

Strategic overview

Turn 5: Strategic Considerations

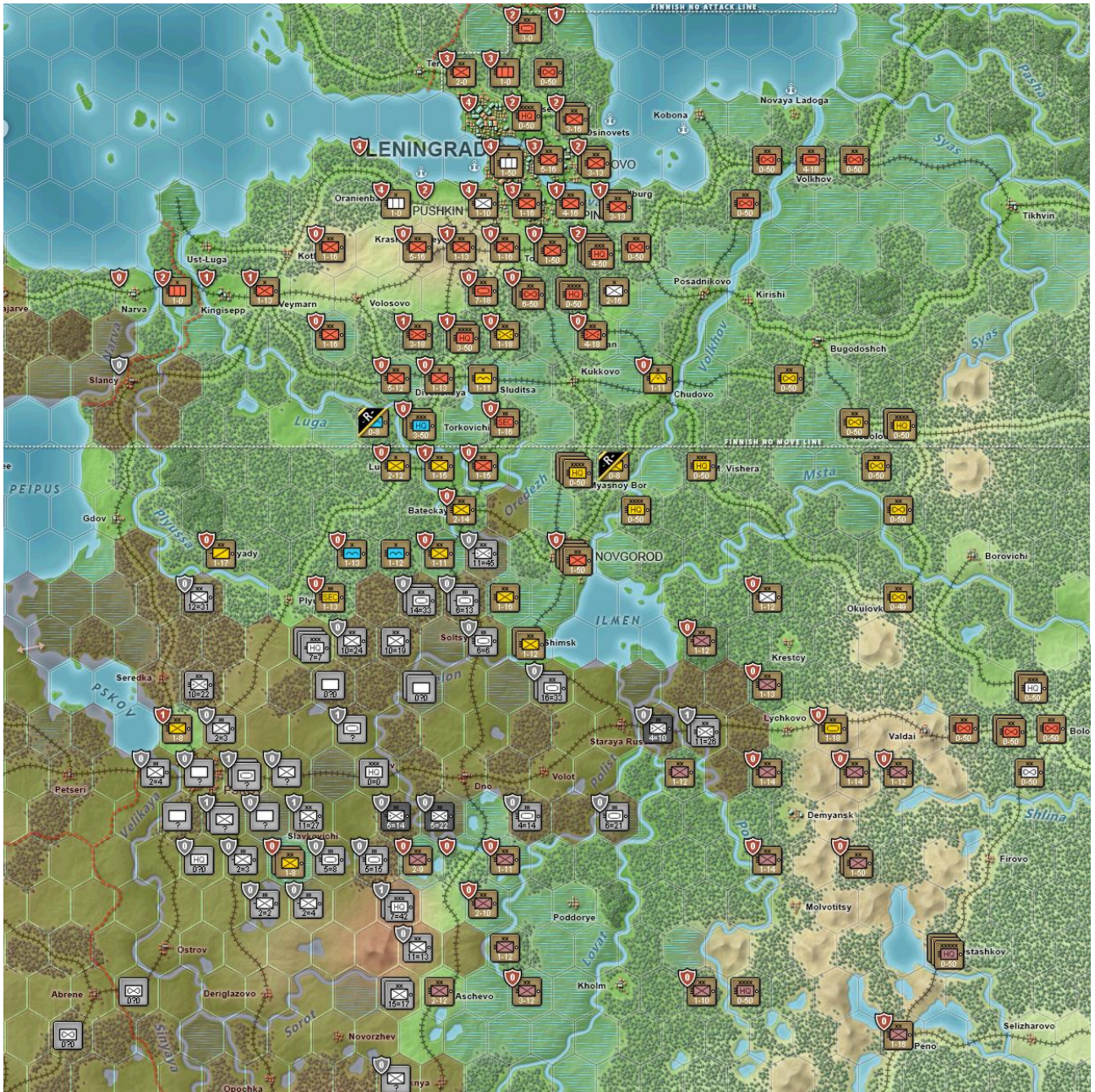
The Germans have continued to widen their front in both the north and the center, but have refrained from any deep penetration attacks. In the south, the Germans have been almost inactive during the last turn. The fact that I have the Soviets increasingly stop their "Run away" policy, has caused casualties to begin climbing, but not yet to an unsustainable level for either side.

