IRON CROSS

WWII wargaming in miniature

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INTRODUCTION

Iron Cross is a set of fast play rules for fielding loads of armour with supporting infantry in any scale. The mechanics are remarkably simple and the method of activation presents players with weighty tactical decisions to ponder and a sense of high tension and drama.

It is a game especially suited to large, multi-player games in which each side has a player acting as the overall commander for the battle, developing and co-ordinating an overall plan for the achievement of operational objectives, and entrusting individual players to execute those plans. It is a game in which simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.

Iron Cross is also ideal for two players, whether gaming with small forces on a "standard" sized table, or with much more impressive formations on a greater scale terrain board.

The rules are purposely uncomplicated to allow players to concentrate on the scale of the battle, but the action/reaction system ensures that all players are involved at all times, making tactical decisions affecting their own commands.

Throughout this book, the characters Feldwebel Coburg and Sergeant Denver will appear to give tactical advice. Heed their wise words!

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

The usual requirements for a tabletop miniature wargame – models, dice (d10's for firing, d6's for activation /morale tests), tape measure, scenery, morale markers and command tokens (see below) and an opponent – are needed for Iron Cross. The game is suited for two players with modest forces but also works really well for large games involving multiple players per side. If you are using teams of players, it is necessary to nominate one as the force commander.

The best commanders are able to manage their resources and maintain the momentum of the operation. Any temptation to be gung-ho in attack must be tempered with the ability to react to enemy counter attacks. All combat situations must keep an element of reserve strength in order to mitigate for unforeseen circumstances, whether in defence or in attack.

COMMAND TOKENS

Command tokens are the engine of Iron Cross and are fully explained on pages 4-5. A command token is spent to activate your units or to improve morale. Players will need tokens for each side and a bag or cup to keep them in. Command tokens for various nations are available from the Great Escape Games webstore at www.greatescapegames.co.uk.

MORALE MARKERS

Morale markers are vital to track the effects of suppressive fire on units and are fully covered on page 10. The accumulation of morale markers hampers the ability of a unit to perform actions. Each unit has a morale rating and, if the number of morale markers exceed this rating, the unit is considered to have been dispersed, destroyed or surrendered. Again, any sort of token may be used and the Great Escape Games store has morale markers specifically designed with this game in mind.

Morale markers, command tokens and dice

COMPANY MORALE TEST

The accumulation of morale markers will degrade your force and prevent it from performing effectively; multiple activation will become difficult and offensive capability is hampered. By spending a command token the player may attempt to remove morale markers. Specific units do not need to be nominated before spending tokens and rolling.

Roll a d6: on a score of 1-2 the test fails; on a score of 3-5 the player removes one morale marker from any unit; on a score of 6 the player removes all of the morale markers from a single unit. A player may take as many Company Morale Tests in a turn as they wish, restricted by the availability of command tokens.

UNIT DESTROYED

If a unit accumulates more morale markers than its morale value, it is too badly mauled to continue fighting and immediately counts as destroyed. Whether it is routed, wiped out, damaged beyond use or surrenders is not catered for, what is important is it takes no further part in the battle. Remove any infantry from the table; leave vehicles where they are to act as cover.

At the start of the next turn, remember to remove any command tokens which represented a destroyed/removed unit.

FALL BACK

A unit may choose to Fall Back, which is a special type of movement away from the enemy. If the unit has previously been activated (or attempted to react), then it must be reactivated using the normal reactivation method. Morale markers are ignored for modifiers when rolling to reactivate in order to execute a Fall Back move.

The cumulative effects of incoming fire, even if it doesn't cause many casualties, will have a degrading effect upon troop capabilities. It may be tempting to throw everything into an attack, but a successful commander will save some of his strength in order to bolster wavering troops at the right time. Be prepared to react to enemy moves by using some of this strength when one of your units in under severe pressure.

A unit which executes a Fall Back may move up to rapid rate but may not shoot. A unit that is unable to move further away from enemy units within 12" (30cm) may not fall back. Vehicles may fall back in reverse, but only do so at normal movement rate. Units which execute a Fall Back move may also roll a die to attempt to remove a single morale marker. On rolling a 4+, you may remove a single morale marker from the unit.

Units may only perform a single Fall Back move per turn. Units which have fallen back may be reactivated again in the same turn, but must roll for re-activation in the normal manner (i.e. including modifiers for morale markers/command tokens). The unit must move further away from any enemy units during subsequent reactivations but may fire as it does so.

Example
A German MG nest in the top floor of a hotel has already activated once this turn and comes under sustained fire from a mortar and Cromwell, suffering three morale markers. The British player is the active side and declares his mortar will fire again at the MG nest. Realising that a hit might destroy the unit, the German player declares that his unit will react and fall back. The fall back reaction ignores morale markers but not previous activations, so instead of the base 3+ on a d6 to react, the German player will need to score 4+(because of the unit's activation earlier in the turn) to do so and avoid the incoming mortar round.

