

Strike Force One

Ударная Группа Один

Unified Version

Replay of *Expert* Game

This document contains a *replay* of an *Expert* game. The scenario is the *full* standard scenario with *all* optional rules. That is

- Soviet faction uses **Guards** allowing the Soviet faction to roll for events *twice* and choosing among the options.
- The fourth turn is a **Night** turn. Units can *either* do **Movement** or participate in **Combat**.
- Tanks can do **Infiltration**, cause **Breakthrough**, and can do **Exploitation**.
- The game lasts for six turns.

The commentary is largely copied from the original replay by Alan Emrich (with kind permission) with a few edits here and there. Also, the overall layout has been changed to tabulate moves, combats, and events, hopefully making the replay easier to follow.

It is advisable, though not needed, to set up the board and following along.

Note that the commentary contains quite a few “golden nuggets” of reflections on playing wargames in general. All credit goes to Alan Emrich for his insightful and pedagogical observations.

Legend



Soviet move



US move



Attack



Retreat



Advance



Position before retreat



Unit eliminated

The last few pages are blank sheets for recording your own replays of *Strike Force One*.

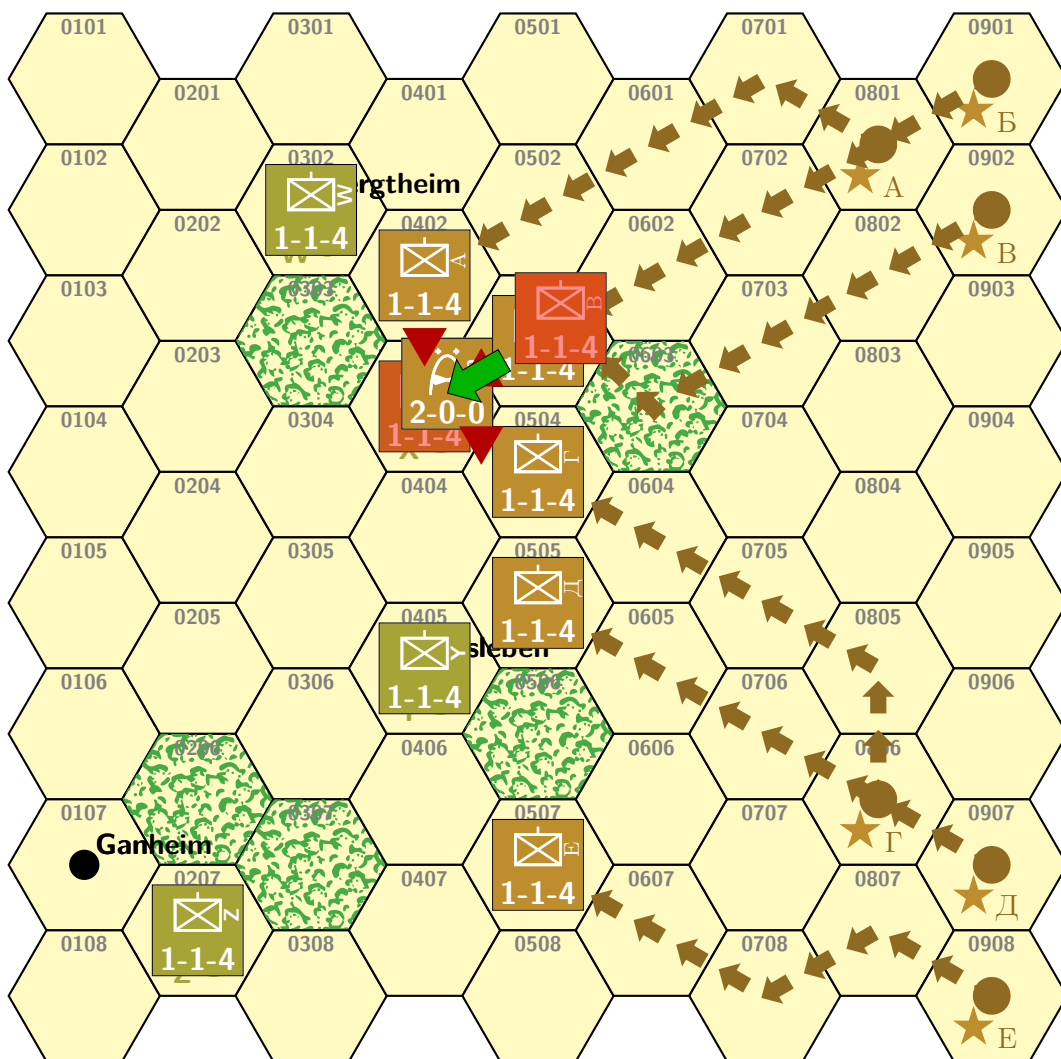
Strike Force One

Ударная Группа Один



Unified Version

Replay of *Expert* game

Turn 1 – Soviet




Event

In effect	Alternative	Comments
		No reinforcements available

Moves

Unit	From	To	Comments
A	0801	0402	
Б	0901	0503	
В	0902	0503	
Г	0806	0504	
Д	0907	0505	
Е	0908	0507	

Combats

Attackers	Defenders	Result	Retreats	Advance	Eliminate	Comments
A, Б,В,Г, 	Х	EX		Б 0403	Х, Б	

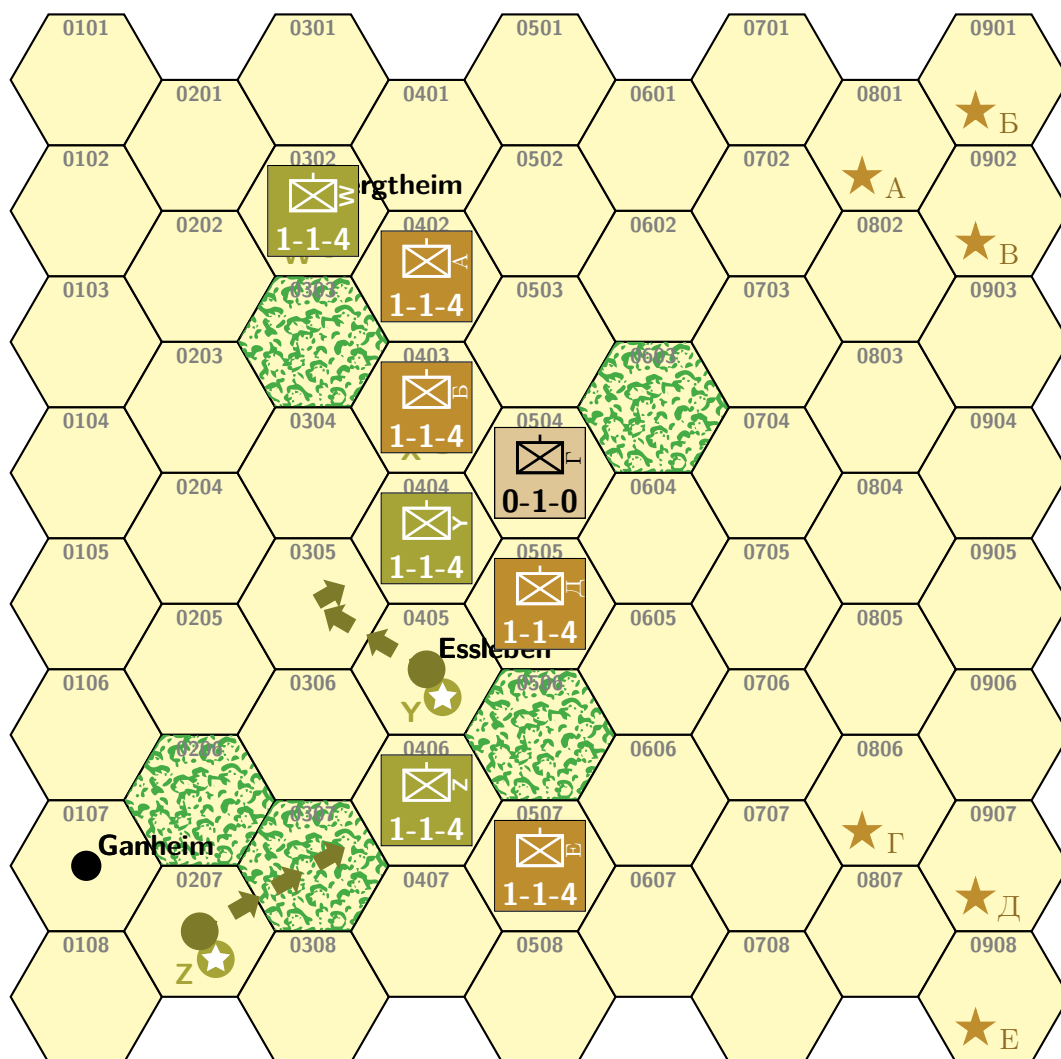
Commentary

Using the **Guards** option for the game, the Soviet faction has a choice between a **Second echelon** and **Air support** event. The choice falls on **Air support** since the Soviet faction has no replacement units.

With a +2 Strength attack pending, the Soviet faction considers making a weak attack with Air Support (to improve his chances), but decides instead to throw the maximum strength he can bear on a single unit in hopes of wiping it out early and begins moving.

Note that, in the *Advanced* (and *Expert*) games, **B** is able to move into hex 0602, a **Forest** hex, but it combines with **B** to bring the maximum amount of strength to bear on **X**.

The Soviet faction decides not to have **D** attack **Y** until he can bring more units to bear. When attacking at a +0 **Combat Difference**, there is a risk of obtaining an **Attacker Eliminated** result if a 6 is rolled in that battle. The Soviet faction has already lost one unit this turn; and does not want to risk losing another right now.



