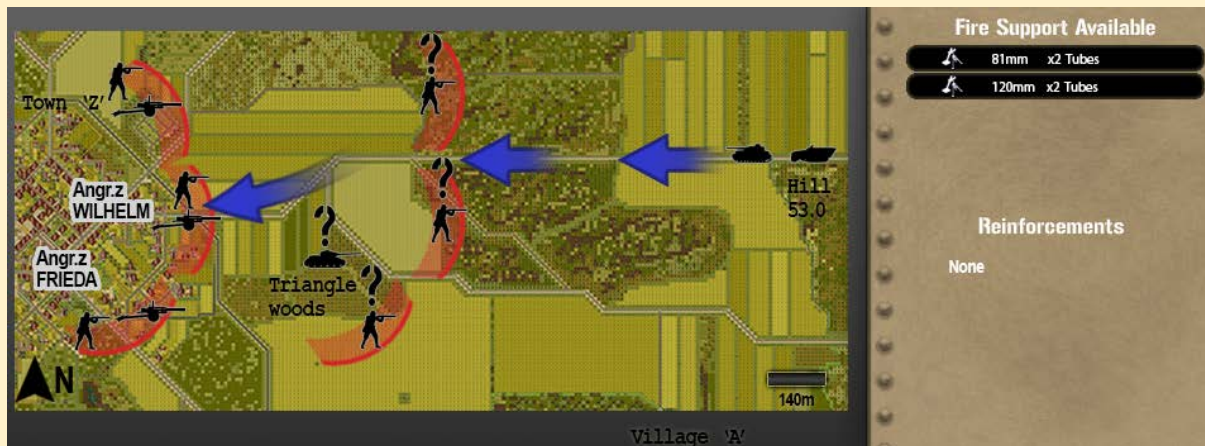
The first company of the 1st Panzer Regiment, supported by the attached SPW platoon, will form the advance guard.

- Execute an organized and disciplined march from the east towards Town 'Z,' conducting thorough reconnaissance to obtain information regarding enemy positions and intentions.

### Phase 2: Establishment of Defensive Positions

- Upon reaching the outskirts of Town 'Z,' the advance guard will seize and occupy the noted road junction objectives.
- Prepare immediate defensive positions to ensure the safety of our forces and facilitate effective information gathering.





### Security:

- \* Maintain a heightened state of security throughout the march and advance.
- \* Be prepared for potential enemy contact and react promptly to hostile actions.

It is the commander's intent that your attack degrades the enemy's force by at least 25% and disrupts their ability to delay or hinder our follow-on forces, whilst your kampfguppe should ensure it remains operationally viable – taking no more than 15% casualties and remaining at 80% or more combat effective.

### Enemy Situation

Intelligence reports indicate the enemy has seized the key road junctions in Town 'Z' which control access further west. They have created a blocking position in and around the town with motorized infantry with light anti-tank gun support.

An enemy screen consisting of several tanks and a light motorized infantry platoon guards the approaches to this position.

Enemy forces are estimated to be at company strength (including organic mortars and ATRs) and supported by three batteries of 45mm AT guns, estimated at 6 guns total, which cover the flanks and center of Town 'Z'.

A platoon sized element of T-34 tanks is believed to be in position in and around 'Triangle Woods'.

## Principles of training aka Tactical Top Tips for TTP No 2

This mission builds on the principles covered in Tank Tactical Problem No 1. So effective use of the point platoon is key to success. This problem introduces further opportunities and challenges.

### **Command and Control (C2) is your key to success.**

A key concept to start appreciating and applying in the game is the way information is passed within and between units. Sharing spotting information can help other units spot and effectively engage enemy units quicker. This is referred to as Command and Control or C2.

### **Terrain is 50% of the battle!**

- In the game, as in real life terrain reconnaissance before moving off is crucial. Acquaint yourself with the ground. Exact information and correct estimation of the terrain will be the decisive difference between victory and defeat.

