

Fireball Forward Scenario

Holding the Crossroads, 1981

(Scenario 2)

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1. Overview

Date & Time: 5 May 1981, 1100 hours

Location: West of Bad Hersfeld, West Germany – crossroads near the village of Obergeis

Weather: Overcast skies clearing to patchy sun, occasional drizzle. Visibility normal.

Historical Context (Hypothetical)

The thunder of Soviet artillery has rolled across Hesse since dawn. At first light, the 39th Guards Motor Rifle Division surged westward, crossing the Inner German Border in force. U.S. cavalymen of the 11th ACR fought with desperate courage, laying mines, firing Dragons from roadside ditches, and delaying the advance mile by mile. But sheer numbers tell their own story. By midmorning, the Soviet spearheads smashed into **Bad Hersfeld**, and after a brutal two-hour fight, the Americans fell back through burning streets, leaving behind shattered APCs and wrecked T-64s.

The battle has opened the Fulda Gap — NATO's nightmare scenario. With Bad Hersfeld's defenses broken, Soviet tanks are now pouring onto the B62 highway. The road to Kassel, and eventually Frankfurt, yawns open. Yet, even amidst chaos, NATO commanders see a fleeting chance to strike back.

Just west of Bad Hersfeld lies the **Obergeis crossroads**, a seemingly unremarkable junction of farm lanes and the B62. But its importance is immense: whoever controls it dictates lateral movement in the valley. Soviet supply columns, fuel trucks, and reserve regiments will need this junction to push their offensive deeper into West Germany.

Recognizing this, U.S. V Corps orders a hasty counterattack. The survivors of the morning fight are reinforced by two fresh M60 platoons and mechanized infantry from 3rd Armored Division. Their orders: **retake Obergeis, hold at all costs, and delay the Soviet steamroller.**

But the Soviets are not idle. Anticipating NATO's move, they push forward additional T-64s and motor rifle companies to secure the crossroads. The Guards know their comrades behind them are already on the march; if Obergeis falls quickly, the division's advance can roll unimpeded into the heart of Germany.

It is now late morning. The fields are scarred by tank tracks, hedgerows shredded by artillery, and the church steeple at Obergeis rises like a landmark over the battlefield. NATO armor is racing to block the road, Soviet vanguards are pressing forward to seize it.

The crossroads will decide not just the pace of the day's battle — but the tempo of the entire war.

2. Mission

- **Soviets:** Capture and hold the crossroads by Turn 10. Drive off NATO armor and secure the supply route.
- **U.S.:** Counterattack, hold the crossroads, and destroy the Soviet spearhead.

3. Terrain & Table Setup (6' × 4')

- **Crossroads Village:** Small cluster of farm buildings and a church at the table center.
- **Highway B62:** Runs east–west across table.
- **North Road:** Crossroads branch running north.
- **South Road:** Crossroads branch running south.
- **Rolling Fields:** Open ground with hedgerows, scattered cover.
- **Wooded Ridge:** On western edge (U.S. staging ground).
- **Stream & Marsh:** Shallow stream with boggy banks crossing the south half of the table (difficult terrain for vehicles).

4. Orders of Battle

U.S. Counterattack Force (Attacker)

- **HQ:** 1 × CO stand in M113
- **2 × Tank Platoons:** 2 × 3 × M60A3 tanks
- **2 × Mech Infantry Platoons:** (each: 3 rifle squad stands + 3 × M113)
- **Weapons Support:**
 - 2 × Dragon ATGM teams
 - 1 × 81mm mortar section (off-table, 3 missions)

Total: 6 × M60A3s, 6 infantry stands, 6 × M113s, 2 × ATGMs, mortar

Soviet Reinforced Forward Battalion (Defender)

- **HQ:** 1 × BMP-1 HQ
- **2 × Motor Rifle Platoons:** (each: 3 rifle squad stands + 3 × BMP-1s)
- **Tank Support:** 2 × T-64A platoons (2 × 3 × T-64A)
- **Weapons Support:**
 - 1 × AT-4 Spigot team (stand)
 - Off-table 122mm artillery (2 missions HE, 1 mission Smoke)

Total: 6 × T-64s, 6 infantry stands, 6 × BMP-1s, ATGM, artillery

Soviet Starting Location

- **Deployment Zone:**
 - Soviets begin **east of the Obergeis crossroads**, within 12" of the eastern table edge (representing forward elements advancing out of Bad Hersfeld).

