Band of Brothers VASSAL Module

A short tutorial for version 4.X

July 2024

This document collects basic information about the Band of Brothers game module for VASSAL, version 4. Version 4 contains new elements and introduces mechanics not present in previous versions. These novelties are briefly reviewed below. It is assumed that the reader is already familiar with the game rules. The last version of the module can be downloaded from the [VASSAL website](#).

Complete list of commands

Table 1: Game Piece commands

Ctrl-a	Ambush (Squad/WT in melee)	Ctrl-n	Remove Used/Op. Fire
Ctrl-b	Remove Ambush/Flanking	Ctrl-o	Mark Op. Fire
Ctrl-c	Concealed	Ctrl-p	Use Command Point
Ctrl-d	Displaced (Co. Hub)	Ctrl-r	Reduced
Ctrl-f	Fully Suppressed/Artillery Fire	Ctrl-s	Suppressed/Artillery Smoke
Ctrl-g	Good order (not suppressed)	Ctrl-t	Designate as target
Ctrl-i	Sustained Fire (MG WT)	Ctrl-u	Mark Used
Ctrl-j	Seishin (Japanese units)	Ctrl-x	Resource depleted (Aircraft)
Ctrl-k	Unconfirmed Kill (Vehicles)	Ctrl-Left Arrow	Rotate clockwise
Ctrl-l	Flank (Squad/WT in melee)	Ctrl-Right Arrow	Rotate counter-clockwise
Ctrl-m	Moved (Vehicle)	Alt-r	Simple decoy (Decoy)

Table 2: Main Map commands

Alt-f	Fire thread	F5	Set zoom factor
Alt-o	Check LOS thread	F6	Zoom out
Ctrl-z	Undo the last move	F7	Zoom in
F4	Hide all units	Ctrl-Left Click	Flare
Alt-u	Mark all units unmoved		

Table 3: Basic Piece commands

Alt-c	Clone	Alt-m	Toggle Moved status
Alt-d	Delete	Alt-l	Change label

Buttons Bar

The button bar is used to perform several actions and access several game features, including the Units & Counters window, the Scenario window, and the Player-Aid window. It keeps track of the activated units in the Operation Phase and the spent Command Points. The icons in the button bar should be self-explanatory. When hovering the mouse over them, a short message appears with the name of the button.

Context-sensitive menus

Be aware that the right-click menu on the counters is context-sensitive. This means that you are not going to see all possible commands in any situation. Many commands become available only when it makes sense to use them. For example, you cannot 'Reduce' a concealed unit: Before being reduced, the unit has to be revealed. Similarly, you cannot place a 'Flanking' counter on a unit that is not in close combat with the enemy.

Select a scenario

Open the scenario using the 'File→ Scenario' menu. The list of available scenarios depends on the extensions installed. The base module contains all the scenarios of 'Screaming Eagles'. Once the desired scenario is loaded, inspect the scenario sheet using the 'Show/Hide scenario window' button. The necessary units could already be prepared for you on the scenario sheet. If not, select them from the counter collection by using the 'Show/Hide units and counters window' button. Note that some folders can be empty depending on the active extensions. Before deploying units on the board, remember to select the appropriate side using the 'Take/Change side' button.
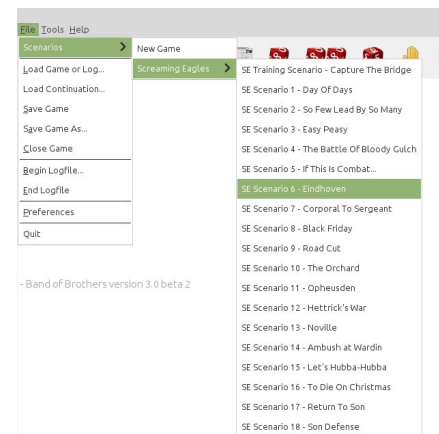
Figure 1: Select a game from the menu

Moved units and Movement Trails

When units are moved on the board they are automatically marked moved with a yellow footsteps icon and, if the option is activated, a yellow movement trail appears that tracks their movement across the different hexes. You can decide whether the movement trails appear on the map using the 'Set trails on/off' button. With this button, you can also reset the movement status of all units on the board.

Figure 2: Set trails on/off and reset moved status.