### **Do not be in a rush – take your time!**

- German tactical advice emphasized the importance of effective communication and information sharing among subordinate leaders to optimize tactical decision-making. According to German training advice, even in high-pressure situations where armored attacks are executed swiftly, it is essential to allocate time for keeping subordinate leaders well-informed about the tactical situation, and any relevant factors that could influence the upcoming action. In Combat Mission terms, this means the player allowing time for the transmission of spotting information between units via the C2 links. This will enable effective situational awareness amongst units, which translates as quicker spotting of enemy units by friendlies, who via information sharing, know enemy units are in that location.

### **Play to your units' strengths – synergy!**

- Having the attached SPW platoon gives the commander an option of using dismounted panzer grenadiers to support or take the place of the tank point platoon (In this context it might be worthwhile circling back to play the first SPW training lesson which covers using the SPW platoon as the point platoon) in close terrain.

### **Single tanks are toast!**

- The player can use the other tank company platoon elements to provide additional overwatch. German tactical advice <sup>2</sup>for this period was the platoon commander must lead with strength. Training advice emphasized that at least two tanks must be forward, and the trail platoons of the company must be held far enough forward to support the lead platoon. The intent was the more guns that could effectively

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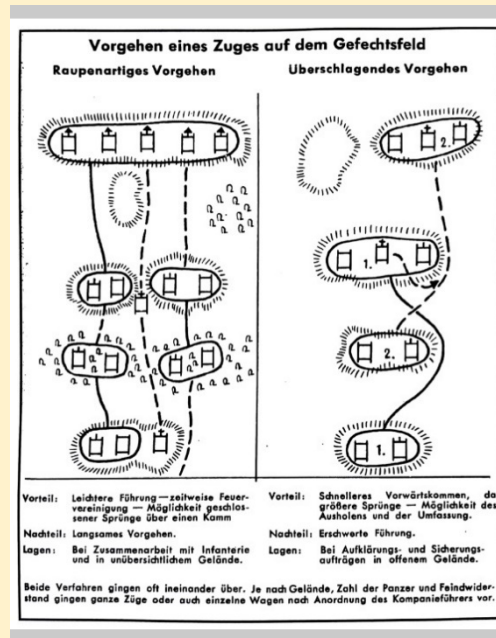
<sup>2</sup> Panzer Vorwärts! Aber mit Verstand!



engage in the first minute, the quicker the enemy would be defeated and the fewer losses the unit would suffer.

### Use overwatch!

- Once the enemy is spotted and their positions located, always advance under successive overwatching, especially when approaching a steep cut, the edge of a wood, a village, etc.



### Do not use your HQs as attack elements!

- In order not to be drawn into action right away, the unit leader must keep out of range at the first clash with the enemy. He must be able to plan deliberately the advance of the tanks/units following him.

### Watch out for ambushes!

- When your attack must pass potential enemy tank/anti-tank positions, for instance a wood line, German tactical advice was you should either pass by them so closely that you are inside their minimum range or remain so far away that you are outside their maximum effective range.

### Try to avoid toe to toe fights with enemy Armor!

- Enemy tanks should not be attacked directly, because then they see you and know your strength before you can kill them. More often, you should avoid them until you can move into favorable firing positions, and surprise them from the flank or rear. Repelled enemy tank assaults must be aggressively pursued.

### Try to split enemy defensive fires!

- If attacking a strongpoint, for instance a small village or artillery battery position, it should, whenever possible, be attacked from different directions simultaneously to

split enemy defensive fire and deceive him about the true location and direction of the attack. In this manner your breakthrough will be easier and your losses fewer.

### Use the terrain!

- During the approach and attack, take advantage of covered terrain, such as defiles, trees/bushes, and houses.

*Panzer Vorwärts! Aber mit Verstand!* Had this advice for newbie panzer commanders.

**Never split your combat power;** do not employ parts of the company in such a manner that they cannot support each other. When your attack has two objectives you should attack first one and then the other with all weapons. In this way you will more certainly end up with both objectives in hand and fewer casualties.