Event

In effect	Alternative	Comments
		Applied to Γ

Moves

Unit	From	To	Comments
Z	0207	0308	
Y	0405	0306	

Commentary

Ouch! With the loss of unit **X**, the US faction needs a **Random Event** that will give him some bodies (any bodies!) to help shore up the line. Of the 12 events on the table, fully half will help him (one **T**, one **U**, and two **V** reinforcements; plus two **Rally** events that will replace unit **X**. Any gambler will tell you that you need to win the toss-ups to prevail, but that is not the case this time. Instead, the US faction rolls an event that gives **Command Problems** to the Soviets. This is applied to **Γ** and things look a little less bleak.

The US faction decides to abandon the town in 0405 (Essleben) in exchange for a better defensive position. Note how the US faction has placed its units with one hex in between them. This forces the Soviet faction to attack before it can press on to the objectives.

Since the probabilities for a favorable result are poor when attacking with a +0 **Combat Difference**, the US faction decides not to attack any Soviet units at this juncture; it's just too risky — and even if a battle is won, so what? Where and why would US units want to **Advance** after combat even if they won?

Situation Analysis

With the devastating loss of 25% of his field forces, the US faction's situation is tense, particularly since he did not replace his loss from a **Random Event** this turn. The thin green line got a lot thinner, but it is still (barely) holding between the US units and their **Zones of Control**.

That is a basic military concept: units tend to spread out in defence and concentrate together when attacking (or counterattacking). Observe this as you study this game replay.

The US faction was wise to have Soviet unit **Γ** suffer the **Command Problems**. Being located at the centre of the Soviet line, it could have been very useful to the Soviet faction next turn anywhere along the line, supporting an attack in the north, centre, or south.

In war, when things are looking bad and your morale is low, you should always consider what a jolly rotten time your opponent is having. The US faction can take some solace in the fact that the Soviet faction can not be happy with having lost one unit and the next turn to have **Command Problems**.

And this is exactly what the Soviet faction is thinking as he tries to figure out how to keep pressing his offensive with his depleted forces.

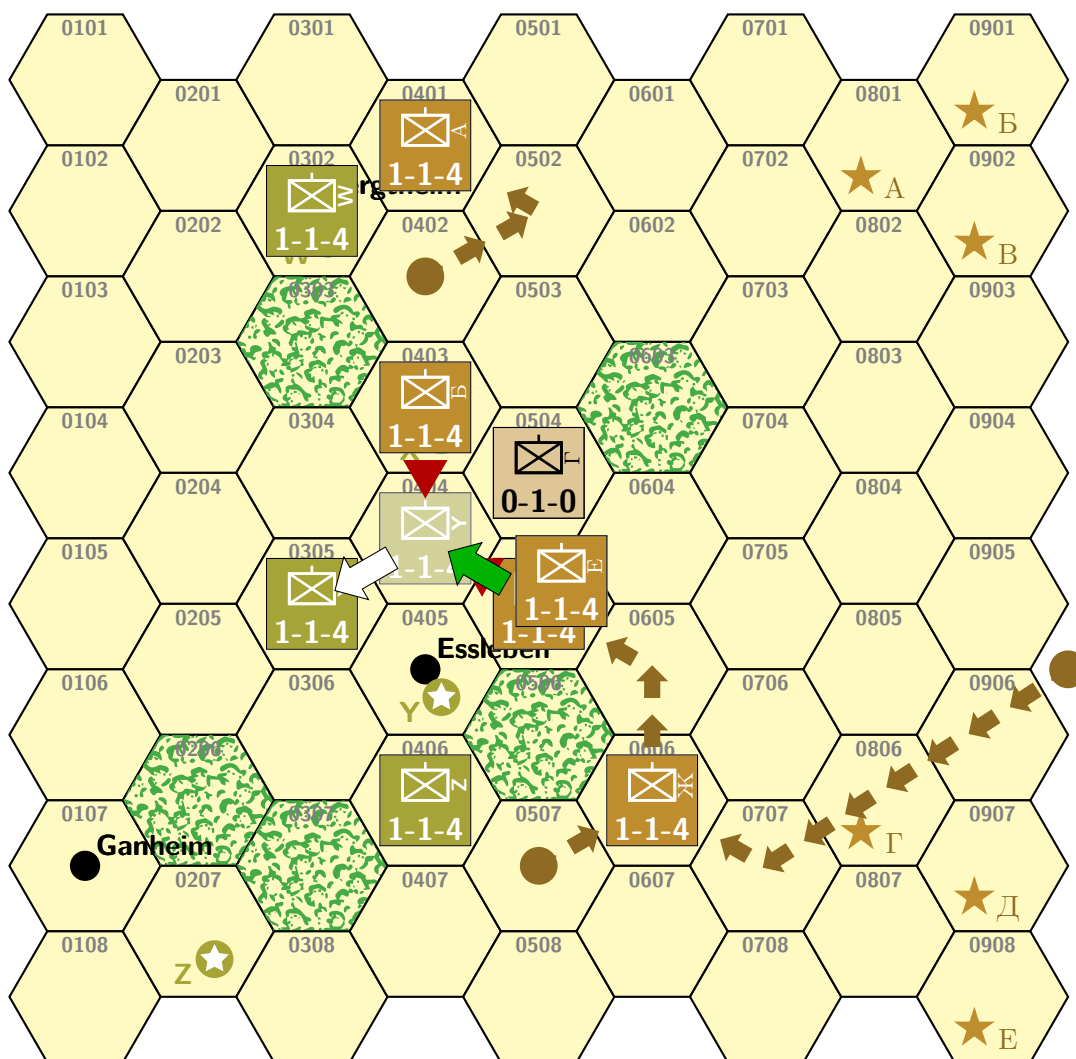
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Turn 2 – Soviet



Event

In effect	Alternative	Comments
		Both options yield the same result


Moves

Unit	From	To	Comments
A	0402	0401	disengage via 0502
E	0507	0505	
Д	Off	0606	


Combats

Attackers	Defenders	Result	Retreats	Advance	Eliminate	Comments
Б, Д, Е	Y	DR	Y 0305	Д 0404		

Commentary

The Soviet faction chooses  rather than **Second echelon**, because it knows there are two **Second Echelon** events on the table and only one **Infantry Reinforcement** event. Thus, his chances are better of hitting a replacement event again (and there might be more Soviet losses to replace later on) than of seeing that reinforcement event reappear.

The Soviet line is thinned out in the north and south using the same tactic that the US faction is using — an every-other-hex line (with **Zones of Control**) will be covering the Soviet faction's flanks. This allows as many Soviet units as possible to concentrate upon and attack the US. unit **Y** in the center.

Note that the new Soviet reinforcement unit () cannot reach the US. line with its four **Movement Points**, so it is left to secure the Soviet's southern flank (one hex column further east than when unit **E** was guarding it). Unit **Γ**, of course, is inverted and will not be moving or attacking at all during this Soviet Turn due to **Command Problems**.

With his **Combat** step now over, the Soviet faction flips unit **Γ** back face-up.

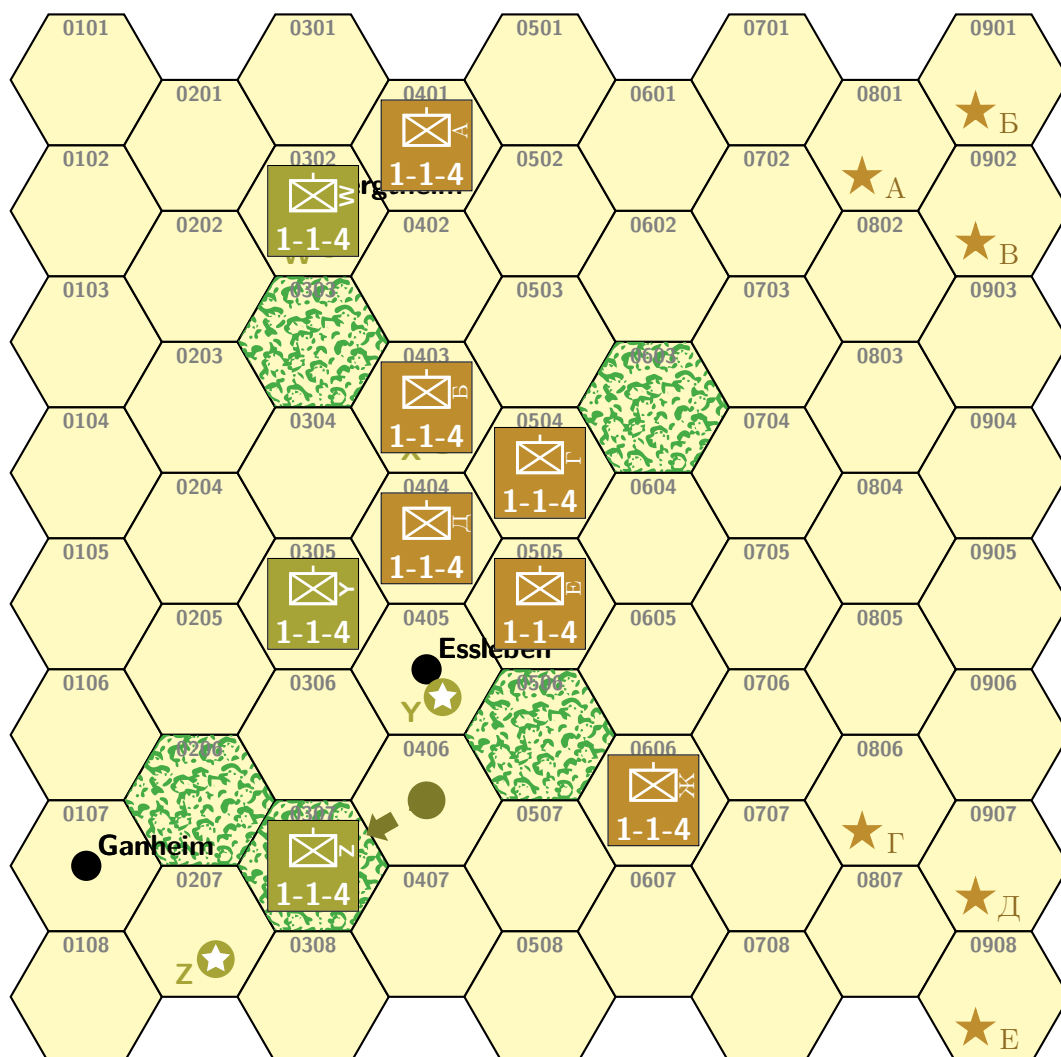
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Ударная Группа Один

Unified Version

Replay of *Expert* game

Turn 2 – US



Event

In effect	Alternative	Comments
		No help at all

Moves

Unit	From	To	Comments
Z	0406	0307	

Commentary

Still desperate to get another unit on the map, the US faction once again rolls one **Random event** only to be disappointed. Instead of a lucky turn, for the US things are only going **According to Plan**, which is no help at all. Ack!

