

# ODD MAN IN

## Three-Player UP FRONT

By Jay Kaufman

*UP FRONT* seems to have everything going for it as a wargame. Excitement, ease of play, one of the shortest playing times around, strategy and luck. It even has its own peculiar claim to a high level of realism with its unpredictability and fog of war. However, there is one intractable problem: unlike many other wargames, *UP FRONT* is not versatile in the numbers who can enjoy a single game. While it is relatively easy to incorporate four players (of ! any other even number) in this game designed for two, an odd number presents a near insurmountable problem. What follows is our variant for overcoming this hurdle and allowing the experienced *UF* fan to take a role when you've that third fellow show up for the weekly session.

### BLIND UP FRONT

How much "fog of war" can you stand? Blind play of *UP FRONT* may be the ultimate. Blind *UF* is designed for two players and a neutral referee. The referee needs to be fully conversant with the rules and must be able to make quick, subjective decisions based upon common sense. There is a burden on the referee to keep the game fair and "realistic".

### PREPARE FOR PLAY:

Place the game box (or any other convenient divider) between the two players. The referee sits so that he can see both sides. The referee secretly determines nationalities, attacker/defender and the scenario to be played in any agreeable manner. He need inform the players only of the first two. At this point, each player can draw his forces as specified in the scenario OOB; but it's much more fun to allow the players to "buy" their forces within the point limits specified by the scenario being played. If this latter option is decided upon, each player must first secretly inform the referee if he will buy armor and whether his troops will be that nationality's elite, regular or second-rate troop type.

Before the players purchase their forces (again, only if using this *DYO* option), the referee secretly draws a RNC for each. (In fact, from this point, let us establish that *all* cards drawn by the referee are kept secret; results are shown to the players only if specified). Each RNC drawn indicates the level of intelligence available to the player:

### Intelligence Table

RNC Draw	Intelligence Gained
0	Presence/absence of armor. Enemy troop quality. Enemy strength (in terms of points). Complete victory conditions.
1-2	Presence/absence of armor. Enemy troop quality. Complete victory conditions.
3-4	Presence/absence of armor. Complete victory conditions only if attacking.
5	Presence/absence of armor.
Black 6	Faulty Intelligence: Misinform the player about the quality of enemy troops and victory conditions (read the VC of a different scenario). Inform him of other conditions without error.
Red 6	Faulty Intelligence: Misinform the player about enemy strength and presence/absence of armor. Inform him of other conditions without error.

In all cases, the players must be informed accurately about terrain cards to be removed from play, Action cards to be treated as Cover, and any special rules in play (such as Night). The players can then, at last, purchase their forces for the battle.

While the players are busily sifting through their Personality cards and plotting one another's destruc-

tion, the referee should take the opportunity to place one of each of the following counters in front of each player: Entrenched, Infiltrator, Flank Fire, Encircled. Next he places a number (whatever seems reasonable to him) of each of the following counters: Crew, Transfer, Guard, Banzai (if Japanese), Starshell (if night scenario). In all cases, this is kept hidden from the opposing player. The remaining information counters are set aside for the referee's use. Each player is given all his Group counters and a plentiful supply of Range chits.

### PLAY:

Play proceeds per the regular rules, with the following changes only (numbers preceding each refer to the rules section modified):

(3.6) INITIAL TERRAIN: Terrain played upon an opponent is placed on the enemy group that the player identifies by letter designation, without his actually seeing it. If that group cannot legally accept the terrain (most notably, because it doesn't exist), the card is discarded by the referee. He does so without revealing to either player that such was attempted or successful. (This is typical subterfuge in this variant; the referee should cultivate an aura of confusion, danger, and chaos.)

(4.0) SEQUENCE OF PLAY: Each player takes his turn normally, once the referee has informed him that his opponent has completed his own actions. The referee maintains the Action deck and discard pile—receives discards and deals new Action cards, places and removes information counters, flips and removes Pinned, Panicked and Killed Personality cards, draws all RNCs and RPCs, and reveals the effects of all actions to the players only to the extent that they could realistically expect to see and hear these effects. Each player's hand of Action cards is placed face-up in front of him for ready view by the referee, but out of sight of his opponent.