**Support from artillery fire must be used immediately,** that is to say, while the fire is still hitting the objective. Afterward, when the fire has stopped it is too late. Mostly such fires only produce a suppressing effect, not a destroying one. It is better to risk a friendly shell than to charge into an active antitank defense.

**Co-ordinating a combined arms attack is challenging!** In combined operations with armored infantry, ensure that the tanks and infantry stick close together; only so can they help each other and achieve success. Which of the two is leading is a secondary matter; it is the intention of the enemy to separate them and that you must prevent this in all circumstances. Your battle cry must be "Protect the Infantry!" and the infantry's battle cry is "Protect the Tanks!"



## Tank Tactical Problem No.3

### Attack Against PAK

#### Aim

This tactical problem has the player coordinating a combined arms armored attack against a dug-in enemy infantry position supported by artillery and a variety of anti-tank guns (PAK). It builds on the principles, tactics, and drills that the player will have used in the previous two scenarios.

#### Outline of the Problem

Executing a tank company attack whilst coordinating support assets such as artillery, pioneers, and tanks to support maneuver, suppress the enemy and deal with obstacles such as mines.

#### Your Command



#### Kampfgruppe HQs

*(NOTE: these will help your units share spotting information- DON'T THROW THEM INTO COMBAT!)*

- Panzer Battalion HQ
- Panzer grenadier battalion HQ

1 x full strength panzer kompanie (22 x Pz IVH)

1 x panzer grenadier SPW zug, with attached heavy weapons (1 x 251/2 and 1 x 251/9)

2 x panzer pioneer section (2 x 251/7)

You have priority of fires from:

2 x 120mm mortars; 2 x 105mm Wespe sections (2 x 3 tubes)



## Situation

The regiment is attacking east towards HILL 107.3 to seize this key feature and deny the enemy its ability to provide enhanced observation and defensive advantages.

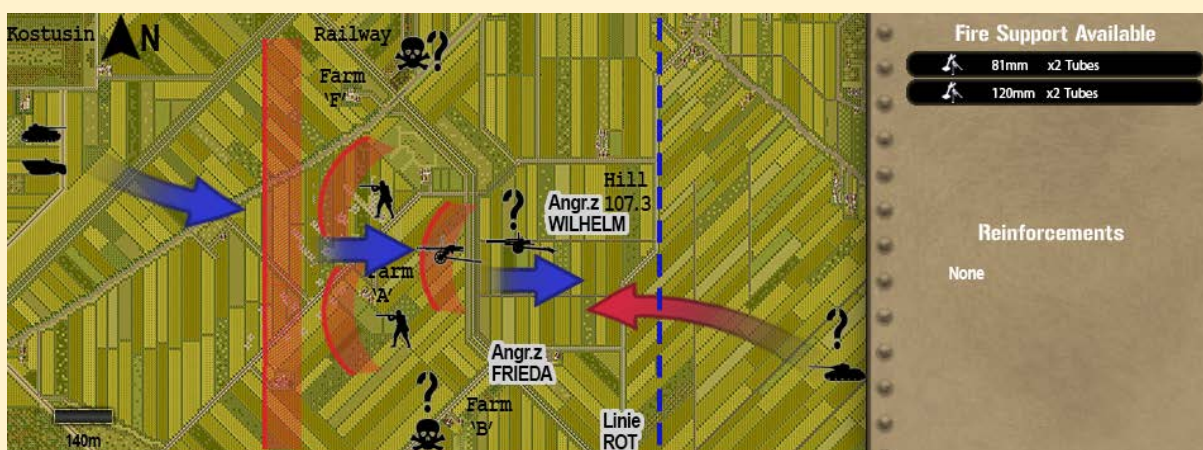
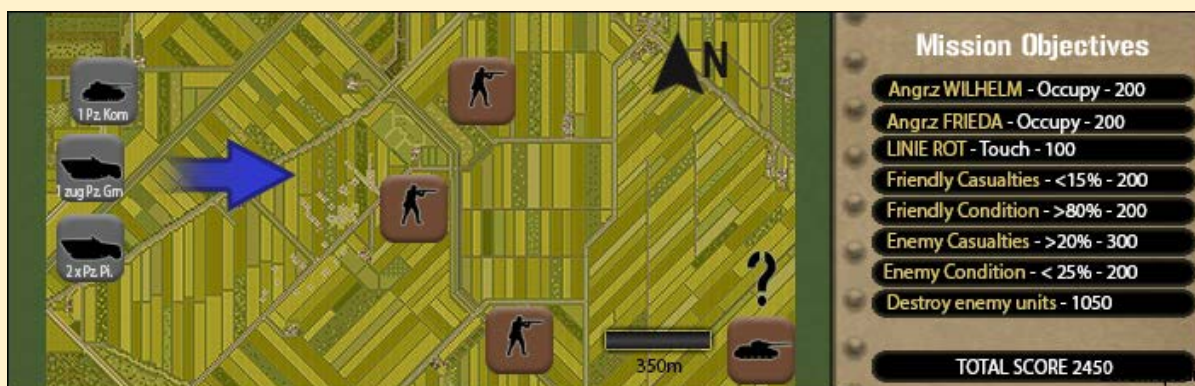
An advance guard, consisting of the first company of the 1st Panzer Regiment, supported by an attached half-track (SPW) panzer grenadier platoon and two SPW mounted panzer pioneer sections with additional artillery support is spearheading the attack.