US unit **Z** falls back to the **Forest** Hex in 0307; this not only takes this unit out of danger from being surrounded during the next Soviet move, but also secures good defensive terrain. Units defend with +1 Strength in a **Forest** Hex.

The US faction sees no immediate benefit in attacking, and so declines to initiate any Battles this turn.

Situation Analysis

The Soviet faction is following the *Principles of War* by repositioning his forces (the principle of *Manoeuvre*) to better achieve his immediate goal (the principle of *Objective*) of pressing the US centre in an effort to start outflanking the town hexes and thus, be in a better position to capture them on a future turn.

The Soviet faction thins out his lines in the less important northern and southern sectors (the principle of *Economy of Force*), setting up a secure every-other-hex defensive line in those areas so that the US faction cannot freely manoeuvre around them (the principle of *Security*).

Furthermore, the Soviet faction then attacks in the US centre (the principle of *Offensive*) by concentrating forces to bring as much strength to bear at the decisive point and time (the principle of *Mass*). These are real lessons that you can learn and practice by playing conflict simulations.

The US. situation is grim. Two of the factions units (**W** and **Y**) can be attacked from three hexes next turn. And if Soviet units move into hexes 0303 and 0304, what will be able to stop them from outflanking the positions **W** and **Y** hold on the following Game Turn?

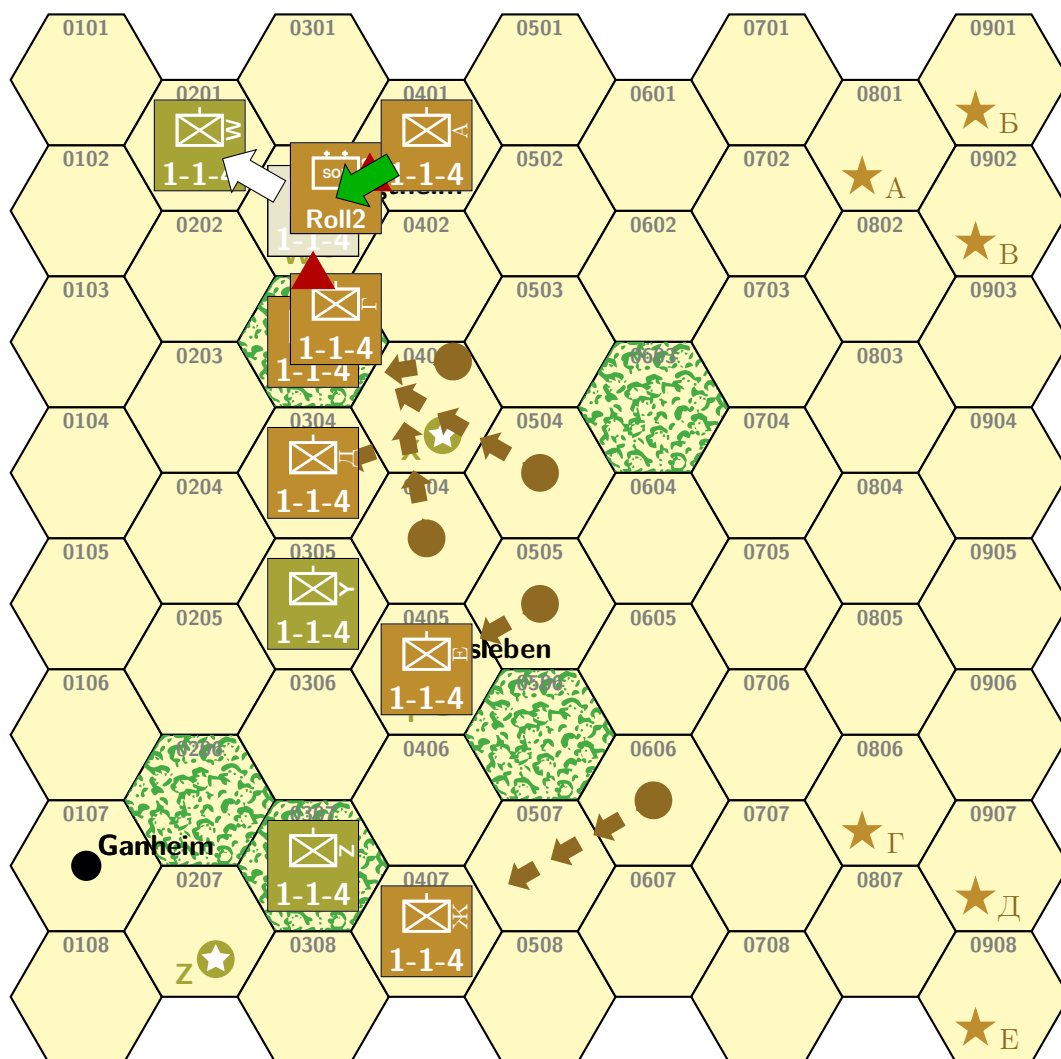
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Turn 3 – Soviet



Event

In effect	Alternative	Comments
		Allocated to W , SUG has already arrived

Moves

Unit	From	To	Comments
Б	0403	0303	
Г	0504	0303	
Д	0404	0304	Disengage and reengage
Е	0505	0405	Captures Esleben
Ж	0606	0407	

Combats

Attackers	Defenders	Result	Retreats	Advance	Eliminate	Comments
А, Б, Г	W	DR	W 0201	А 0302		Bergtheim captured

Commentary

The **Ж** event is essentially a “no event” since the Soviet **Ж** unit has already arrived. The Soviet faction therefore chooses to use its Спецназ support (Special Operations Forces) to enable a *two* die rolls in the combat at 0302.

As the US faction fears, the Soviet faction pushes units **Б**, **Г**, and **Д** forward into the gap through hex 0403 to take up this positions on the 03XX hex column and set up an attack on Bergtheim (0302) including his Спецназ Support.

Additionally, Soviet unit **Е** occupies Esselben while unit **Ж** closes up on the southern flank.

In the combat at 0302 the Soviet faction rolls the die twice (for a 6 and 4) and *must* use the lower result. The result is that US faction retreats **W** to hex 0201. Unit **A** advances after combat into Bergtheim.

Units **Д** and **Е** could attack **Y**, but with two town hexes now on Soviet hands, the Soviet faction thinks, “Why bother? I’m in a good position right now. Let the US try to throw me out with his reduced forces!”

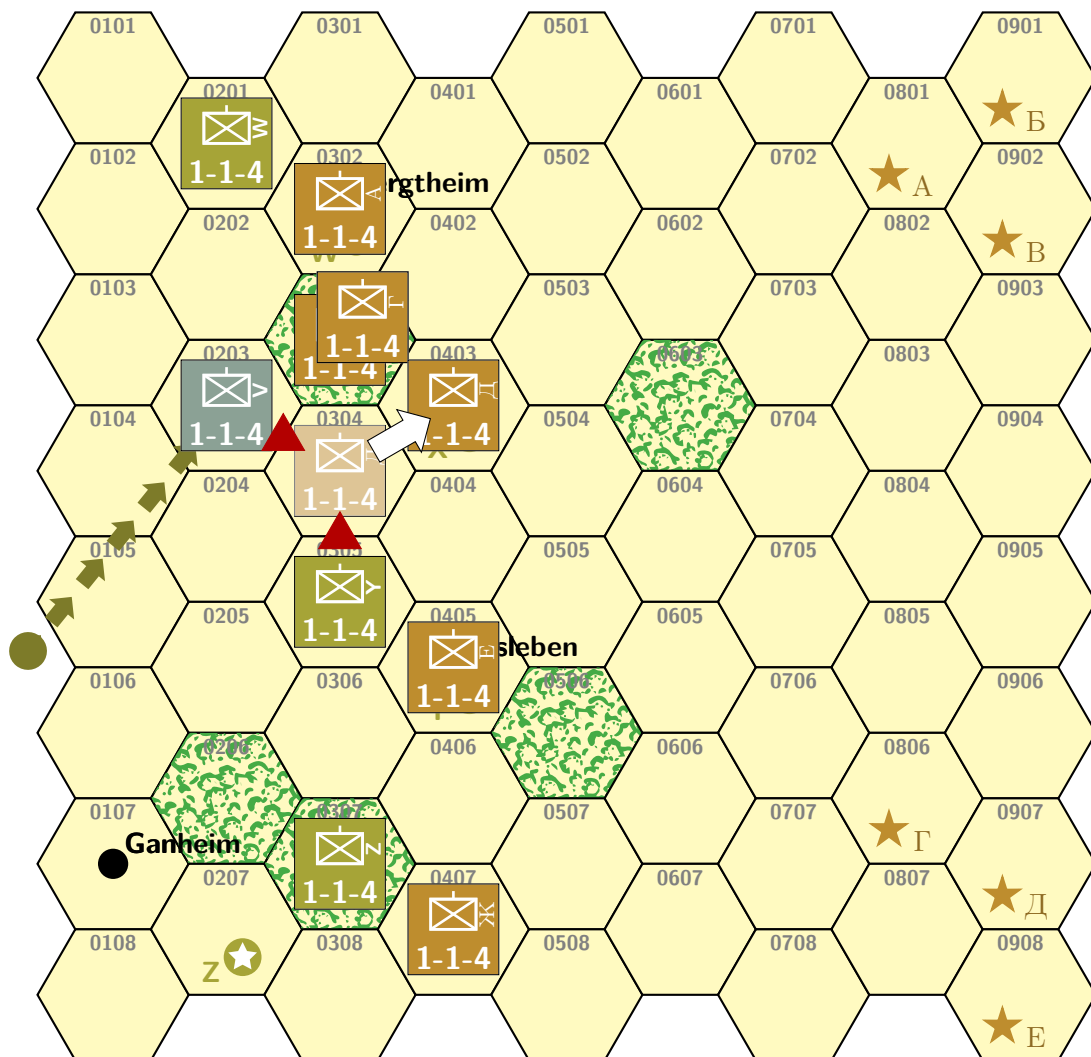
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
Unified Version