(5.0) MOVEMENT AND RANGE DETERMINATION: When a player moves a group, he places the Movement card and changes the range chit as necessary. Note that as the RR between enemy groups closes, they will be able to see and hear each other more clearly. The referee informs each player of what he may see as subtly or clearly as possible without revealing information to the other. This will demand some sense of fairness and judgement on the part of the referee, as he strives to keep the players as well-informed as they have a right to expect in the changing situation. The chart below is a loose guide of what to tell each player, based upon the RR between the iup ucillj enemy group being observed and the nearest friendly group:

### Sighting Chart

RR	What is Seen
0	Infantry invisible if in any terrain; terrain card visible. Guns indistinguishable from infantry (simply inform of number of cards) if in Open. Results of own fire invisible (EXC: KIA of vehicles). Vehicles, but not type, present (EXC: in Woods). Smoke visible.
1-2	Infantry invisible if in -2/ -3 terrain; otherwise presence but not numbers known. General type of vehicle identifiable (i.e., AFV, HT, AC, etc.). Multiple Pin/Panic/KIA results visible (number given only).
3	Rough numbers of enemy personality cards regardless of terrain ( + / -50%). Entrenchments, Flank, Encircling, Transferring troops visible. Specific vehicle identifiable. AFVs identified as CE/BU. Guns identifiable.

- 4 More accurate numbers of enemy personality cards ( + /-20%). Fire on enemy position visible and results given. SL and ASL identifiable as to Group occupied. Some individual weapons identified (FT, ATR, DC, ATMM, etc.—referee's choice).
- 5 All information revealed.

Modify the RR for such observation depending on the following: + 1 per Movement card on observed group or if fired upon; -1 per Movement card on observing group, smoke present in either group, or if jungle scenario; -2 if night scenario or observing group is BU vehicle. All such modifiers are cumulative.

Additional factors might be taken into account upon the referee's discretion. Elite troops, for instance, might get a +1 bonus and second-rate ones a -1 penalty. But the above is a loose guide for referees; anything more detailed would be inconsistent with the referee's role.

Pinned personalities never provide information. If, for example, Kvasnikov and Sokoloff are sent ahead as "scouts", subsequently both get pinned after calling back that a StuG has been spotted, are then overrun, the Russian player would know only that the little-lamented pair were removed from play. Further information (type of attack, enemy presence, etc.) would only be supplied if friendly, unpinned Russians were near enough to observe the activity.

Some weapons are distinguishable by their sound. Inform a player if fire upon his troops is by mortar, ATG, artillery, sniper, or lone MG.

The key phrases regarding Sighting for the referee are *common sense* and *simplicity*. The above "rules" are only a guide. Use the chart as an aid only. Keep the information as limited as is fair. The object of this exercise is to make the game enjoyable, and challenging, for all involved. As with a role-playing GM, the referee is the heart of the system, and much depends on his ability to impart information. Practice will make perfect; I'd urge all to experiment with 3-player *UP FRONT*.

(6.0) FIRE ATTACKS: If a player fires at a group which does not (or no longer) exists, the referee takes the Fire card normally and makes a show of resolving that fire (secretly returning the cards to the bottom of the Action deck afterward, *not* the discard pile). Such fire is considered an action taken, and reveals any appropriate information to the enemy about location, size and armament.

If a player can't legally play a Fire card due to insufficient FP, the player may keep the card—but this also does count as an action taken by that group. If a player plays a combination of Fire cards which demands more than available FP, the referee resolve's the attack using the greatest legal combination; the player may retain unused Fire cards not involved.

In all cases, when resolving fire the referee should try to limit the information he conveys to both players with regard to cards drawn, effects on the enemy, comments, etc. Again, use the guidelines on Sighting as a reference for your decisions.

(7.32) REJECTING TERRAIN: If a terrain card is rejected by an enemy group, the discarding player learns this only if he can see the group at its original RR.

(8.2) GULLIES: A group in a Gully is completely invisible except to an enemy group at RR5 or on a Hill.

(9.0) CONCEALMENT: Play of Concealment cards is never revealed to the firing player.

(10.0) RALLY: This action is completed secretly unless an unpinned enemy group is at RR5.

(13.3) WIRE: If discarded on a non-existent enemy group, the Wire is discarded without revealing this fact to either player.