As for last turns quiz, the Germans have taken Orsha and Bogushevsk, which means that for the second turn running I had predicted the fall of Liozno which just has not occurred.

Productionwise I have spent another 70.000 of my stored Armament Points, but as I still have more than 900.000 available, this should bring me through to winter without any game losing deficits. Also worthy of note is the fact that I have automatically disbanded a lot of Corps HQ's this turn, which should ease up on the Red Army Command structure (not to mention leaving a lot of support squads in the National Reserve).

In the air, I have only had two Air Regiments replace their aircraft types over the last turn (one MiG-3 and one IL-2). Meanwhile, the fighters of the Orel MD have pretty much all taken a heavy beating with morale a lot less than the 45 points they get in the National Reserve. As I have plenty of fresh Air Regiments around Moscow, those withdrawals will be easy to replace.

The North



Situational assessment

North of Leningrad, the Finns have continued their attacks, but without encircling any units other than those I have left behind to die on the last turn. This means that another five divisions can now head south to participate in the defense of Leningrad. The Finns have not crossed the Janisjarvi river line north of Lake Ladoga.

South of Leningrad, the Germans have continued to attack, encircling three Rifle Divisions at Pskov and outmaneuvering one more. In the Baltics, Talinn has fallen, and the Germans are slowly approaching

Leningrad from the west. However, south of the Luga, the Germans have not advanced their units in the direction of Leningrad or east of Lake Ilmen.

Once again, the Germans have not used any interceptors against my recon missions in the area, which is yet another suggestion that the main German effort is aimed at Moscow. The Germans still have a Panzer Group in the north (I can spot four Motorized Divisions and five Panzer Divisions), so there is certainly a threat against the city. I also spot that the German have been resupplying several Panzers in the rear with air supplies, so I guess that some sort of aggressive action will be undertaken on the coming turn.

The German rail line is now near Rezekne, so the German supply situation is looking increasingly good.

Planning

North of Leningrad, I will pull all units back towards Leningrad at the highest possible speed. Those units will be bound for the fighting south of the city.

For that defense, I will strengthen the line at the Luga River, while also continuing to fortify the lines closer to the city itself. The plan is to continue to slow down the Germans as best I can, so that the close up defense at Leningrad can be as strong as possible. I am getting increasingly concerned about the possibility of an attack heading northeast from Novgorod cutting the rail line to Leningrad, so I will also be railing in another set of divisions to strengthen the Northwestern Front in the area.

Meanwhile the Reserve Front will be establishing a defense line south of Lake Ilmen, including setting up a few Rifle Divisions as reserves, in order to stop the Germans from hasty attacking to easily against the weak Soviet defenses.

In the air, the lack of German fighter cover will mean that I can let my bombers of the Northern Front go crazy against the Germans. I will focus on those I have a good detection level on, and let the SB-2's attack the Infantry, while the tactical bombers will have a go at the Motorized Units and the Panzers.

Execution

I have tried to establish a defense in depth around Novgorod, aimed mainly at delaying the Soviet advance once more. I must admit to some difficulty in doing this properly, as My hibernation has meant that I have quite lost "the edge" when playing the game. I have establish two hexes with relatively high defensive CV around Novgorod and Bateckay in order to force the Germans to do some heavy attacks in order to advance properly, but I fear those units will simply be encircled instead. In order to further strengthen the defense, one more army of the Northwestern Front has had a new commander. As the turns go by, I get an ever better command structure up and running, which will have a real impact on my ability to stop the German offensive.