Replay of *Expert* game

Turn 3 – US



Event

In effect	Alternative	Comments
		

Moves

Unit	From	To	Comments
V	Off	0203	Reinforcement

Combats

Attackers	Defenders	Result	Retreats	Advance	Eliminate	Comments
V, Y	Д	DR	Д 0403			No advance

Commentary

Finally, Headquarters sends some help. As if on cue, the West German Reinforcement unit, **V**, arrives and the US faction considers the possibilities presented by its arrival.

The US moves the reinforcement (**V**) to hex 0203. This not only neatly plugs the hole in the defensive line (there's now a unit in every-other-hex), but it also provides an attack opportunity that the US considers...

It's risky, but the US is looking at an attack against Soviet unit **D**. Knowing that the next turn is a **Night** game turn, if the US can force **D** to retreat (and then the US *declines* to **Advance** after combat), then **D** will be out of position and unable to fight.

There is a 3 in 6 (i.e., 50%) chance of that positive outcome; a 1 in 6 (17%) chance of **no effect**, and a 2 in 6 (33%) chance of an **Attacker Retreat** result, which would be a major setback indeed.

Deciding that the benefits are worth the risks, the US faction commits **V** and **Y** to battle. It works! The battle's outcome is a DR and unit **D** is pushed back to 0403.

Situation Analysis

The Soviets did everything right, but fate stepped in and made the Soviet decision *not* to attack **Y** (which seemed like a good idea at the time) a bad one in hindsight. This is what the great military thinker Carl von Clausewitz called in his opus *On War*, “the Friction of War.”

That is, there are things that you simply can not predict and it is impossible to completely prepare for every contingency ‘on paper’ when real war is so chaotic. This is why a randomizing element, like a die, and the Laws of Probability (which state that, “While a range of outcomes is known, the order in which they occur is subject to chance”) are essential tools in a wargame; they juxtapose the analytical with the mysticism of luck.

The die serves as the unknown quantity which, on the human scale, always appears as if it were handed down on the winds of fate – it thus preserves the chaotic perspective of the battlefield and forces an intuitive or poetic basis in the ultimate moment of crisis, an adoption of the calculated risk, which alone can grant success.

Kevin Zucker, noted wargame designer

Thus, the US took a calculated risk, picked up the die, and the “Friction of War” worked out in his favour — *this* time.

Right from the start, there is a game of possibilities and probabilities, of good and bad luck, which appears in every thread of the weave. Thus, of all the branches of human activity, War is that which most resembles a card game.

Carl von Clausewitz, military author

And so in wargames, dice and cards are staples of design and gameplay. These randomizing tools allow game designers to provide important lessons, and game players opportunities to learn from them.

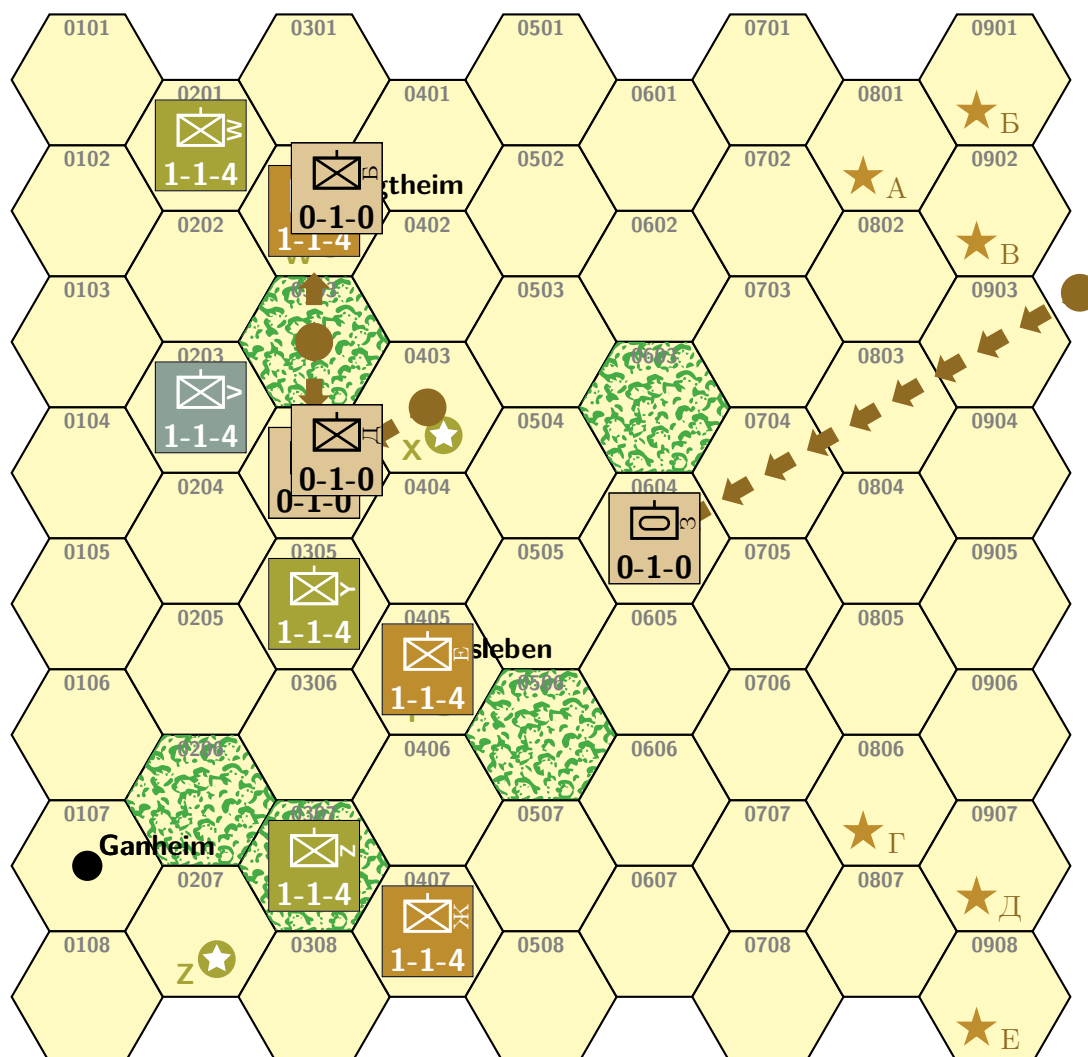
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
Unified Version

Replay of *Expert* game

Turn 4 – Soviet — Night



Event

In effect	Alternative	Comments
		Night, US attacks unlikely

Moves

Unit	From	To	Comments
Б	0303	0302	
Г	0303	0304	
Д	0403	0304	
З	Off	0604	Reinforcement

Commentary

Since this is a **Night** turn, the Soviet faction is not too concerned with the US actions during this turn, and therefore chooses to 3 tank unit as reinforcement over **Enemy SNAFU**.

Unit 7 heads back to occupy Esselben since the game's victory conditions require Soviet occupation of town hexes.

Since there is not enough Soviet strength that begins the night adjacent to US units and ready to attack at an advantage, and since no Support marker arrived that could have helped to put together an advantageous battle, the Soviet faction decided to use this **Night** turn to reposition his forces to put them in better positions to attack in the morning.

With four of his units inverted from night manoeuvres, the Soviet faction declines to initiate any night Battles and merely flips his units back face-up.