Falling back is a useful way of extricating a unit from a perilous situation. Not only will it save the unit, but this tactic can also lure enemy troops to overstretch themselves, making them vulnerable to a counter attack from other units.

28mm US paratrooper (Artizan Designs)

ORDERS OF BATTLE

Following are orders of battle for the main belligerents in Europe in 1944/45. For most games you may wish to forego formal army lists and use historical orders of battle. In fact, we highly recommend this method as Von Runstedt never called Bradley to check how many points he had before their encounter in the Ardennes at the end of 1944! It is also recommended for scenario designers to force restrictions on players' choice of forces – the Orders of Battle do this somewhat – as real life commanders rarely had the luxury of selecting what they wanted from an "army list".

Nevertheless, a points system is included for players who wish to use a method of providing balance for their games. Still, as many battles pitched a superior attacking against a defending one, most scenarios benefit from an intentional imbalance of relative strengths. A force of around 500 points might give you 15 or so units to control, plenty for a full evening's gaming. 200-250 points per player in big, multi-player games will be compact enough for even novice players to handle. For 28mm forces on small gaming tables (e.g. 6' x 4'), 300-400 points will give you plenty of units for a fast and violent battle!

Each unit also has a Break Point (BP) value. Totalled up, this represents the entire force's Break Point. Once a unit reaches its Break Point, it withdraws from the battle and the game ends.

ORDERS OF BATTLE SPECIAL RULES

ANTI-TANK GUN
Anti-tank guns count as infantry/support squads (i.e. you roll 2 dice against them for shooting) but, if they have a gun shield, always count as though they are in cover against enemy infantry. They only ever get to use 1 die whether shooting at enemy infantry detachments or tanks. In a given activation, AT guns may only fire when stationary.

*15mm PaK40 anti-tank gun
(Battlefront Miniatures)*

COMMAND UNIT
One unit in each force is designated as the command unit. It has the same profile of a unit of its type but, once per turn, one unit within 12"/30cm (or within 6"/15cm if playing on a 6' x 4' table) may reroll a failed activation or reaction roll.

In addition, and most importantly, a command unit bestows two additional activation tokens, whether it is on the gaming area or in reserve. All of these are abilities are lost if the command unit is lost.

28mm German command unit (Artizan Designs)

FLAMETHROWER
Flamethrowers may only fire when stationary and have a range of 8"/20cm; against infantry/support squads, they roll 2 dice (and score morale markers with each hit), ignoring all cover. Against enclosed target vehicles, flamethrowers simply inflict morale markers. Open topped and softskin vehicles are penetrated on a roll of 2+ on d6, regardless of armour value.

If a flame tank's armour is penetrated, add 2 to the roll for damage. Flamethrower infantry units suffer additional morale markers from shooting on a 3+ instead of a 4+. Flamethrower units always count as heavy (see below).

GERMAN ORBAT 1944/45

One unit may be designated as a command unit at no cost. Command units bestow an additional two command tokens per turn. If infantry, it may upgrade its halftrack to a 251/10 as listed below (it is the only unit that may do so). This effectively gives it a longer ranged anti-tank capability. One additional unit may be designated as a sub-commander.

Infantry units, MG Teams, Mortar Teams and Anti-tank Guns may purchase transports for the points listed below. Any infantry detachment may add IAW's (panzerfausts, panzerschrecks; weapon value of 9) for +8 pts per unit. The number of infantry detachments in the force must exceed the number of support squads.