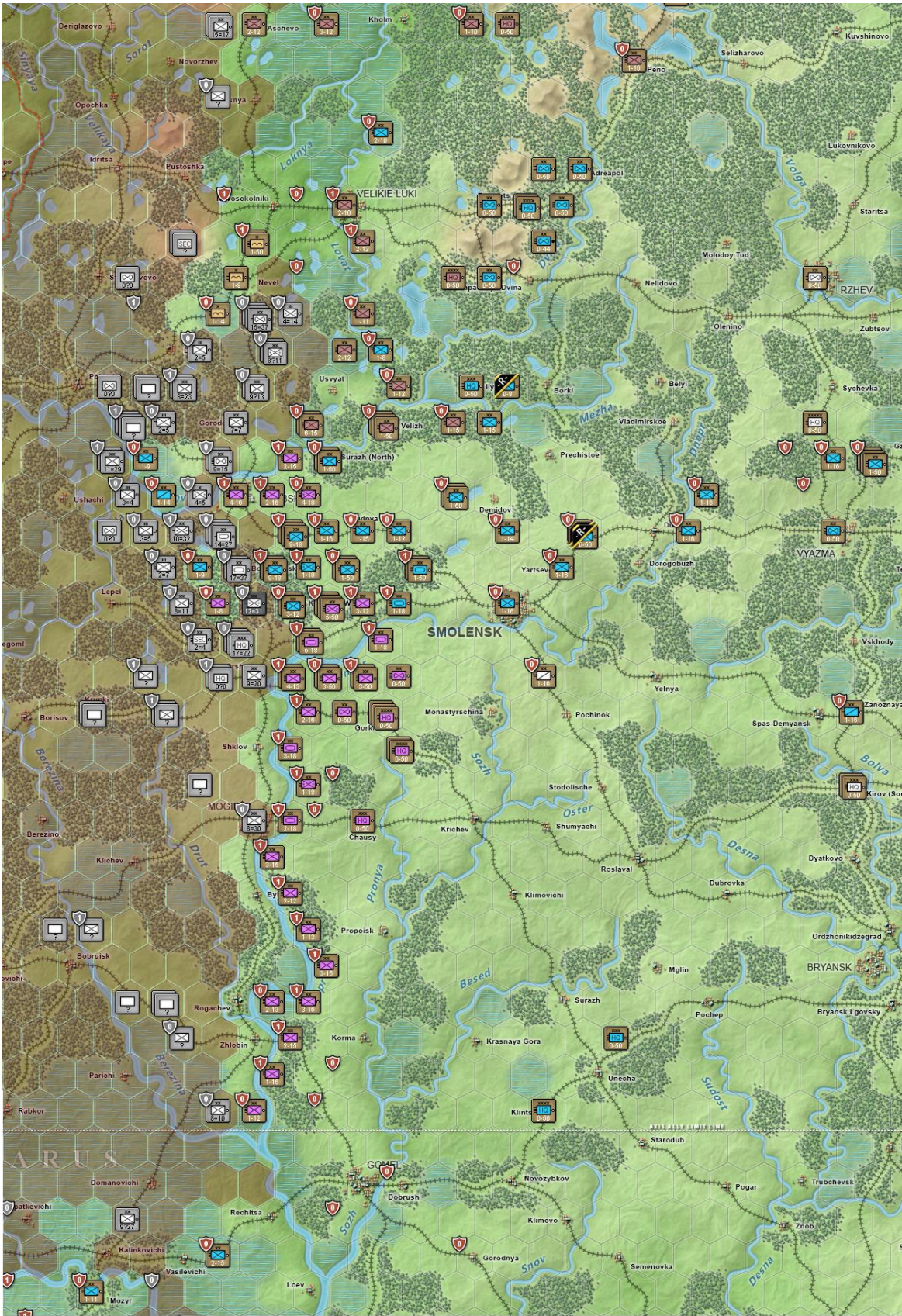
Meanwhile, the Karelian isthmus has been evacuated apart from the two encircled Soviet Rifle Divisions, and the Soviet defenses now hinge on the Finnish No attack line at Leningrad. East of Lake Ladoga, I have nowhere near enough units to protect the line at the Svir River, but as long as the Finns are still only at Janisjarvi, the threat is not imminent.

In the air, the bombing campaign against the front German units has been a mixed success, with an average of 500 landsers being fatigued in every front hex and a couple of hexes nearer to Pskov. However, the vast majority of those hexes are held by mobile formations, so the attacks will not work to reduce the amount of MP given to the Germans on the coming turn. It may however, reduce their combat effectiveness ever so slightly.

Below is an image of the situation in the north, as I give the turn to Huw.