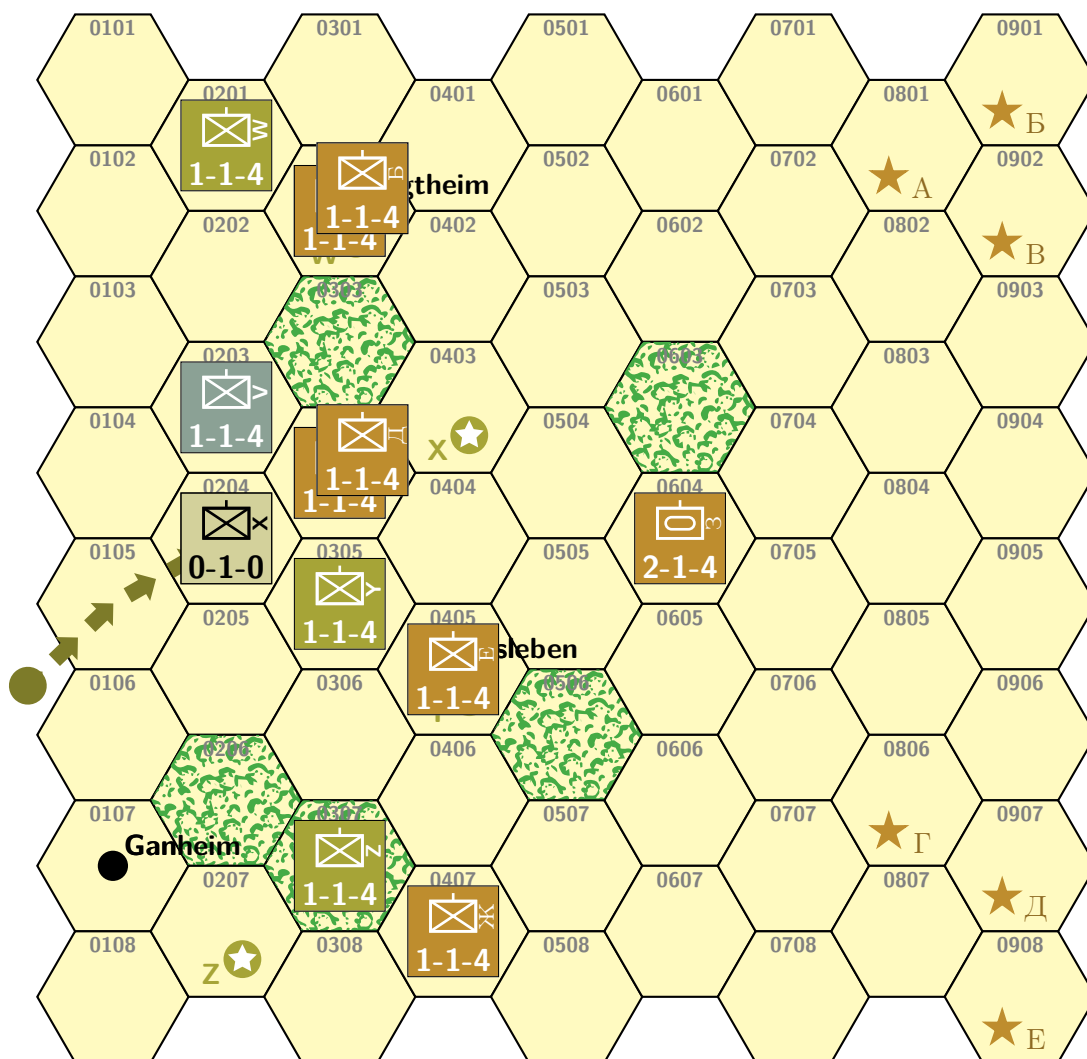
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Replay of *Expert* game

Turn 4 – US — Night



Event

In effect	Alternative	Comments
		Replacement of X

Moves

Unit	From	To	Comments
X	Off	0204	Reinforcement

Commentary

With unit **X** unavailable to attack (because it moved during the **Night** turn), the US faction chooses not to initiate any battles.

Situation Analysis

Carl von Clausewitz remarked that, “Defence is the stronger form of waging war.” That is why an attacker needs a **Combat Difference** of +2 or more (i.e., about a 3:1 strength advantage) before battle outcomes tend to give advantage.

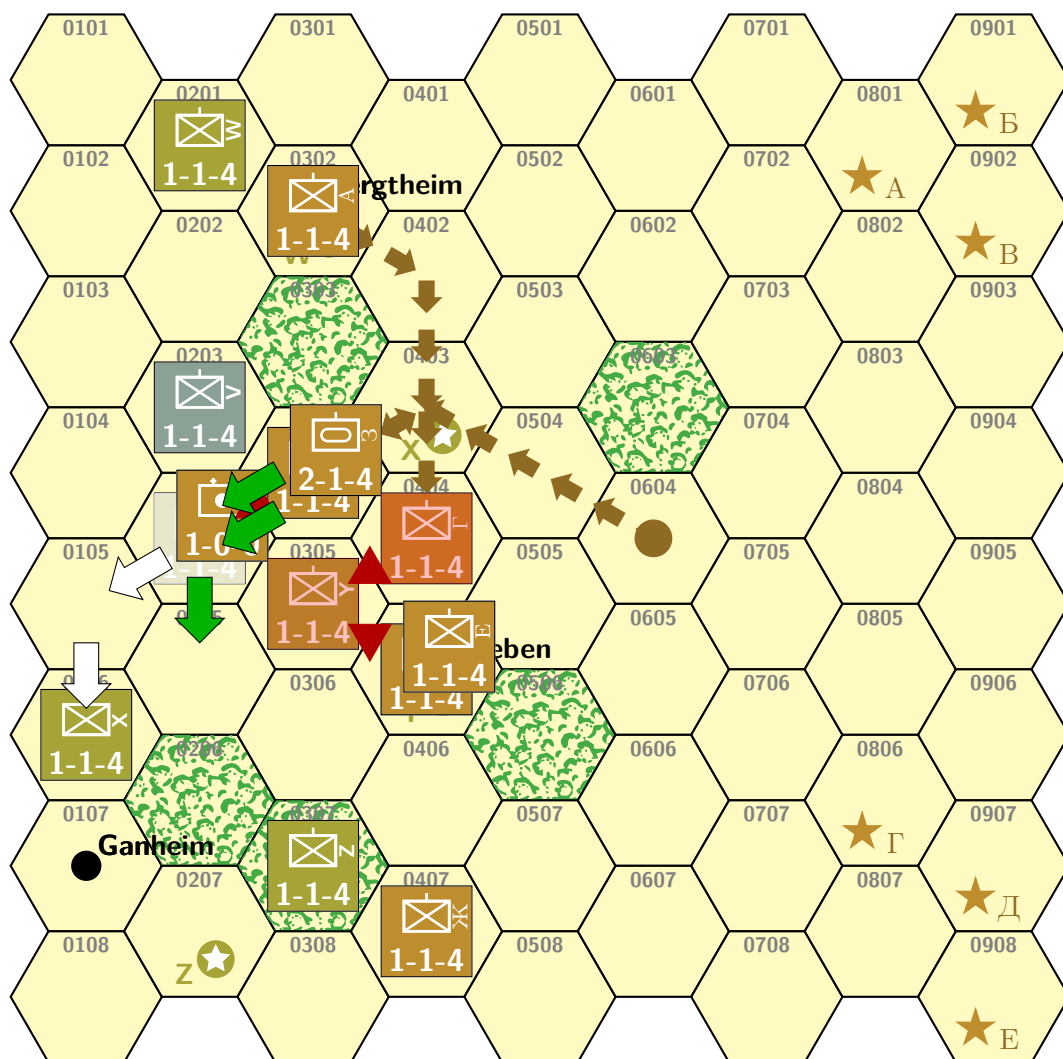
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Replay of *Expert* game

Turn 5 – Soviet




Event

In effect	Alternative	Comments
		Soviet has immediate plans for attacks on X

Moves

Unit	From	To	Comments
Б	0302	0304	
Г	0304	0404	Disengage and reengage
З	0604	0304	

Combats

Attackers	Defenders	Result	Retreats	Advance	Eliminate	Comments
Б, З, 	X	DR	X 0106	Б 0205, З 0204		Breakthrough and Exploit
Г, Д, Е	Y	EX			Y , Г	

Commentary

Even though the Soviet faction could reinforce **B**, it chooses to take the **Artillery support** event, as the Soviet has immediate plans for attacks this turn.

Leaving only units **A** and **⚔K** to guard the flanks (using the every-other-space and **Zones of Control** technique of spreading out while on the defensive), the Soviet faction packs his remaining forces in the centre for two battles. With US pieces lined up next to each other (for a change), a well coordinated **Advance** after combat against one to cut off the next unit's retreat may deliver a crushing blow to the opponent forces and position.

For his first Battle, the Soviet faction commits infantry unit **B** and tank unit **3**, plus his **Artillery support** (4 Strength total) against US unit **X**. The result is DR. Unit **X** *must* retreat two hexes, as this is a **Breakthrough** outcome using attacking tanks against a **Clear** hex. Opting to fall back toward Ganheim, the US faction retreats first to hex 0105 and then to hex 0106. The Soviet faction advances unit **B** into the defender's vacated hex (0204) and **Exploits** with his Tank unit **3** to hex 0205, driving as hard as he can toward his last objective: Ganheim.

Following his **Advance** after combat and **Exploitation**, the Soviet faction has now cleverly surrounded US unit **Y**. That means that any **Retreat** result will eliminate it instead. Units **Γ**, **Δ**, and **E** combine to attack **Y**. The outcome is an EX (exchange) when all the Soviet faction desired was a **Retreat**. Unit **Y** goes down fighting and takes unit **Γ** with it.