- This includes their **BMP-mounted motor rifle platoons and at least one tank platoon (3 × T-64s)** already on table at game start.
 - Their **HQ** deploys here as well.
- **Follow-On Forces:**
 - Additional Soviet armor (second tank platoon, remaining BMPs) enters from the **eastern table edge** on **Turn 2**, reflecting the column advancing along the B62 highway.
- **Artillery Support:**
 - Soviet 122mm artillery remains off-table; fire missions may be called in starting Turn 1.

U.S. Starting Location

- **Deployment Zone:**
 - U.S. units start **off-table**, representing a hasty counterattack force.
 - On **Turn 1**, the American counterattack enters from the **western edge of the table**.
 - Infantry in M113s and tanks arrive together, with ATGM teams able to dismount upon entry.

5. Scenario Special Rules

1. **Counterattack:** U.S. forces enter from western table edge on Turn 1 (not deployed at start).
2. **Momentum Clash:** Soviets may activate 2 platoons in Turn 1 (reflecting their pursuit tempo).
3. **Crossroads Objective:** Control is determined if one side holds it uncontested at the end of a turn (no enemy within 6").
4. **Marshy Ground:** Vehicles moving through stream/marsh zone roll d6; on 1–2, they bog and lose remainder of movement that turn.

6. Victory Conditions

- **Soviet Major Victory:** Hold the crossroads at end of Turn 10 and retain ≥ 4 AFVs in play.
- **Soviet Minor Victory:** Deny NATO control of the crossroads but with < 4 AFVs surviving.
- **U.S. Major Victory:** Capture and hold the crossroads by Turn 10 while destroying ≥ 6 Soviet AFVs.
- **U.S. Minor Victory:** Contest the crossroads (no Soviet control) and preserve $\geq 50\%$ of U.S. AFVs.

7. Balance Adjustments

- **Smaller game:** Remove 1 Soviet tank platoon ($3 \times$ T-64s).
- **Larger game:** Add $1 \times$ NATO tank platoon ($3 \times$ M60A3s) entering Turn 3.

U.S. Commander's Briefing

3rd Armored Division Counterattack Force

Location: Obergeis Crossroads, West Germany

Time: 1100 hrs, 5 May 1981

Men,

We bloodied them this morning, but they broke through Bad Hersfeld. That's history now. The Soviets are advancing fast, and unless we stop them, they'll tear through central Germany before lunch.

The crossroads at Obergeis is the key. If they secure it, their columns will flood west, and there'll be nothing between them and Frankfurt. We are ordered to counterattack immediately — armor in front, infantry securing the flanks.

- **Mission:** Take the crossroads, hold it, and destroy as many Soviet tanks as possible.

- **Forces:** We've got two platoons of M60s and two platoons of mech infantry. Dragons and mortars are in support.
- **Enemy:** Expect a reinforced Soviet battalion. BMPs will spearhead, but it's the T-64s we must worry about.

This is our chance to hit them before their divisions build momentum. **Take the crossroads, and show them NATO still fights back.**

— *Counterattack Force Commander*

Soviet Commander's Briefing

39th Guards Motor Rifle Division, Forward Elements

Location: Obergeis Crossroads, FRG

Time: 1100 hrs, 5 May 1981

Comrades,

The Americans fought stubbornly at Bad Hersfeld, but our armored fists have crushed their defenses. We march westward, unstoppable. Now, before us lies Obergeis — a crossroads vital to our advance.

Our task is simple: **seize the crossroads, hold it, and open the road for the division.** Reinforcements follow behind us, but we must secure the route now.

- **Mission:** Occupy and hold the crossroads.
- **Forces:** Motor rifles and BMPs supported by two companies of T-64s. Artillery stands ready to suppress their reinforcements.
- **Enemy:** A battered but dangerous American counterattack force. Expect tanks, APCs, and missile teams.

The imperialists will come fast, desperate to stop us. Crush them before they can organize. Show no hesitation — victory here guarantees the road west.

Onward, comrades! The way to Frankfurt lies through Obergeis!

— *Forward Detachment Commander, 39th Guards MRR*