The Center



Situational Assessment

In the center, the Germans have encircled the two Rifle Divisions out at the front of the Vitebsk Defense and reencircled the two divisions in the swamps northeast of Vitebsk. They have also conducted quite a few attacks in the direction of Velikie Luki, which is a surprise to me. This could signal that the Germans plan to have their rail line progress through this city.

Further south, the Germans have pushed up to the Dnepr in a couple of locations and taken the city of Mogilev. In the Pripyat Marshes, the Germans are also pushing the infantry forward, in the hope of catching a Soviet Rifle Division or two (however, the remaining division in the swamp can be simply railed out to safety).

In the air, the Germans have some Luftwaffe presence outside Vitebsk, and my recon missions have been intercepted along the entire front. Further west, at Drissa, the Luftwaffe now have no less than four Gruppen of stukas with several lesser units of dive bombers as well. Once again, this supports the theory that the center will be the location of the main German thrust.

On my side, the Western Front still have some fighter cover available, while the Orel MD has taken some substantial losses. I have some 17 Air Regiments standing by at Moscow, although the vast majority of those are of the I-Type configuration.

The German rail lines are now just west of Drissa, and from now on the progress will not benefit from being in the Baltic Rail zone. Meanwhile, the Vilnius rail line have continued northeast and will rendezvous with the already established rail line at Daugavpils next turn.

Planning

As it seems like the Germans wish to push for Velikie Luki, I will be defending the city with the 24th Army of the Reserve Front. I have no hope of holding for long, as all divisions of this army are relatively fresh and have CV's of less than 2. I notice, that the German unit closest to Velikie Luki is a Motorized Regiment in a swamp, and I have decided to do a full scale attack on this unit as I establish my mainline of resistance.

My main defense however, will still be conducted by the Western Front in the area between Vitebsk and Smolensk. In order to strengthen this area, I will continue to pull fresh forces up from the east, to start digging a second and third line of defense, that may soon become the front line on subsequent turns.

In the air I notice that the II/JG51 Air Gruppe is far forward and equipped with Bf 109F-2's. Because of this I will begin the hunt for the German fighters this turn. This will be done by using the bombers of the Western Front to bomb the forward German units, while drawing in the German fighters to do battle. Once the German fighters are tired out, I will then follow up with an airfield attack on the airbase with the Bf 109F-2's.

Execution

The attack on the lone Motorized Regiment northeast of Vitebsk has shown that the Soviet Rifle Divisions are in no way fit for offensive action quite yet. The lesson for now seems to be that I must simply train them for a while yet to come, and otherwise use them on the defense. Another important takeaway is the fact that the Luftwaffe are simply untouchable in a direct air to air conflict, as I have lost 23 aircraft for none during the combat.