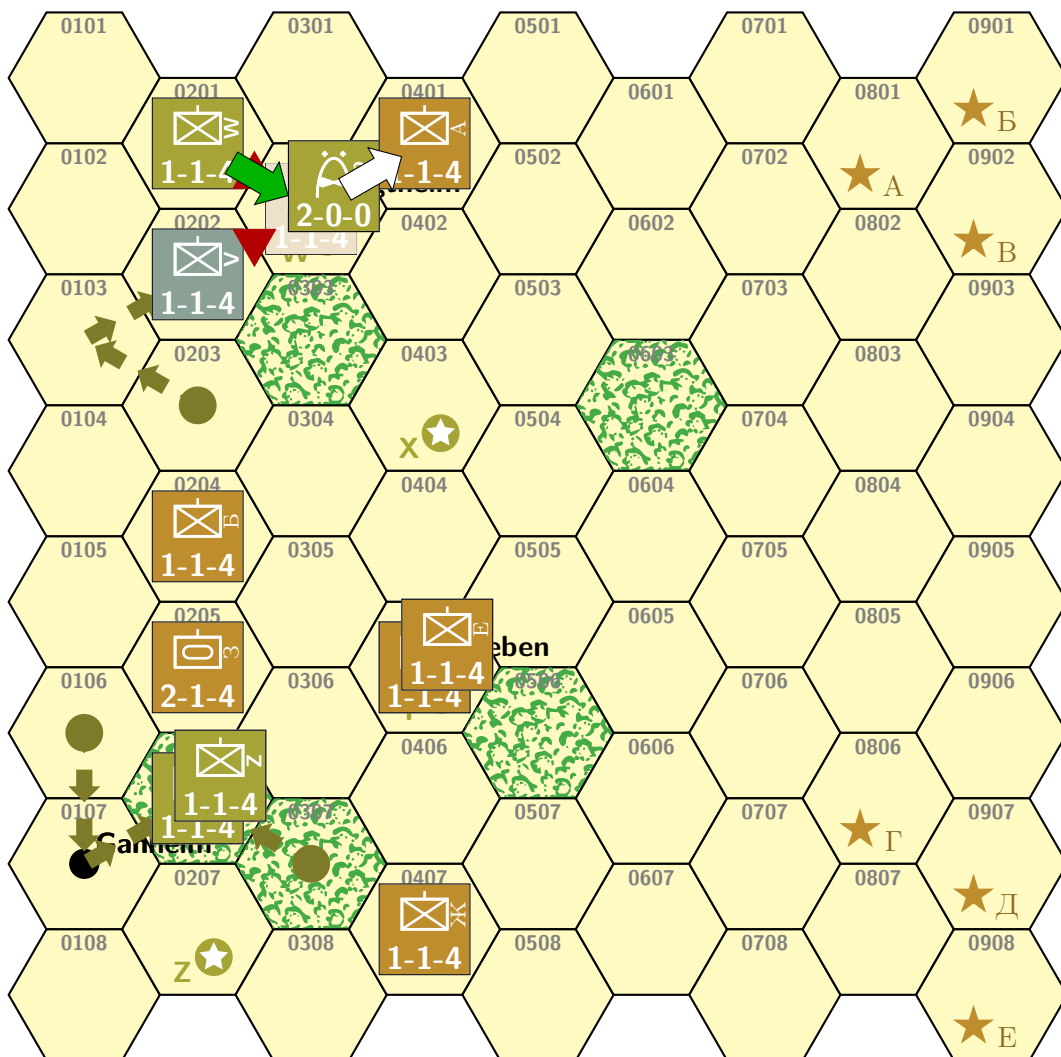
Strike Force One

Ударная Группа Один


Unified Version

Replay of *Expert* game

Turn 5 – US




Event

In effect	Alternative	Comments
		Sorely needed air support on A

Moves

Unit	From	To	Comments
V	0203	0202	
X	0106	0206	Disengage and reengage
Z	0307	0206	

Combats

Attackers	Defenders	Result	Retreats	Advance	Eliminate	Comments
V, W, 	A	DR	A 0401	W 0302		Recapture Bergtheim

Commentary

At last, the Air Force arrives.

The US faction moves his West German infantry unit, **V**, into position to join **W** in an attack to retake the lone defender at Bergtheim. In the south, units **X** and **Z** both move into the **Forest** hex at 0206.

Although units **X** and **Z** can be surrounded and, therefore, more easily eliminated next turn, that doesn't matter to the US faction. Their presence in the **Forest** hex makes it impossible for the Soviet units to enter Ganheim and secure it (there are no two hex advances through **Forest**) on the next, and final, turn of the game. This absolutely works for the US faction for victory purposes.

Units **V** and **W**, plus the US **Air support**, attack **A** at Bergtheim, obtaining a DR result. The Soviet faction retreats **A** to 0401 and the US advances in with unit **W**.

Situation Analysis

The Soviet blitzkrieg in the center was clever – perhaps too clever. Although it succeeded in eliminating a US unit and putting the pressure on Ganheim, it cost the Soviets a unit (in an unfortunate EX outcome). Worse, the US faction solved the Ganheim *Defence Problem* by placing the two infantry units nearby in the **Forest** hex. Even though they are extremely vulnerable to a Soviet attack against them, it does not matter. This is, after all, a game, and the US faction is using the clock and map edges to his best advantage in order to fulfill the **Victory conditions**. The clever Soviet attack in the centre was ultimately for nought.

Now let us turn once again to Carl von Clausewitz regarding an 'active' defence:

If we are really waging war, we must return the enemy's blows. Thus, a defensive campaign can be fought with offensive battles. The defensive form of war is not a simple shield, but a shield made up of well-directed [counter-] blows.

And so the US faction's counterattack works on multiple levels:

First, it keeps the Soviet faction off balance; it shows that the US faction is not just going to sit there and take it.

Second, it demoralizes the Soviet faction a bit, cursing the US faction's good luck. If that **Air strike** had only been **Artillery support**, then the battle would have been resolved on at lower odds making a "No Effect" outcome more likely. The Soviet faction would then still control that town hex.

Third, and most importantly, it presents the Soviet faction with the dilemma of needing to reacquire Bergtheim to have any chance of winning the game (by occupying two town hexes when it is over). Granted, there are still plenty of Soviet units around, but now they have to perform in order for the Soviet faction to win, and you can't always count on your luck to save you.

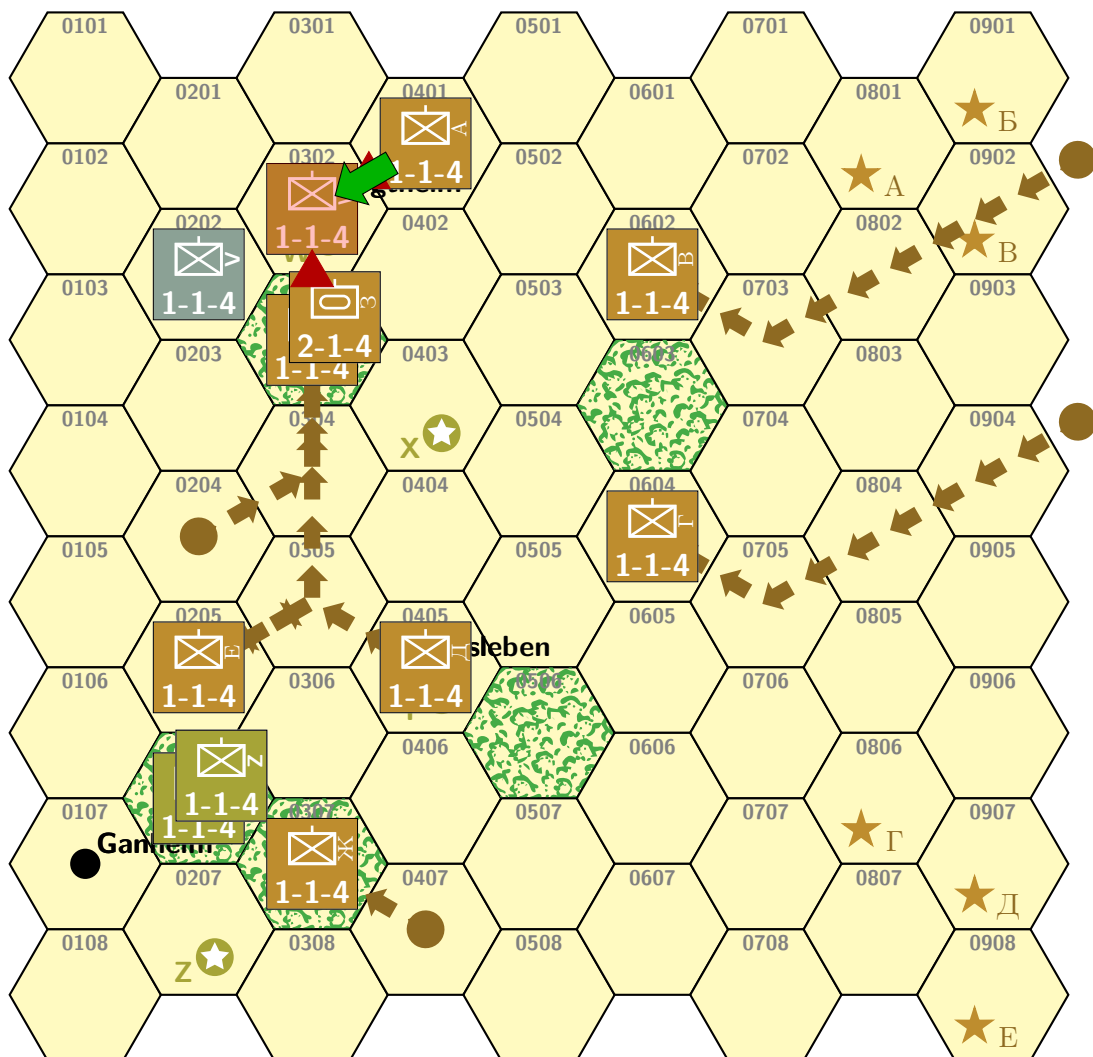
Strike Force One

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Unified Version

Replay of *Expert* game

Turn 6 – Soviet



Event

In effect	Alternative	Comments
		Alas, reinforcements can help

Moves

Unit	From	To	Comments
B	0204	0303	
B	Off	0602	Replacement
Г	Off	0604	Replacement
E	0405	0205	
Ж	0407	0307	
З	0205	0303	Disengage and reengage

Combats

Attackers	Defenders	Result	Retreats	Advance	Eliminate	Comments
A,B, 3	W	DE		A 0302		Recapture Bergtheim

Commentary

The Soviet faction brings units **B** and **Γ** back into play as replacements, but since they arrive from the east map edge, they cannot reach a position to affect the outcome of the game since this is the final Game Turn.