(14.0) SNIPERS: The fact of a Sniper attack is announced to the victim only if the attacked group is at RR4 to any enemy group. Results of a Sniper attack are only visible to the attacker at RR5. If a Sniper Check is successful, the referee places the "Sniper Lost" counter in front of the successfully checking player; subsequent enemy Sniper cards are discarded, causing only a fake draw of RNC to disguise the Sniper's loss.

(16.0) VICTORY DETERMINATION: Unless indicated on the pre-game Intelligence Chart, players are not informed of Victory Conditions until the conclusion of play. The referee must announce the breaking of either squad promptly upon its occurrence. At that point, the divider may be removed.

(17.1; 17.6) FLANKING FIRE & ENCIRCLEMENT: The player attempting such places the appropriate counter given him before play on his group performing the action and secretly indicates to the referee the enemy group that he's moving to outflank or encircle. The opponent is informed of this action only if any of his groups are close enough to observe (usually at RR2) or upon first fire by the Flanking/Encircling group upon the affected group (even if doubled FP is not necessary to play the Fire card).

(17.7; 17.8) TRANSFERS: The player places his Movement card normally, and marks the affected personality/group with the Transfer counter given him before play. Complete the transfer normally (unless fired upon) without informing the enemy unless at RR2 (where the referee need only inform the other player of the action).

(19.0) WEAPON MALFUNCTION: In all instances unless at RR5, the opposing player is not informed of such, nor of the result of Repair attempts.

(17.7; 17.8) TRANSFERS: The player places his Movement card normally, and marks those affected personalities with the Infiltration counter given him before play. The referee resolves all attendant Morale Checks and Infiltration Checks, and informs the player of results. Do not inform the enemy when a player attempts infiltration. This fact is revealed only when the infiltrators fire or engage in CC.

(27.0) TARGET ACQUISITION: Flip the group counter of the *firing* group.

(28.0) AFV: Damage to AFVs short of destruction is not revealed to the firing player. Exceptions may be made at RR5, but this is left to the discretion of the referee.

(36.0) The player attempting such may mark his group only if successful, with the referee resolving the action. Except at RR5, this action and its result is not revealed to the enemy.

(40.) ARTILLERY (Optional): As an added bonus, use of a referee makes it possible to more realistically simulate the actions and effect of artillery. Play of Radio cards is always invisible. The artillery mission will arrive a random number (RNC) of turns later; it is the referee's responsibility to keep track. All RNC draws for malfunction and availability are made by the referee. No Concealment cards may be played to modify this. If the mission is accepted, the firing player indicates the enemy group and range chit targeted.

The referee resolves the fire attack upon arrival, drawing an additional RNC for accuracy. On a draw

of "0-3" the mission is on target; on a "4" it lands one range long/short; on a "5", two ranges; on a "6", three. The mission is long on a black RNC and short on a red RNC. Fire Strength is "5" versus any group it falls directly upon, and "2" on any adjacent (as determined per 38.51). Results are revealed only to the affected player, unless at RR5.

*Example:* With German groups A and B at RR2 to Russian group A and at RR5 to Russian group B, the desperate German player calls an artillery strike down on Russian Group B. The referee draws a black RNC, and then determines that it will impact three turns later. Upon that German player turn, the referee announces the arrival to both players and draws a secret RNC—in this case a red "4", indicating the artillery falls one range short. If the positions of the groups are unchanged, German Group B is attacked with F5, and German Group A and Soviet Group B suffer F2 attacks.

(45.4) BANZAI: Banzai groups are immediately recognizable as such regardless of range, as is their intended target group (announce both group IDs and the range).

(48.) RANDOM REINFORCEMENTS: The referee must inform a player if he becomes eligible for Random Reinforcements. The opponent is not informed. This rule is highly recommended for "Blind" *UP FRONT*.

In conclusion, I think you'll find that three-player, 'Blind' *UP FRONT* captures the confusion of low-level tactics very well. Not knowing what's out there, the players' fears often exaggerate the actual danger, or make the players careless and reckless. There seem to be two states for them: they are desperately short of information, or else everything has suddenly become much too obvious. When next you've three experienced players, try this version. With some effort and good humor all around, it is an entertaining way to pass an evening.