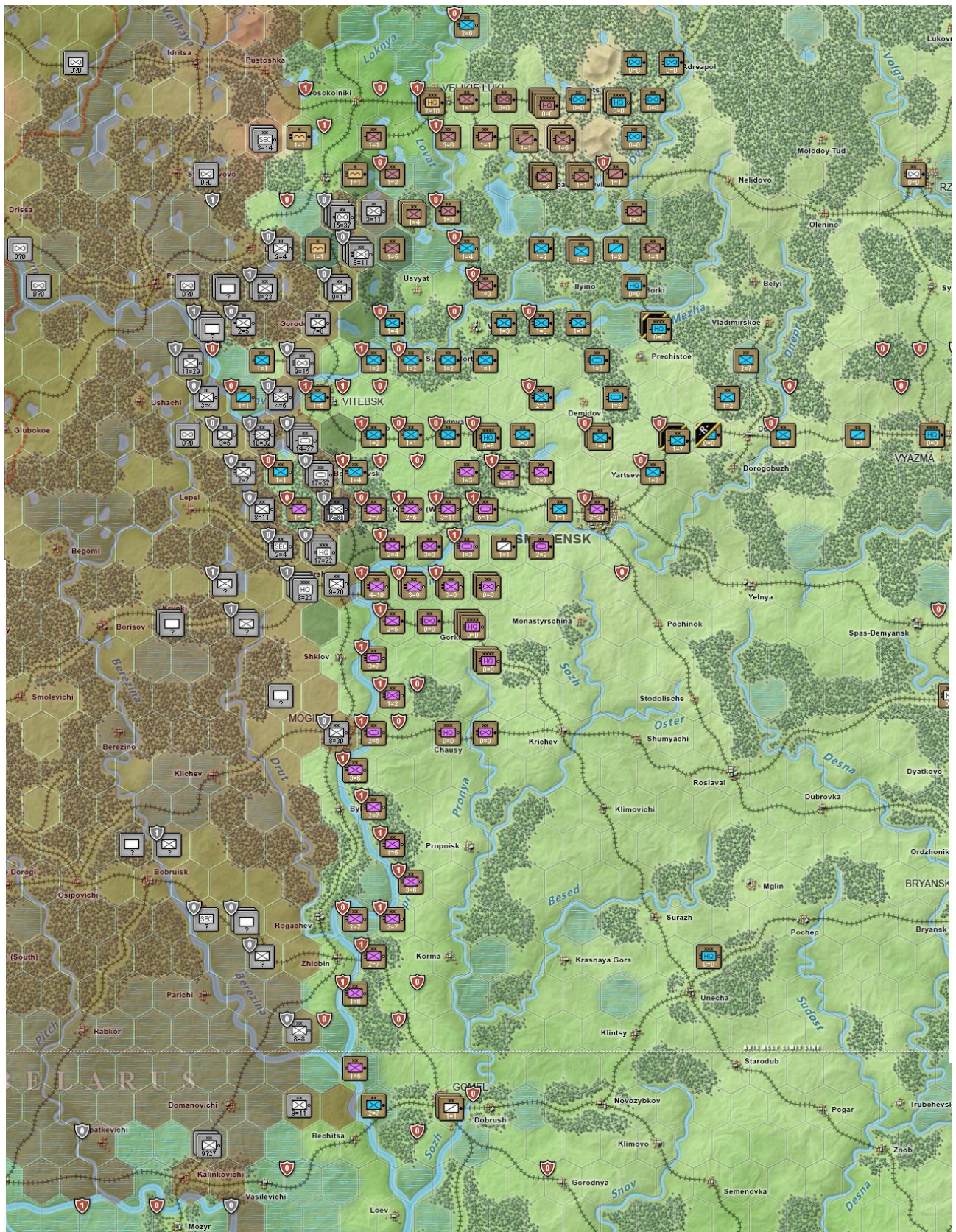
Axis Forces Defending (C): LVII Panzer Corps G.D. Mot. Rgt (209) 427th Gun Battalion (0) 816th Howitzer Battalion (1) 103rd Heavy Werfer Battalion (0) Luftflotte 2 22 Bf 109E-7		< 3 of 7 > 80,43 - Swamp - Clear Turn: 5 1941-07-17 Forces Engaged DEF: men 7642, art 115, afv 10 ATK: men 83110, art 1060, afv 92 DAM: men 73, art 6, afv 2 DAM: men 1122, art 19, afv 8 LOST: men 200, art 6, afv 0 LOST: men 1448, art 10, afv 23 DEF: flt 92, bmr 56, utl 0 ATK: flt 66, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: flt 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: flt 23, bmr 0, utl 0		Soviet Forces Attacking: 52nd Rifle Corps 91st Rifle Division (30) 119th Rifle Division (68) 166th Rifle Division (33) 392nd Crps Art Rgt (0) 24th Army -3% 107th Rifle Division (39) 133rd Rifle Division (44)
CV: 210->277.9 Fort: 0.02->0.00 Comm HQ: LVII Panzer Corps GL Otto von Knobelsdorff		Defending Forces HELD Odds 1.34 : 1 <a>Show Details <a>Exit		CV: 256->373.1 Eng Val: 4 Comm HQ: 52nd Rifle Corps GM Dmitry Andreev

I have endeavoured to create a deep defense in the center, that will be able to continuously fall back on further fortifications built as the front units are pushed back. My hope is that the Germans will have to restrict themselves to encircling a few weak Rifle Divisions every turn, and thus eventually run out of steam before reaching Moscow. My success criteria are to keep the Red Army growing in strength and numbers, while also keeping the Germans from taking any vital cities to my rear.