The Soviet Player would have much preferred to receive some **Air** or **Artillery support** to help blast the way back into Bergtheim.

Except for units **A** (which is already in position for battle) and **Δ** (who will remain to garrison Esselben as required for victory), the entire Soviet army is on the move. Units **B** and **Γ** (the **Second echelon** replacements) enter from the east map edge, while units **E** and **Χ** close the ring around the two US units in the south – preventing them from possibly influencing events to the north.

The critical maneuver is positioning units **B** and **З** into the **Forest** hex at 0303 for an attack into Bergtheim.

In the one-and-only battle, the Soviet faction commits infantry units **A** and **B**, along with tank unit **З** (4 Strength total) against US unit **W**. With a lucky roll, the outcome is DE, unit **W** is eliminated.

With glee, the Soviet faction triumphantly advances unit **A** into Bergtheim, having performed the absolute best to secure victory for the glorious Peoples Republic.

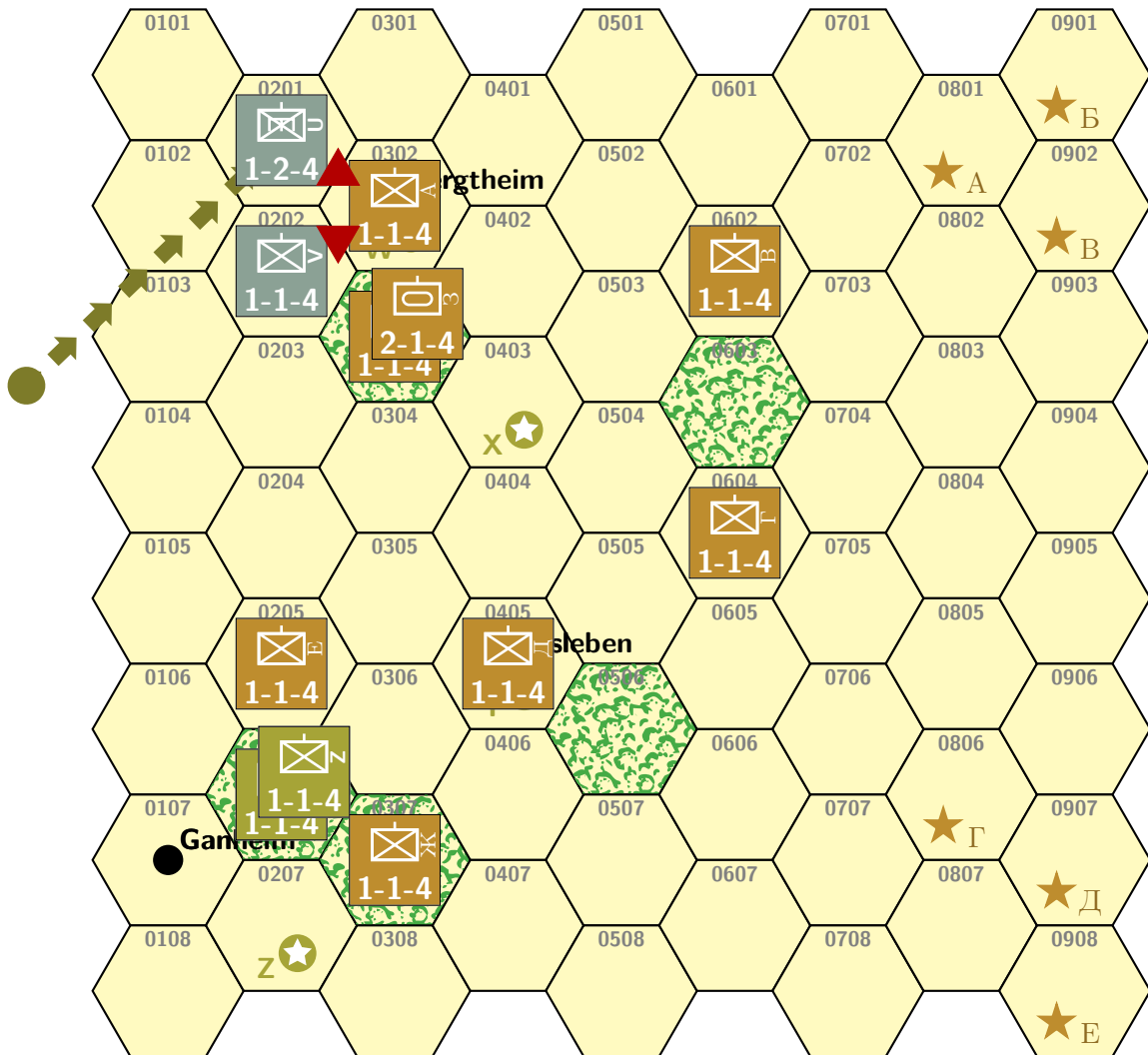
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Replay of *Expert* game

Turn 6 – US



Event

In effect	Alternative	Comments
		

Moves

Unit	From	To	Comments
U	Off	0201	Reinforcement

Combats

Attackers	Defenders	Result	Retreats	Advance	Eliminate	Comments
U,V	A	NE				

Commentary

The US Player considers the odds of receiving some help the upcoming 'Final Push' on Bergtheim. Out of twelve possible **Random events**:

- Five are +0 Strength events, providing no immediate help (2 **According to plan**, 2 West German **V** unit events – but that unit is already in play, and 1 **Command problem** for the Soviets, which is too late to have any effect)
- Four will add + 1 Strength on the map (2 **Rally a broken unit** events, 1 **Artillery support**, and 1 West German **U** unit)
- And three will generate +2 Strength on the map (2 **Air support** events, and 1 US Armor **T** unit)

But, as the Laws of Probability state: “While a range of outcomes is known, the order in which they occur is subject to chance.” Fatefully, the US faction rolls for a **Random event** and receives the West German Reinforcement unit **U**. This time the West German Chancellor has sent some help.

The US faction moves the West German infantry unit, **U**, into position to join its countrymen in **V** in an attack to once again retake the hotly contested town hex at Bergtheim.

The whole game comes down to this one battle. West German units **U** and **V** (2 Strength total – unit **U** is only worth 2 strength when defending not attacking) attack Soviet unit **A** at Bergtheim at +1. The US faction studies the **Combat Results Table** and sees that there are three chances for success (a DR outcome) and three chances for failure (the NE and AR outcomes). Sighing, the US picks up the die, and rolls a 4, obtaining an outcome of NE. Bergtheim is not recaptured.

The game is over; and the Soviet faction has held on and won. That was close!

Situation Analysis

With both sides putting in skillful performances, and each making about the same number of consequential mistakes, it is no wonder that the entire game came down to one 50/50 die roll.

The Soviet recapture of Bergtheim was well planned, but better served by sheer luck as the US unit there was completely eliminated in that battle. Because unit **W** did not retreat and survive to fight another turn, it reduced the amount of strength that the US could bring to bear when counterattacking at Bergtheim on the final US turn.

Although the US faction enjoyed some decent die rolls, right up to receiving a little extra help in the final battle, it ultimately failed at the last moment when it counted most. *Such are the Fortunes of War.*

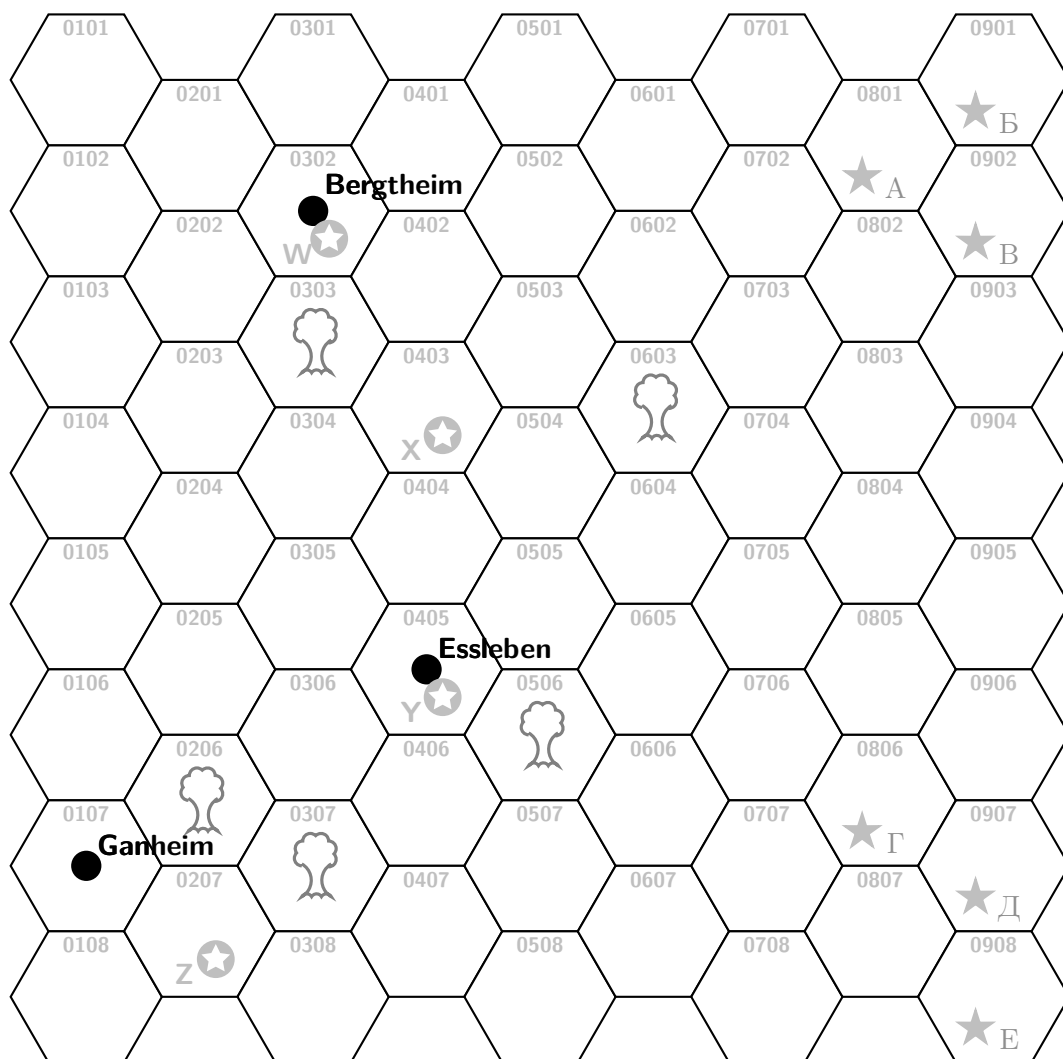
Fortunately, there is still time to set up another game of *Strike Force One* and play it again. Perhaps we should try one of the scenarios this time?