## Mission

Your mission is to OCCUPY Angr.z WILHELM and Angr.z FRIEDA no later than 1415Hrs, allowing the main body to pass through your positions and maintaining the tempo of the advance.

The limit of your advance is LINIE ROT.

It is the commander's intent that your attack degrades the enemy's force by at least 25% and disrupts their ability to delay or hinder our follow-on forces, whilst your kampffgruppe should ensure it remains operationally viable – taking no more than 15% casualties and remaining at 80% or more combat effective.





### Enemy Situation

Enemy forces are dug in in company strength (with support from organic mortars, ATRs and several 45mm AT Guns) with mutually supporting platoon positions online FARM 'F'/FARM 'A'/FARM 'B'.

This company strong point is templated to have a triangular shape, approximately 600 meters wide and 600 meters deep. It comprises three platoon positions, each measuring around 200 meters in width and depth. Two platoon positions are in the forward area, while one, including the headquarters, is positioned towards the rear.

These positions are separated by 200-meter-wide gaps. Additionally, a security line is established in front of the strong point, consisting of individual outposts occupied by approximately one squad each. Each strongpoint will have heavy weapons and AT support (most likely from anti-tank rifles or ATRs and light 45mm anti-tank guns).

The enemy has several anti-tank gun batteries positioned in this sector. One battery of 76.2mm PAK is thought to be positioned on the reverse slope of HILL 107.3. The other battery's position is unknown.

Reconnaissance indicates that the flanks of this position – tree line 200m NE of FARM 'F', and south of FARM 'B' - appear to have been mined.

A concentration of enemy tanks, estimated at 8-10 tanks was observed moving into woodland 2km southeast of HILL 107.3. This is most likely their mobile reserve for counterattacking any penetrations in this sector.



## Principles of training aka Tactical Top Tips for TTP No 2

This follows on from tactical problems 1 and 2 so the tactical top tips from these create the foundation for this lesson and should be applied here. If you have not played them before I would strongly advise you to do so before embarking on this one.

This is an armored company attack against a textbook Soviet defensive line. The enemy is dug-in and has had a little time to strengthen their defenses. In reality you would have more infantry support, but the focus in this problem is using your armor. The SPW training lessons in the battle pack focus more on using SPW.

