

# Fireball Forward Scenario

## Breakthrough at Bad Hersfeld, 1981

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### 1. Overview

**Date & Time:** 5 May 1981, 0630 hours

**Location:** Outskirts of Bad Hersfeld, West Germany, near the Fulda Gap

**Weather:** Overcast, morning mist, light drizzle (visibility reduced to 18")

#### Historical Context (Hypothetical)

The Cold War has gone hot. Before dawn on May 5th, 1981, Warsaw Pact artillery thundered across the Inner German Border, smashing NATO border posts and sowing confusion in the rear areas.

By first light, the Soviet 39th Guards Motor Rifle Division is pushing hard through the Fulda Gap — the very invasion route NATO planners feared most. Elements of the U.S. 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, bloodied but unbroken, fall back from the frontier, delaying with mines, ambushes, and burning wrecks. Their job is to buy time — but the clock is ticking.

Now, as the morning drizzle settles over the valley, Soviet forward battalions reach the approaches to **Bad Hersfeld**, a key road junction and gateway deeper into West Germany. If the Soviets can secure it quickly, the path westward lies open for follow-on armored regiments.

But NATO is not giving ground without a fight. A **mechanized company team from the U.S. 3rd Armored Division**, rushed forward in the night, has dug in on the western approaches. Reinforcements are thin, but the Americans know they must hold. Their tanks and Dragons are ready, their infantry crouched in the hedgerows.

As the mist lifts, engines rumble. From the east, the silhouettes of BMPs and T-64s emerge, advancing along the B62 highway. The Battle for Bad Hersfeld has begun...

## 2. Mission

**Soviets:** Smash through the American screen and drive for the western exits. Exit forces off the NATO table edge within 10 turns.

**U.S.:** Hold the line. Inflict heavy losses, delay the Soviet advance, and prevent a breakthrough past the town.

## 3. Terrain & Table Setup (6' × 4')

- **Bad Hersfeld Suburb:** 2' × 1.5' built-up area, dense houses, narrow streets.
- **Fulda River:** North–south along the eastern edge; only one bridge crossing.
- **Highway B62:** Runs east–west, main Soviet axis of advance.
- **Wooded Hill:** On the western edge; ideal U.S. defensive high ground.
- **Fields & Hedgerows:** Scatter the center of the map, providing cover and ambush points.

## 4. Orders of Battle

### U.S. Company Team (Defender)

- **Company HQ:** 1 × M113 (HQ, CO stand)
- **3 × Mech Rifle Platoons** (each: 3 rifle squad stands + 3 × M113 APCs)
  - Each squad: 9–11 men (M16, 1 × M60 MG, 1 × M203 GL)
- **Weapons Support:**
  - 2 × Dragon ATGM teams
  - 1 × 81mm mortar section (off-table, 2 fire missions)
- **Armor Support:**
  - 2 × M60A3 tanks (arrive Turn 2 via western road)

**Total:** 11 infantry stands, 5 × APCs, 2 × ATGM teams, 2 × M60A3s, 1 × mortar

### **Soviet Battalion Slice (Attacker)**

- **Advance Guard (Turn 1, eastern road):**
  - 1 × BMP-1 HQ
  - 2 × Motor Rifle Platoons (each: 3 rifle squad stands + 3 × BMP-1s)
  - 1 × AT-3 Sagger team
- **Follow-On Armor (Turn 3):**
  - 4 × T-64A tanks
  - 1 × Motor Rifle Platoon (3 rifle squad stands + 3 × BMP-1s)
- **Fire Support:**
  - Off-table 122mm artillery battery (2 missions, HE or smoke)

**Total:** 9 infantry stands, 9 × BMP-1s, 4 × T-64s, 1 × ATGM team, artillery support

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## **5. Scenario Special Rules**

- **Fog & Drizzle:** Turns 1–2, max LOS = 18". Normal visibility from Turn 3 onward.
- **River Crossing:** Only the bridge is usable. BMPs may attempt amphibious crossing with a 2+ for success on a d6 roll (failure = immobilized / didn't make it across in the flowing river).
- **NATO Morale Edge:** U.S. infantry gain +1 morale if within 6" of a Dragon team or tank.
- **Soviet Momentum:** For Turns 1–2, Soviets may activate 2 platoons per initiative (representing shock assault tempo).