Fire and LOS threads

When firing, you can designate the firer and target with the fire thread. The thread is activated using the 'Fire' button or Alt-f command. Click on the firer and drag the line to the target hex. The selected firer and target hexes are reported in the chat. If the Ctrl
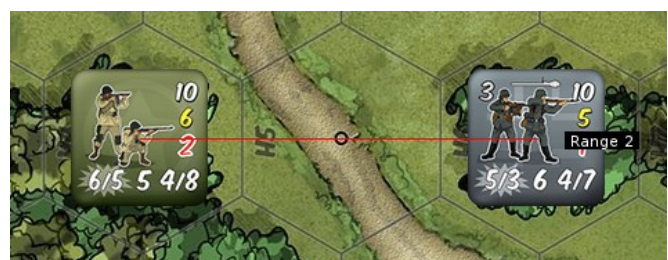
Figure 3: Fire thread

button is pressed when performing the click-and-drag operation, the thread becomes permanent. Clicking again on the 'Fire' button cancels it. When necessary, as when firing at a vehicle accompanied by infantry or attacking with a plane, use Ctrl-t or the right-click menu to designate a specific target unit in the target hex. To check the Line of Sight (LOS) between two hexes without performing an attack, use the 'Show LOS thread' button or the Alt-o command.

Operation Phase

As units are marked Used or OP. Fire the number on the corresponding Operations Phase tracker is updated. The counter of the inactive side is grayed out. Once the Operations Range of one side is over, right-click on the counter to switch the active side. You can also use right-click to manually adjust the tracker. Before starting the game, the Operation Range of both sides can be set in the File → Scenario preferences menu.

Figure 4: Operation Phase tracker

Spent Command Points

Use Ctrl-p or the right-click menu to spend a CP on a unit. The command points spent by each side are reported in the CP tracker. Click on the button to obtain the list of units on which CP has been spent. Selecting a unit in the list will automatically refocus the main window on that unit. The list of units is emptied at the beginning of a new turn. Before starting the game, the available CP of both sides can be set in the File → Scenario preferences menu. Note that to keep track of spent CPs, units must remain in the game. I suggest moving eliminated units back on the scenario sheet rather than deleting them. Alternatively, you can set the 'Drop CP' option (see below).

Figure 5: Command Points tracker

Game Options

The module has a few options you can use to customize its behavior. You can find these options in the 'File → Preferences' menu. 'Report unit suppression…' increases the verbosity of the messages that the module displays in the chat. 'Show movement trails…' automatically activates the movement trail when units are moved on the main board.
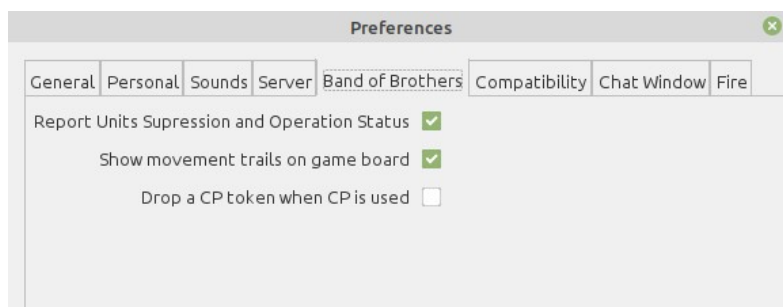

Figure 6: Game options

'Drop a CP token…' is useful for players who want to delete units that are eliminated. When a unit is eliminated on which a CP point has been spent, a CP token is placed on the map to keep track of the spent CP. The tokens are deleted at the end of the turn. Feel free to explore the other general options of VASSAL. They can significantly improve your experience with the game interface.

Terrain and Unit Labels

Despite all the prevision for the condition of units in the context-sensitive menu, sometimes it is necessary to record something about a game piece or a location on the map. In the 'Terran → Markers' tab of the unit

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Figure 7: Terrain and unit labels

window, there is a special counter that can be used to write text labels on the board and/or position colored dots inside the hexes. This might be very handy for keeping track of which side is controlling one particular hex or a group of hexes. In addition, each piece of the game can be assigned a label using the right-click menu or the Alt-l command.

Off-Board Artillery markers

OBA counters are in the Artillery section of the Counters and Units window. When on the Scenario Window, the Artillery counter can be marked for OP Fire (Ctrl-o). When on the main map, the Artillery counter can be marked used (Ctrl-u) if the proficiency roll fails. Otherwise, use the Fire for Effect (Ctrl-f) or Place Smoke (Ctrl-s) menu entries to perform the appropriate mission and mark the counter Used. When placing smoke,