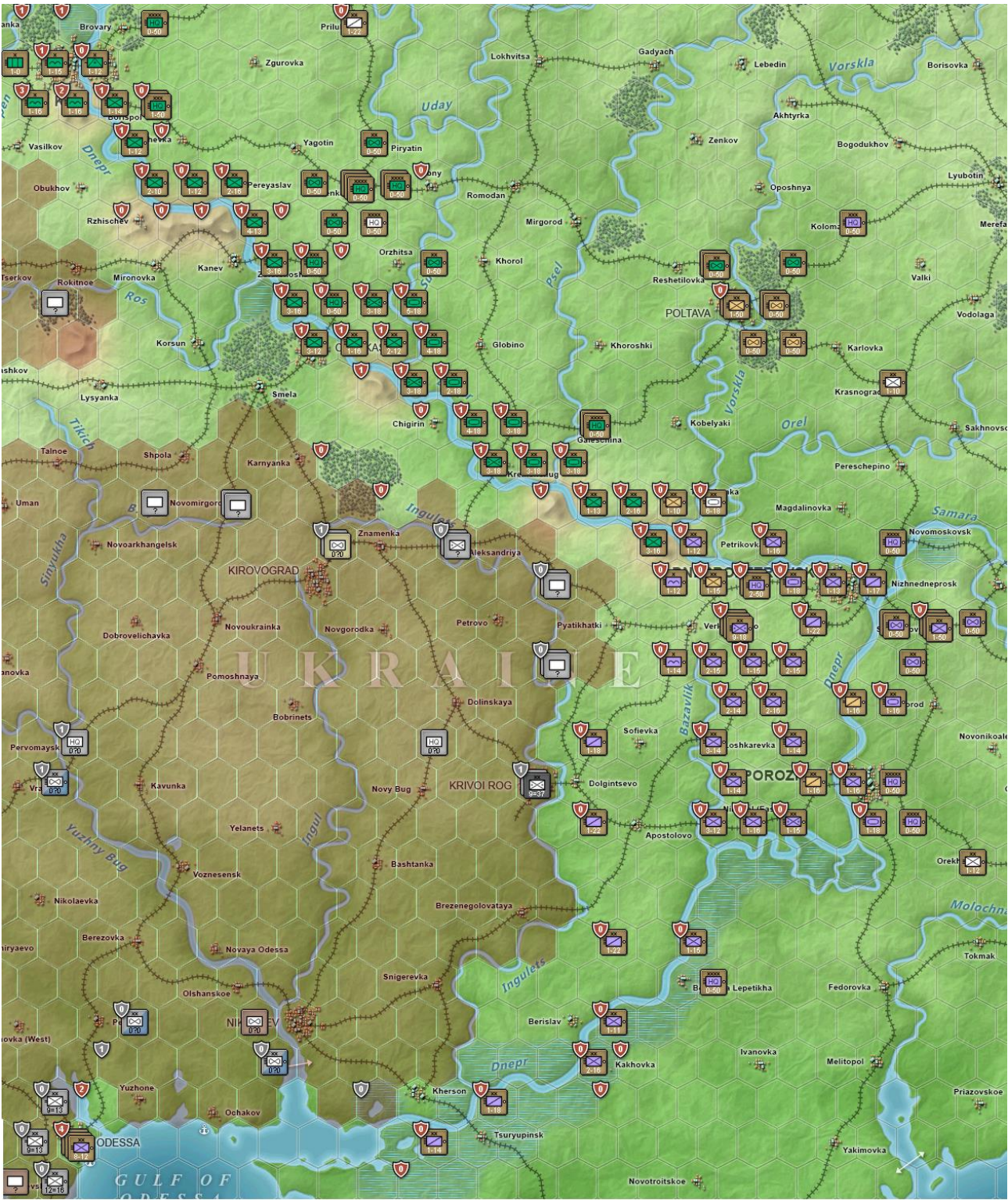
In the air, the bombing attacks on the forward Luftwaffe Air Gruppe was a mixed success to say the least. I only managed to destroy four enemy fighters, but I assume that the local air forces will carry some heavy fatigue into the next turn (I am ever the optimist). I have deployed a number of fresh Fighter Air Regiments to the Western Front and the Orel MD, as their airbases have borne the brunt of the fighting this turn. To the rear, I have deployed 10 Air Regiments with SB-2's and 24 Air Regiments with I-Types and MiG-3's around Moscow. Come next turn, I should have plenty of fresh fighters to transfer forward.