### Terrain recce! Terrain recce!

- Terrain reconnaissance is one of the keys to success here. Whilst this map appears relatively open with little cover, there are slight undulations and shallow terrain features that will provide some cover – use the terrain to the best of your advantage, especially in your initial approach.



### Target Reference Points = fast call-in times for arty

- You have some intel from prior reconnaissance so consider using this to pre-plot some fires on identified enemy targets. Also make sure you use your TRPs well. They will significantly reduce the time for on-call off-map artillery (or on-map mortars assuming they do not move). Consider placing them in key terrain where you suspect enemy forces.

### Know how Combat Mission game engine handles mines.

- Whilst there is little chance of organized minefields having been laid, there is the possibility of the enemy having hastily buried mines to protect some positions. In this case your pioneer teams will be useful in identifying any mines - so avoid using them as infantry. Reference the Combat Mission Manual regarding how to 'mark' mines – note marking a minefield substantially reduces the chance of triggering a mine for infantry traversing the minefield. Although antitank minefields can be

marked, marking them has no effect, since infantry can traverse them without risk and vehicles do not benefit from marking. If anti-personnel mines note your tanks can cross them, and whilst they may run the risk of track damage, they are unlikely to be immobilized or seriously damaged. SPW are more likely to suffer severe damage and crew losses. Another (quick and dirty) approach is to lead with your tanks and have the SPW follow in their tracks. If there are AP mines at least the tanks will take the initial hit and suffer some (minor damage), but this allows your attack to maintain some momentum.

### **Concealed AT guns are the Devil's own. Watch your flanks!**

- The enemy anti-tank assets are your main enemy. Both AT guns and anti-tank rifles will mess up your panzers and accompanying SPW. The light 45mm AT guns will be a threat to your panzers from the forward arc and their thin side armor. Watch your flanks!

### **Use your organic smoke assets!**

- As always, the use of smoke will prove helpful here. Whilst your panzer grenadiers cannot throw smoke from their SPW they can if you dismount them. This can prove useful. Your SPW 251/2 mortar carriers are an especially useful fast response support – use them carefully and do not expose them.