Figure 8: Artillery auto re-positioning

or at the end of the turn, all OBA counters are re-positioned in the scenario window, in the approximate position they occupied originally, for later use. Some manual adjustments to the position of the OBA counter might be required. If a scenario window is not available or an appropriate zone has not been set up to accommodate it, the module does not know where to move the OBA counter and a warning message will appear in the chat. The message is issued only the first time this situation is encountered in a game. You can safely ignore this message and manually move the OBA counter.
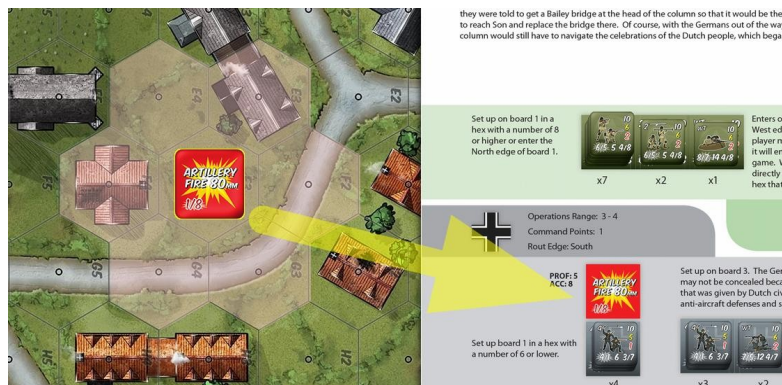
Aircraft

After its attack, an aircraft counter is marked as used (Ctrl-u). When doing so, it is moved back into the scenario window. If it is removed from the game, mark it with a cross (Ctrl-x). If a scenario window is not available, or an appropriate zone has not been set up to accommodate the aircraft counter, the module does not know where to move it and a warning message will appear in the chat. The message is issued only the first time this situation is encountered in a game. You can safely ignore this message and manually move the aircraft counter.

Figure 9: Aircraft counters

Simple decoys

The module contains all the original counters of the game. The original decoys have numbers on them to protect their nature from inadvertently moving the 'Conceal' token. This is not an issue on VASSAL. Selecting 'Simple decoy' in the right-click menu (Alt-r), you can replace the original decoys with simpler decoys with no information on them. They stand out more clearly, and it is less likely to confuse them with actual units.

Figure 10: Simple decoys

Turn Tracker

The turn tracker can already be visible on the button bar or can be activated by clicking the 'Turn' button. By clicking the '+' or '-' buttons you can move through the turn's phases. At the end of the Operation Phase, click on the '+' button to move to the Rout Phase of the same turn.

Figure 11: Turn tracker

Unnecessary counters are automatically removed. At the end of the Rout Phase, click on the '+' button again to move to the Melee Phase. At the end of the Melee Phase, a further click will move the game to the Operation Phase of the next turn. All steps of the recovery phase are automatically performed.
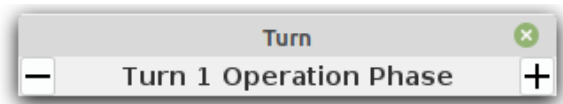
Flare

By Ctrl-Left click in any position of the Main Map, a pulsing yellow circle will appear for a few seconds. This is useful to draw the opponent's attention to one particular location or unit.
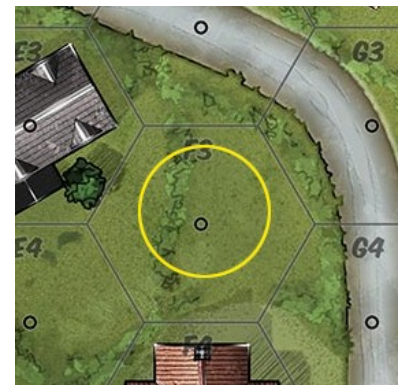

Figure 12: Pulsing circle

Fog of War (FOW) Cups

The FOW cups are accessible by clicking on the mug icon in the buttons bar. Three numbered cups are provided. To add a unit to a cup, move it into the respective square. When a unit is added to a cup, it is automatically concealed. The drawing from the cup is done randomly. The cups can be labeled using the labels available in the units and counters window, 'Game Markers→Utility tab'. Position the label on the cup. The labels automatically report the number of counters in the associated cup. Right-click on the label to adjust the text and the nationality background color.
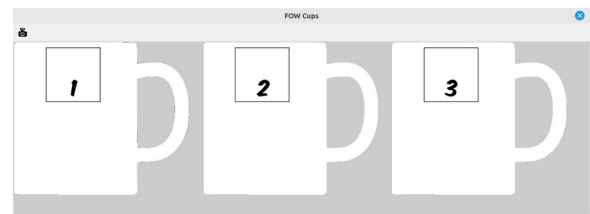

Figure 13: FOW Cups

Combat Events

Random combat events can be generated using the "events" buttons on the button bar. The white button is for ETO events, while the button with the Japanese flag is for PTO. These buttons merely roll for the event on the corresponding tables. Players should follow the rules to decide if an event actually takes place and for which side. Players can ignore this feature and roll 1d10 instead using the tables reported in the rule book.
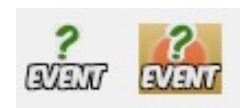

Figure 14: Combat events