Further south, I have a few lone SB-2 Air Regiments bombing the German infantry Divisions advancing through the Pripyat Marshes in order to inflict a little fatigue.

Below is an image of the center, as I give the turn to HJ.



The South



Situational Assessment

The south is, without a doubt, the sector where least has happened during the German phase. It seems like the Germans are basically catching their breath. Thus, the Germans have made no real advances except to close a little in on the Dnepr defense line. The German mobile divisions are on a north/south line at Krivoi Rog with a second line of Panzers at the Ingul river.

One detail I do notice is the old "Odessa trap". The Germans have encircled Odessa, but left the hex to the northeast free. Thus, if the city defenses are beaten, the defeated units will not rout over the ocean, but rather to the northeast. In essence, it I guess wrong on how long the defenses can hold, the Germans might destroy three good Rifle Divisions in the city.

Planning

Much like last turn, I will simply continue to build my strength in the south, hopefully digging a little deeper into the Ukrainian topsoil, in order to make the German advance a little harder.

I will leave my defenders of Odessa for at least one round of fighting in the city. While I think there is some risk to this, I also believe that the German push at the Dnepr Estuary would gain a lot of momentum if the Germans could push forward three Infantry Divisions in one turn. I also have two entire AA Regiments in the city, and I am loth to give them up without any sort of fight. We shall see if my gamble pays off.

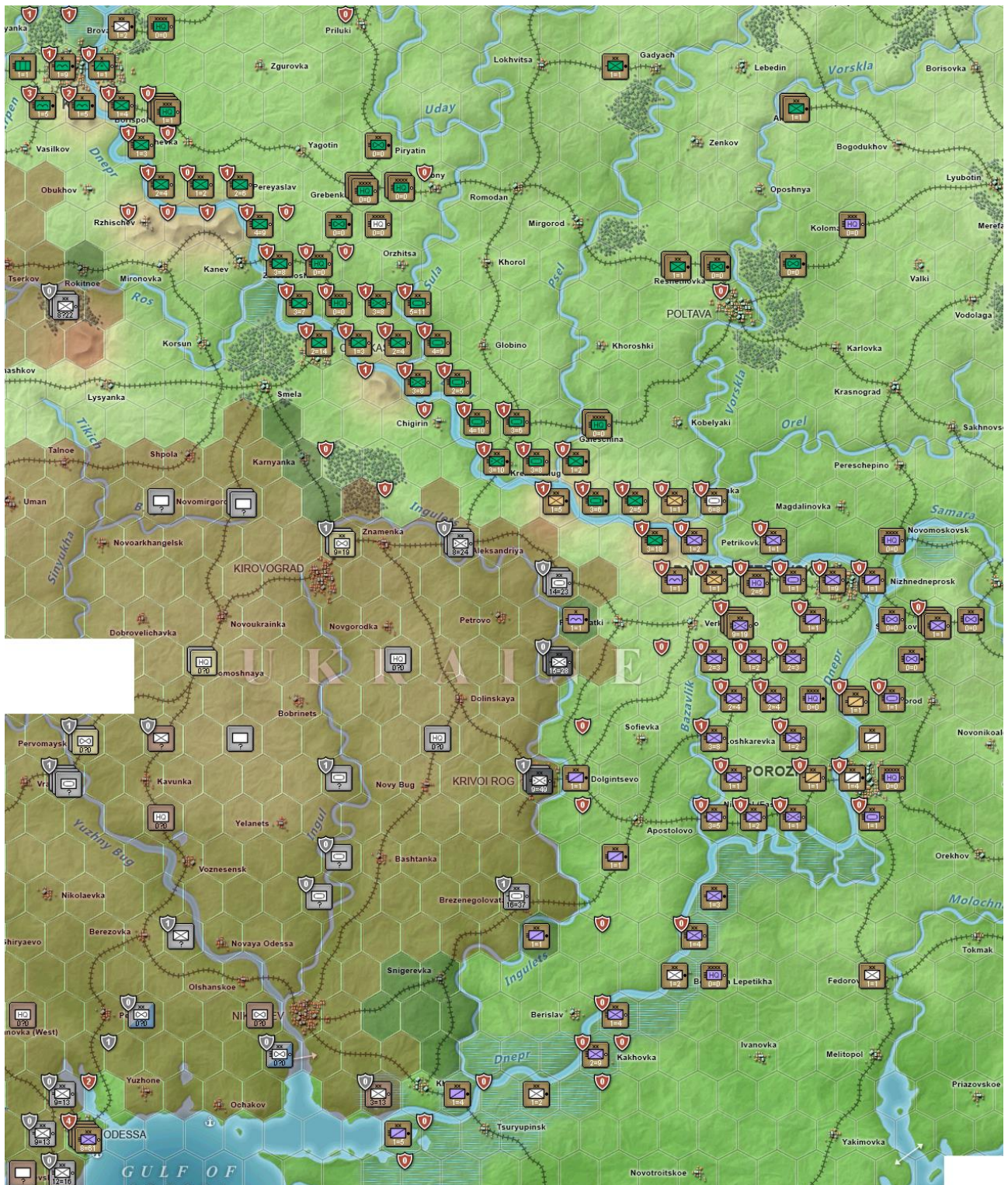
Finally, I will move a few skirmish units next to the German Panzers in order to cause a little attrition come the next Axis Logistics phase.