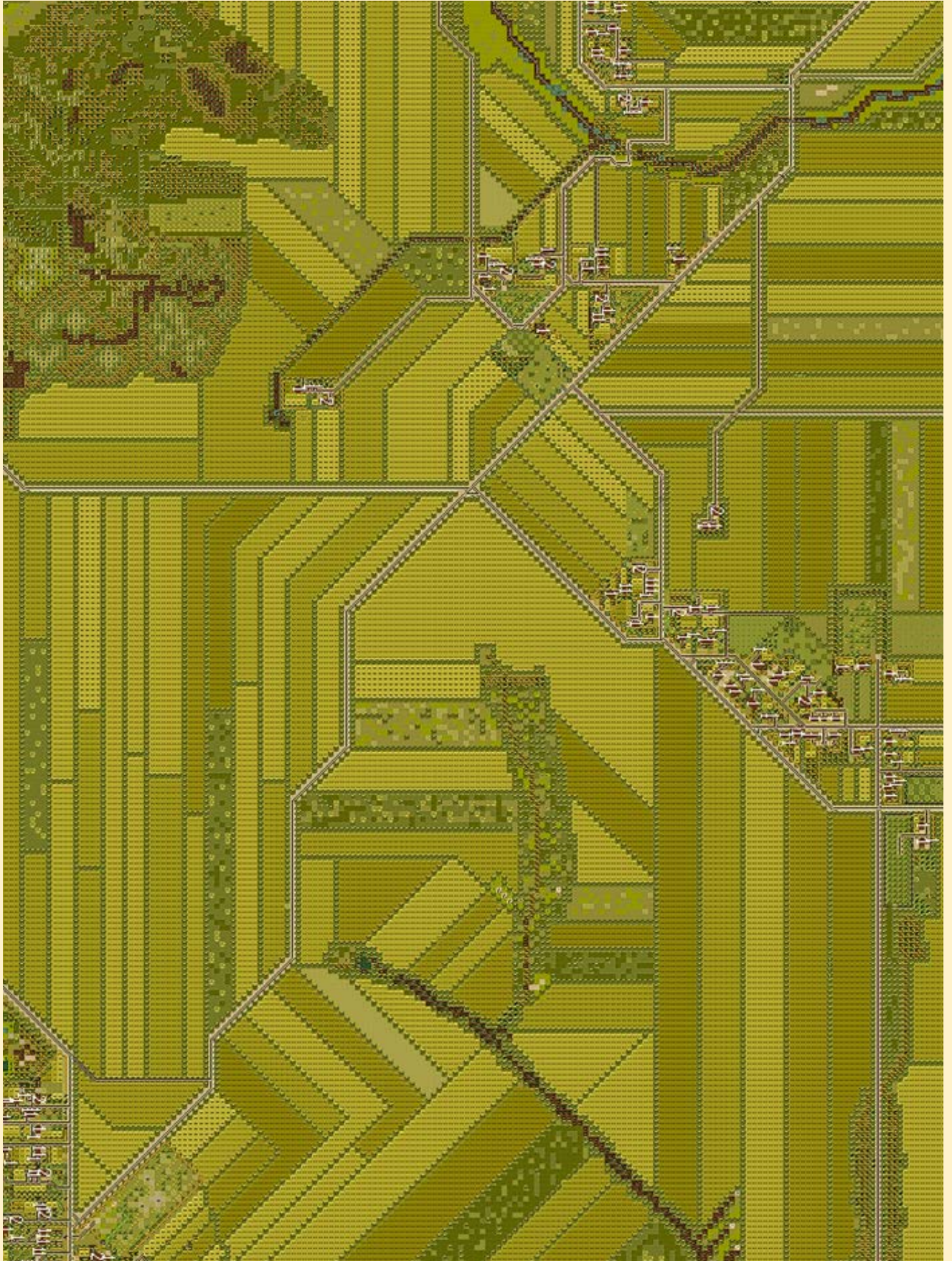
### **Do not hang around and do not bunch up!**

- Last tip. Do not stay still for long. Enemy observers will be quick to call down arty and mortar fire on any vehicles stationary for too long. Keep this in mind when attacking – especially with support assets you may wish to hold back.