TYPE	NAME	ARMOUR	WEAPON	MORALE	NOTE	PTS	BP
Heavy Vehicle	Tiger I	17/14	10	6	Heavy	102	13
Heavy Vehicle	Tiger I I	19/15	11	6	Heavy	136	17
Heavy Vehicle	Jagdtiger	19/15	11	6	Heavy, Howitzer, Rare	163	21
Heavy Vehicle	Ferdinand/Elefant	20/15	11	6	Heavy, Rare	143	18
Medium Vehicle	Panther	17/13	10	6		100	13
Medium Vehicle	Jagdpanther	17/13	11	6		119	15
Medium Vehicle	Jagdpanzer IV/Hetzer	16/10	10	5		75	10
Medium Vehicle	Panzer IV G (late) to J	14/10	9	5		55	7
Medium Vehicle	StuG IV, StuG III F-H	15/10	9	5		59	8
Medium Vehicle	StuG III A-E	13/10	7	5		39	5
Medium Vehicle	StuH 42	15/10	8	5	Heavy, Howitzer, Rare	62	8
Medium Vehicle	Panzer III J (late)/K	12/10	8	5		40	5
Medium Vehicle	Panzer III L-N	13/10	8	5		44	6
Medium Vehicle	Panzer III M (F1)	13/10	n/a	4	Flamethrower, Rare	46	6
Light Vehicle	Marder II	10/9	9	4		34	5
Light Vehicle	Sd.Kfz 123 Luchs	10/9	4	4	Scout tank	17	3
Light Vehicle	Sd.Kfz 234/4 8-Rad	10/9	9	4	Scout car	36	5
Light Vehicle	Sd.Kfz 234/2 8-Rad Puma	11/9	8	4	Scout car	30	4
Light Vehicle	Sd.Kfz 233 8-Rad	10/8	7	4	Scout car	25	4
Light Vehicle	Sd.KFz 222	10/9	4	4	Scout car	16	2
Light Vehicle	251 Halftrack	10/9	n/a	n/a	Transport	6	0
Light Vehicle	251/10 Halftrack	10/9	5	n/a	Transport	9	0
Light Vehicle	Truck/Kubelwagen	7	n/a	n/a	Transport	3	0
Infantry Detachment	Infantry Detachment	n/a	3	5		25	4
Support Squad	Flamethrower Team	n/a	n/a	3	Flamethrower, Heavy, Rare	30	4
Support Squad	PaK40 Anti-tank Gun	n/a	9	3		30	4
Support Squad	Flakvierling 38	n/a	4	4	Infantry Gun	27	4
Support Squad	MG Team	n/a	0	3		20	3
Support Squad	MortarTeam	n/a	0	3		25	4
Support Squad	Sniper Team	n/a	n/a	3		18	3

Armour is given as the value for the front followed by the value for the side/rear/top; armour values are reduced by 1 if the firer is within 6.

KAMPFGRUPPE

German units may form ad hoc groups for platoon movement (see page 9) comprising any three units, not just those of the same type. The Kampfgruppe may only move at the rate of the slowest unit.

Right: Marder II (28mm Die Waffenkammer) operating on the Eastern Front in the autumn of 1944.

MEETING ENGAGEMENT

*As one side attempts to secure strategically important features,
a counter attack is launched to deny the enemy.*

TERRAIN

The gaming area is set up in a mutually agreeable way on any size of gaming area. Each side has a defined deployment area which may be opposite corners, long or short table edges and/or involve roads or preclude certain areas. At least four objectives must be defined at this stage. As a guideline, four is enough for a game of up to 1000 points per side and one should be added per 500 points of troops above 1000. Each objective should be at least 6"/15cm from any table edge but may be next to each other; for example a village may represent two objectives.

ORDER OF BATTLE

Both sides have an equal number of points, but start the game with up to three quarters (number of units, not points or BP value) on the tabletop (with an equivalent number of tokens).

SCENARIO SPECIAL RULES

- Objectives
- Random Operation Length
- Reserves

DEPLOYMENT

For the initial deployment, the players should take it in turns to place a unit on the tabletop until all units are deployed at which point the game commences. Alternatively, one player may plot his units' deployment on a sketched map.

INITIATIVE

Roll a D6 with the highest scorer choosing whether to start with the initiative or not. All units count as having moved at the start of the game.

RESERVES

Reserves may be activated from turn 3.

LENGTH OF GAME

7 turns plus Random Operation Length.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

Each forces' Break Point is 2/3 of its total BP value. If both forces are unbroken at the end of the game, count the number of objectives held to determine the victor.

ESCALATING ENGAGEMENT

*With an operation in full flow, opposing reconnaissance elements sight each other
and further troops are drawn in to destroy enemy forces.*

TERRAIN
The gaming area is set up in a mutually agreeable way on any size of gaming area. Each side has a defined deployment area which may be opposite corners, long or short table edges and/or involve roads or preclude certain areas.

ORDER OF BATTLE
Both sides have an equal number of points, but start the game with up to one third (number of units, not points or BP value) on the tabletop (with an equivalent number of tokens).

SCENARIO SPECIAL RULES
• Random Operation Length
• Reserves

DEPLOYMENT
For the initial deployment, the players should take it in turns to place a unit on the tabletop until all units are deployed at which point the game commences. Units deploy up to one move from the table edge. Alternatively, one player may plot his units' deployment on a sketched map. The Command Unit starts the game in reserve.

INITIATIVE
Roll a D6 with the highest scorer choosing whether to start with the initiative or not. All units count as having moved at the start of the game.

RESERVES
Up to half of the reserves (number of units) may be activated from turn 2. The remainder may enter from turn 3.

LENGTH OF GAME
Until one side is defeated.

VICTORY CONDITIONS
Each forces' Break Point is 2/3 of its total BP value.

*US paratroopers in action (28mm Artizan Designs). Buildings by 4Ground
(photo courtesy of Wargames Illustrated).*