The *Meeting engagement* scenario is very fast playing, while the *NATO counterattack* scenario puts the combat boot on the other foot and lets the Soviet side try out a defensive mission for a change.

Strike Force One

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Unified Version

Replay of _____ game
Turn _____



Event

In effect	Alternative	Comments

Moves

Unit	From	To	Comments

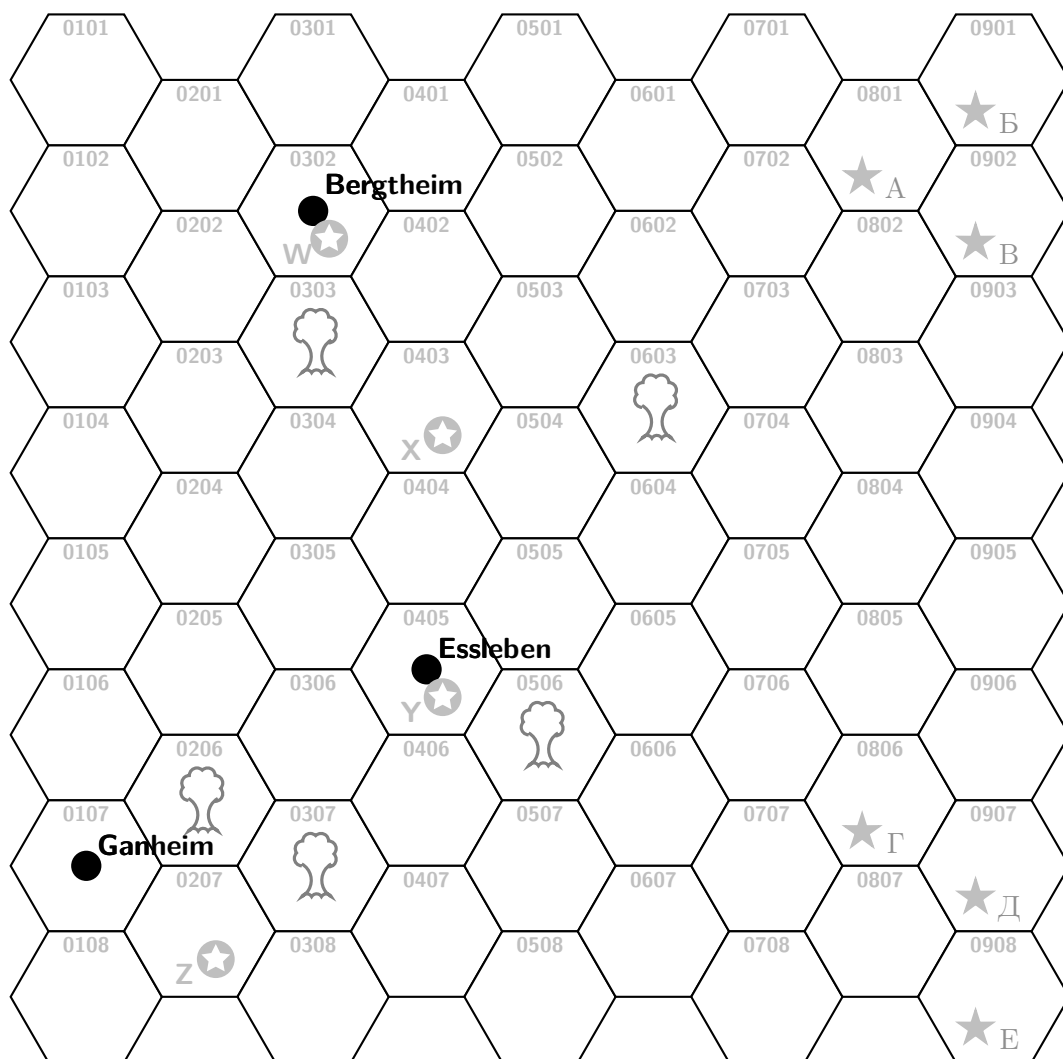
Combats

Attackers	Defenders	Result	Retreats	Advance	Eliminate	Comments

Strike Force One

Ударная Группа Один
Unified Version

Replay of _____ game
Turn _____



Event

In effect	Alternative	Comments

Moves

Unit	From	To	Comments

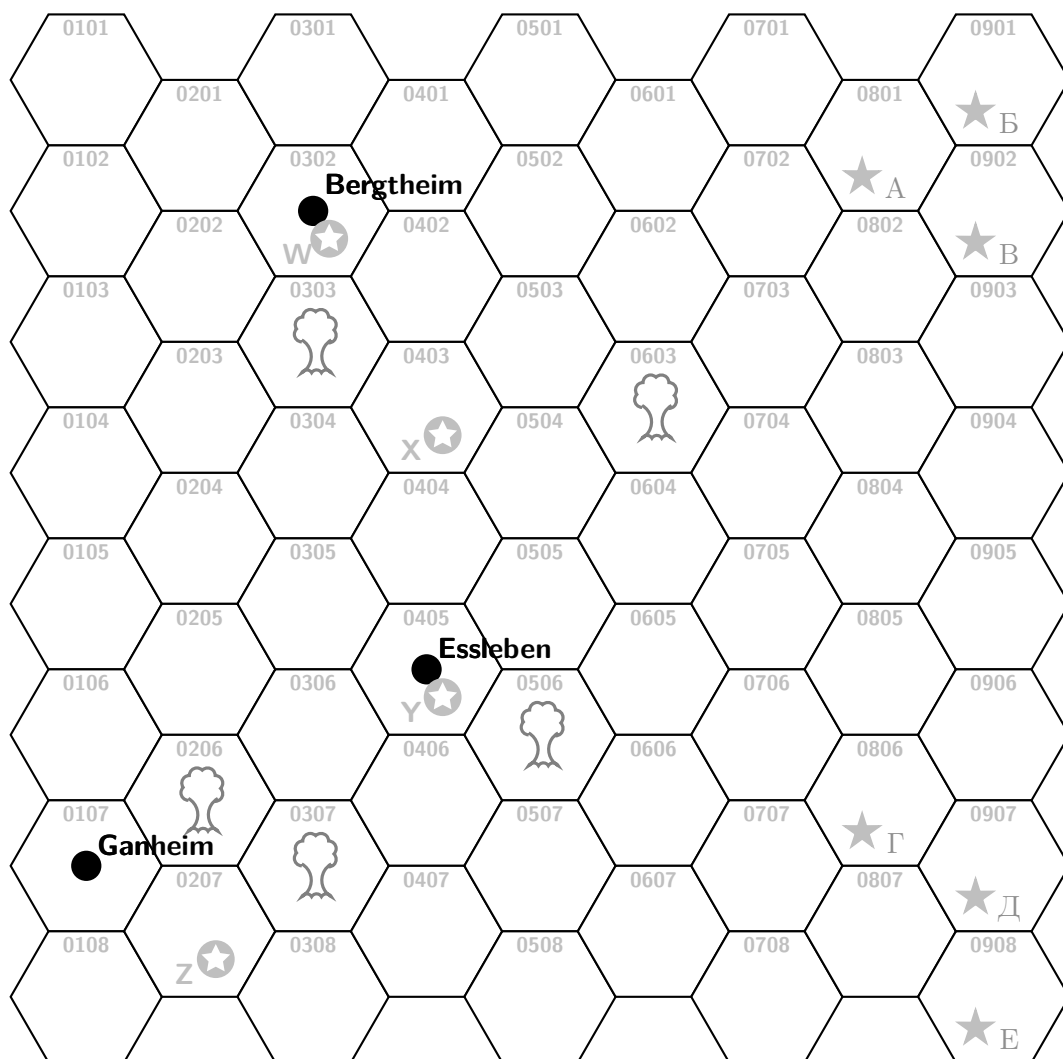
Combats

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Event

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Moves

Unit	From	To	Comments

Combats

Attackers	Defenders	Result	Retreats	Advance	Eliminate	Comments