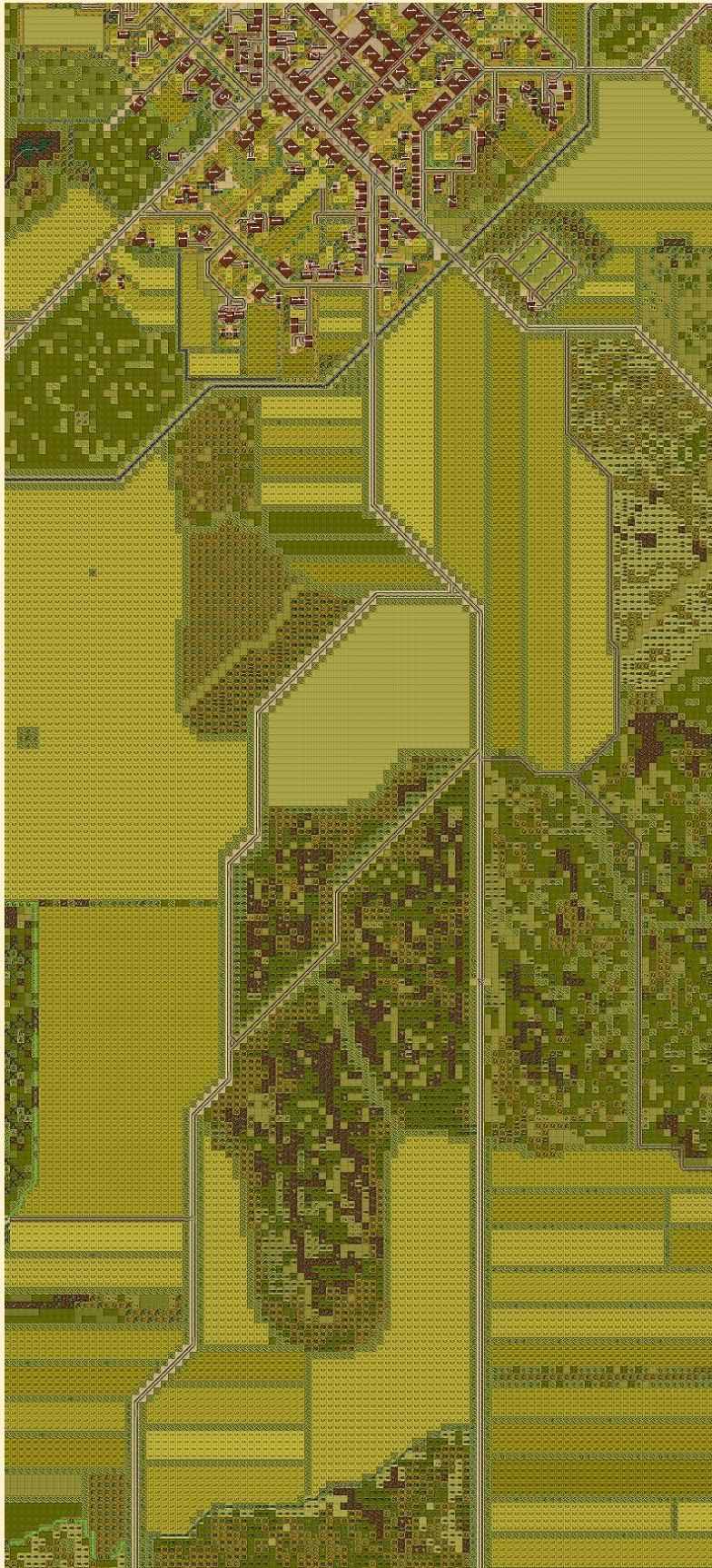
## Appendix: Tank Tactical Problem Series Maps

TTP No 1 Map





## TTP No 2 Map





## TTP No 3 Map



## References and Further Reading

For further information/reading check out:

### Books

**Panzer Tactics** by Wolfgang Schneider

**Panzer Truppen Vol 2** by Thomas L. Jentz

**The German Tank Platoon in WWII: Its training and employment in battle** – The Nafziger Collection

**German Panzer Tactics in World War II** – Charles C. Sharp

### Websites/Blogs

**TANK TACTICS: Panzer Vorwärts! Aber mit Verstand!**

<https://drill1103.rssing.com/chan-62762908/latest-article2-live.php>

This blog by Bil Hardenberger provides some practical advice on how this 1944 German advice to new tank unit commanders can be adapted and used in the context of Combat Mission.

**Panzer Vorwärts! Aber mit Verstand!**

I referenced this actual document for many of the 'tactical top tips' contained within each scenario. You can see the translation at this link: <https://www.feldgrau.com/ww2-german-panzer-tank-tactics-training-guide/>

**How C2 works in Combat Mission**

[https://combatmission.fandom.com/wiki/Command\\_and\\_control#:~:text=Command%20and%20control%20\(abbreviated%20%22C2,describes%20the%20Elite%20skill%20level](https://combatmission.fandom.com/wiki/Command_and_control#:~:text=Command%20and%20control%20(abbreviated%20%22C2,describes%20the%20Elite%20skill%20level)

### Video Links

**Panzer Tactics - "Blitzkrieg" Years – Platoon**

<https://youtu.be/kg8JM3SueSU>

Whilst this video by Bernard from Military History Visualized is set in the early war period, it describes several of the basic tactical concepts e.g. fire and movement, that hold true for late war.

**Video AAR of Tank Tactical Problem No1**

@37mm did an excellent video AAR of the first Tactical Problem. You can see how he approached it in this video.

<https://youtu.be/TBP9LzaI9UY>