

Call to Arms is a regular convention held in August each year in Wellington, New Zealand. Having previously run a couple of *Spearhead* Mega-Games (including a *Crete 1941*, *Maleme* game) successfully, local MSH players Pete Connor & Rhys Batchelor decided to try a hand at a Modern *Spearhead* game assisted by other local gamers and joined by several other New Zealand Wargamers on a table 20' x 6'.

It is Summer 1984, and tensions are high between East & West, and an unusual Soviet build-up has occurred along the Iron Curtain ostensibly under the grounds of annual exercises. NATO forces have been raised to high alert, and preparatory steps are taken for potential hostilities although full mobilisation has not been initiated for fear of pre-empting hostilities...



Right: The infamous Alsfeld - Soviet bridging operations are beginning (left & bottom right) while the West German Territorials wait apprehensively in the town! Some brutal urban combat occurred here involving the 54th West German Heimatschutz Brigade as it was overrun by the 57th Guards Motor Rifle Division's attached Czech Regiment in the morning.

Below: Aerial view early on - from the East. The table is 20' wide and 6' deep. It is slightly 'staggered' to keep the (meandering) river (the Soviet start-line) as close to the edge as possible. A side effect of this was to make it a little easier to reach parts of the central sector by

reaching diagonally from behind the adjacent part of the table. This was possible because the table consisted of 5 actual 4' x 6' tables side by side.



On 23 June the WarPac forces declared war and began offensive operations against Western Europe. After a couple of days of initial frontier operations Soviet & WarPac forces had advanced sufficiently to threaten a breakthrough in the area of [Alsfeld](#) on the 25 June while NATO completed mobilisation; Alsfeld being North of Fulda is one of several possible routes of advance in NATO assessments of possible Soviet attack scenarios. As such a somewhat scratch force is assembled to face the attack, a German Territorial brigade that was already in position was reinforced principally by British Forces from the North and German Regulars. A Dutch Brigade arrived to cover the Southern Flank, and there was the vague possibility of a U.S. Task Force arriving as a reserve later on the 25th. Facing them were 3 Soviet Motor Rifle Divisions, with second line support from a Guards Tank Division and an East German Tank Division intended to exploit the breakthrough.

The attacking Soviet & WarPac forces were under the command of the 8th Soviet Guards Army (Rhys Batchelor) and from North to South consisted of:

- 27th Guards Motor Rifle Division (Greg Jennings & John Moher).
- 57th Guards Motor Rifle Division & attached Czech Motor Rifle Regiment (Jake Collins assisted by Rhys Batchelor).
- 8th Guards Army Air Assault Battalion (Rhys Batchelor).
- 39th Motor Rifle Division (Kieran Mahony assisted by Pete Connor).
- Possible leading elements of the 79th Guards Tank Division.
- Possible leading elements of second line from the 9th East German Tank Division.



Right: Mass attack in the South - Three Regiments of Soviets (on Right) swarm forward to their river crossings against the Dutch.

NATO forces were under overall command of the British 1st Armoured Division (Paul Reynolds)

and was a cosmopolitan mix (North to South) as follows:

- 7th British Armoured Brigade (Keith McNelly).
- 54th West German Heimatschutz Territorial Brigade in Alsfeld (Ant McKenna).
- 12th & 22nd British Armoured Brigades in central reserve (Mike O'Reilly).
- 35th West German Panzergrenadier Brigade (Chris Harrod).
- 43rd Netherlands Mechanised Brigade (Peter Page).
- Possible Task Force of 1st U.S. Armoured Brigade from 3rd U.S. Armoured Division.



Left: Day of Infamy! The scene in the North when two British battalions broke and ran after being targeted by a mass BM-21 Persistent Chemical strike (the yellow 'squares')!

Soviet operations began at 0400 with simultaneous river crossing operations in at least 6 locations, screened by smoke, and preliminary artillery bombardments including SS-21 & 9K52 Luna (FROG-7B) missiles with conventional warheads. The 8th GA Air Assault Battalion was dropped in the rear of Alsfeld to disrupt NATO communications and hopefully block any reinforcements or redeployment of reserves... This backfired as they were dropped right in the centre of one of the reserve British Armoured Brigades and were rapidly put out of action, the last survivors being rounded up within an hour or so of the initial landings...

In the South the 39th Motor Rifle Division (MRD) quickly got all 3 of it's Motor Rifle Regiments (MRR) with T-62's, BTR-70s & BMP-1s up to the river and preparing to cross, bearing down on the Dutch. The latter were less well equipped than the other NATO Brigades (barring the German Territorials) having older Leopard 1's and YPR-765s and older communications equipment (that struggled to maintain communications with the rest of the NATO force). The 39th MRD's Tank Regiment (T-64's) followed in support but had to wait until the MRR had completed their crossings (in the end it did not cross and was transferred to follow up 57th GMRD successful penetration in the centre).



Right: Kieran's tail (39th MRD); part of the mass behind the rapid advance - including artillery, engineers, ferries, SRBMs, and assorted support stands...;

While the bulk of the Soviet plan was based around expecting resisted crossings of the river, in the South 39th MRD in fact had to advance some way to reach the river resulting in their crossings not beginning until sunrise and in clear view of NATO forces. But in the Central & Northern Sectors the Soviet Divisions had already completed their initial crossings in darkness. However one bonus was the heavy commitment to Counter Battery (CB) missions by the Soviet Command – realising the usefulness of their Artillery would be limited early on and potentially impacted by NATO ECM they opted to put all the Army level support and the heavier Divisional units into dedicated CB tasks. This had a huge effect rapidly silencing almost all the NATO batteries and greatly reducing ongoing NATO artillery support. It's believed that only one NATO Artillery Battalion in the entire battle successfully fired more than 2 fire missions the whole day without taking heavy casualties,

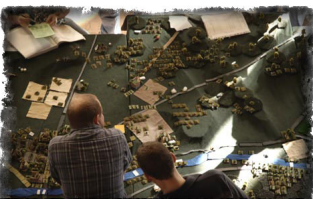


and that was due to it making major changes of position after each fire mission (greatly impacting its response time and how often it could fire). By late afternoon the Soviet artillery dominated the battlefield and NATO artillery units had more or less ceased to fire.

Left: The ignominy - As the Challengers & Warriors flee the gas attack they get targeted by a MiG-21 air strike! Although their disorderly rout to the woods didn't get there fast enough it was a good job the elderly MiG's couldn't hit anything to save themselves (their 'iron' bombs being relatively ineffective against the armoured British troops)!

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