Execution

When moving my defenders into position, I came across a Rumanian Infantry Division at the banks of the Dnepr at its very estuary. In order to inflict some fatigue on this division and thus cause it some movement penalties, I sent a massive raid of night bombers against it, hoping to get some better results compared to my typical bombing of German units. With 2429 men disrupted in one attack, I believe I did and that this units will pay by having a little less movement on the coming turns.

Other than that, few things of note has happened in the south.

Below is an image of the situation in the south, as I give the turn to HJ.



Conclusion

This turn I have evacuated the remaining industries from Dnepropetrovsk and Zaporozhye as well as the industries in Kiev. This, I hope, should remove any immediate threat of industry loss in the south. Combined with my moving fresh forces north to the Leningrad area, this has meant that I have not had enough Rail Capacity to move all arrived divisions forward.

On the ground, the Red Army has grown by some 90.000 men since my last turn. As I currently have 13 divisions encircled, I guess my growth rate will not increase greatly over the coming turn. Another reason why I think the strength of the Red Army is on the increase, is that the majority of my Army commands have been swapped to new and better commanders. This turn four such appointments have been made. The bleeding of Soviet Tanks has been slowed, with only 377 AFV + SP/AC having been lost since my last turn. I hope I can keep up such good numbers.

In the air, it seems that my strategy of circling Air Regiments between the National Reserve, the rear assembly bases and the forward fighting stations is beginning to come together. This turn, I have inflicted fighter losses comparable to production on the Luftwaffe, while my own losses of "prime" fighters are far below production. The losses of I-Type fighters are higher, but not so high as to make them untenable. I can sustain losses at this rate until winter at least, and by then the presence of P-40's, Hurricanes and potentially LaGG-3 11 Series will make the situation improve even more.

I have also conducted my first air attack with U-2VS this turn, although hardly with noteworthy results.

Axis Forces Defending:		1 of 2 > 79,53 - Clear(Orsha) - Clear Turn:5 1941-07-17		Soviet Forces Attacking:	
		Forces Engaged			
21	-> SdKfz-10/4 SP Flak	DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0	ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0		
4	-> 20mm Anti-aircraft Gun	DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0	DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0		Orel Air Command
24	-> 88mm Anti-aircraft Gun	LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0	LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0		34 U-2VS
2	-> 37mm Anti-aircraft Gun	DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	ATK: ftr 0, bmr 34, utl 0		
6	-> SdKfz-7/1 SP Flak	LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	LOST: ftr 0, bmr 1, utl 0		
		ground forces were BOMBED			
		Show Details		Exit	