## 6. Victory Conditions

- **Soviet Major Victory:** Exit  $\geq 6$  AFVs (tanks or BMPs) *and*  $\geq 3$  infantry stands off western edge by Turn 10.
- **Soviet Minor Victory:** Hold the town center and destroy both U.S. tanks.
- **U.S. Major Victory:** Prevent Soviet major victory *and* destroy  $\geq 6$  Soviet AFVs.
- **U.S. Minor Victory:** Inflict  $\geq 40\%$  Soviet casualties and retain control of the wooded hill.

## 7. Balance Adjustments

- **Smaller Game:** Remove 1 Soviet platoon & 2  $\times$  BMPs.
- **Larger Game:** Add 2  $\times$  M60A3s (arrive Turn 4, western road).

## Briefings:

The following two sheets can be **printed as one-page handouts** and given separately to each side before play — players only know *their* intelligence and objectives, which builds fog-of-war and immersion.

# U.S. Commander's Briefing

## 3rd Armored Division, Company Team C

**Location:** Outskirts of Bad Hersfeld, West Germany

**Time:** 0630 hrs, 5 May 1981

Gentlemen,

The balloon has gone up. Soviet forces have smashed across the border, and the Fulda Gap is wide open. 11th ACR has fought like hell but they've been forced back. It's our turn now. We are the line between Bad Hersfeld and a Soviet highway west.

Our job is simple: **hold here and bleed them white.** Reinforcements are en route, but until they arrive, this town and these ridges are ours to defend. If the Soviets push through Bad Hersfeld, they'll roll into the heart of West Germany. That cannot happen.

- **Deployment:** Occupy the wooded ridge on our left, cover the town outskirts, and make every hedgerow a strongpoint.
- **Weapons:** The Dragons are your best tank-killers — protect them. The M60A3s will arrive shortly; they're your fire brigade.
- **Mortars:** Two missions available; use them to break up assaults or blind their advance.
- **Enemy Expectation:** Recon shows BMP-mounted infantry and at least one company of T-64s pushing this way. Expect artillery prep, then armor and infantry advancing along the highway.

Remember, this is not about glory — this is about delay and destruction. Make every Soviet vehicle burn. Every minute we hold buys time for the rest of NATO to get ready.

**Hold fast. The eyes of Europe are on you.**

— *Company Commander, Team C, 3rd Armored Division*

# Soviet Commander's Briefing

**39th Guards Motor Rifle Division, Forward Detachment**

**Location:** Approaches to Bad Hersfeld, FRG

**Time:** 0630 hrs, 5 May 1981

Comrades,

The border has been crushed, and the road west lies before us. The imperialists retreat in disarray. Now is the moment to drive the dagger deeper.

Our orders are clear: **break through at Bad Hersfeld and continue west.** We are the vanguard of the division — speed is our weapon, surprise is our ally. The Americans will try to delay us here, but they are weak, isolated, and outnumbered.

- **Advance Guard:** BMPs and infantry lead the way along the B62. Push hard, do not stop until you reach the town.
- **Follow-On Armor:** A platoon of T-64s and additional motor rifles will arrive to crush any pocket of resistance. Use them decisively to shatter NATO armor.
- **Artillery:** Two missions are allocated; suppress their strongpoints or block reinforcements.
- **Enemy Expectation:** The Americans have only fragments of a mechanized company. Expect M113s, infantry with anti-tank missiles, and perhaps a few tanks. They will fight desperately but they are few.

We are the hammer of the Soviet people. Our brothers march behind us. Break their defenses swiftly and drive west — Berlin, Frankfurt, and beyond await.

**Forward, to victory and socialism!**

— *Forward Detachment Commander, 39th Guards MRR*