

OPART III – Elmer AI Mode Primer Document

Elmer AI Mode - Overview and Concept

Welcome to the OPART III primer on the Elmer AI mode of play. Basically, the Elmer AI mode provides the player with the ability to access the formation dialog and objective tracks (similar to the deployment editor) during game play and then invoke the built-in AI movement/combat routines. The player can modify the formation orders, formation orders emphasis (loss tolerance), and change/set objectives for each formation – and then let the built-in AI movement and combat routines handle the detailed movement and combat for units assigned to the formation.

From the player's viewpoint, the Elmer AI mode of play provides several benefits/options:

- For those who lack the time or the inclination to play the really big scenarios, the AI-assisted mode shortens and simplifies the game by allowing the player to control the formations and leave the details to the computer.
- For those playing solitaire, this mode allows the player to modify the opposing AI “on the fly” by changing the AI formation and objectives, particularly during a long game, when it is difficult for the computer to react to changing tactical and strategic situations. This should make the AI opponent much better and stay in the game over the long haul.
- For those who want to play at the “same level” as the AI, the player can also use the AI mode vs. the computer to “level the playing field” by using the same built-in movement/combat routines for both sides.
- And for the scenario designers out there, the AI-assisted mode is another useful tool in testing scenarios under game conditions and fine-tuning the programmed AI.

This primer covers the simple concepts to invoke and use the Elmer AI mode and also provides some tips and hints as players go through the initial learning curve. By far, the most difficult part of using the AI mode is getting a general feel for how the AI moves, reacts, and handles the movement/combat routines. A few simple games, some trial and error and hopefully some of the hints/tips in the primer will shorten the learning curve and make this a worthwhile and enjoyable gaming experience.

Elmer AI Mode – Sequence of Play

The sequence of play and use of the hot keys are straightforward and easy to use. Here's how to do it.

- Use the PO Mode radio button from the right-side buttons (below the recent news/reinforcement buttons) or one of the hot keys (see next page for hot keys) to invoke the PO mode. When the PO mode is active, the currently selected formation will show the objective numbers on the map and in the micro view.
- Select each formation and set/change objective hexes (right click in a hex to add an objective or right click on an objective to bring up the dialog box). This works the same as setting objectives in the scenario editor.
- Use the standard “F” key or the radio button to bring up the formation dialog. You can change the formation orders (Attack/Defend, etc) and Emphasis (Ignore, Limit or Minimize Losses) in the same way that you do this in the editor.
- Cycle through your formations to set objectives, orders and emphasis. For those units that you don't want the AI to move, use the Fixed (Manual) command. Note: the hot keys toggle on/off the AI movement for the entire side (not just a particular formation).
- To invoke AI movement, use one of the hot keys or Move PO radio button (lower right button in the display). The computer will move all units using the built-in AI routines except formations with Fixed orders.
- Once movement is completed, you can turn off the PO mode to move some units manually if you want.
- Use the standard “Resolve Attacks” button to initiate combat. Once combat is complete for this phase, you can then repeat the review and updating of formations, invoked AI movement and initiate

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another combat round until you end the player turn or the turn ends automatically. You can review/modify AI-planned attacks using the “P” key (the Attack Planning dialog box) before resolving your attacks.

- Players can go back and forth to AI and manual mode by toggling the hot keys. This will allow the player normal access to all unit functions such as entraining, boarding, entrenching, tactical reserve, etc. Note – if you manually move/change status of units, the AI-assisted mode will take over the formation in PO mode and possibly move the units again or change unit modes unless you change/set the Formation Order to Fixed (Manual Mode).

Optional Full AI Mode:

- This mode uses the hot key to toggle on the AI-assisted mode. Use this feature to set formation orders, objectives and tolerance limits for the entire turn – not just the current phase.
- Instead of invoking the AI-assisted movement with one of the keys, you can actually go the Play Menu, Computer Player and then select the current side as the computer player.
- The computer will then take over for you and will move, conduct combats, move again, etc. until the turn is finished.
- This is the quickest way to play since you obviously only need to review/change formations and objectives at the beginning of the turn. It does require a little more pre-planning of objectives and orders to anticipate how the computer will handle the entire turn. It’s also a good way to test the AI during scenario design.

Hot Keys

The following are the hot keys that you need to use/learn to invoke the PO mode. There are several alternative ways to toggle between manual and AI mode, turn of/off the display of formation objective lines.

Advanced Game Options	Under the 2 nd page of advanced game options, you can select to have the PO mode buttons displayed. If you select this as a view option, you will have 4 radio buttons available at the bottom right side of the screen. The first 2 toggle on/off lines showing the current formation’s objectives and all formations’ objectives, respectively. The 3 rd button (PO Mode) toggles on/off the AI mode. The 4 th button (Move PO) invokes the AI movement routines.
F12	The F12 function key toggles on/off the PO mode. You can tell which mode is which since the objectives will show on the map and micro map views in the PO mode.
\	Same as F12 key – just a different key to accomplish the same thing.
Shift F12	By pressing both the Shift Key and F12, this will invoke the AI movement routines (Move PO function) for all formations. You then click “Resolve All Attacks to invoke combat.
	By using the \ key (in effect, the shift key), this also invokes the AI movement – same as the Shift F12 key. Just another way to do it.
/	Useful key to easily review the line of objectives for the formation (blue line) and units of the formation (red lines tracing to the last objective). To refresh, rehit this key after going to another formation. This will clear the prior formation objectives and show the current formation’s objectives.
?	Same as the / key but shows all formations and all units. Sometimes useful when there are few formations and objectives to check for “gaps” in how all objectives are assigned/setup.
F	The F key pulls up the normal formation dialog where you can see the usual formation info, plus the formation orders and order emphasis (loss tolerance) when in AI-assisted mode. This is where you can change from Attack to Defend, or Ignore Losses to Limit Losses, etc.
P	The P key pulls up the normal attack planning dialog where you can modify the attacks planned by the AI when in PO mode.

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Game Options – Hints & Tips

- Disengagement – highly recommend that you turn off Disengagement. This really penalizes the AI since it makes it painful to correct AI movements when you need to pull out units from contact. It also limits the ability of the AI to move units once in contact.
- Air Staff Assistant – turn this feature on as part of the overall AI. With the new AI feature, you can change formation orders, emphasis and objectives.
- New Turn Rules – turn on so that Player 2 has movement points at beginning of the turn. This is useful for manually moving units, particularly those adjacent or in close proximity to enemy units, to help the AI properly respond to formation orders and objectives.
- High Supply – in the AI-assisted movement/combat modes, you may need to use high supply since the AI tends to use up a lot of supply each turn, even when using Limit Losses.
- Fog of War – if you decide to use the Full AI mode, then you want to turn off Fog of War so you can track the AI movements and combat during the turn – otherwise, you will only see the spotted units.
- Intelligence – set to Strong (the manual says that the AI makes more internal passes at movement).

General AI Hints & Tips

- Game Save – always get in the habit of saving before you invoke AI movement or combat. In effect, this gives you an “Undo” feature if you don’t like how the AI handled it.
- Before playing a scenario, it’s a good idea to check the Event Editor for PO-type events such as changes in objective tracks, formation orders, and strategic bias. These can impact the AI and how you can control it during game play. If you notice a lot of objectives, you can even delete most of these before starting the game, or completely delete and set a couple of objectives per formation.
- For some types of situations, the AI just won’t handle it completely. Special movement such as airborne drops or engineering tasks such as bridge repair may need some manual intervention. Fortunately, the PO mode is easy to toggle on/off and you can use the Fixed (Manual) formation so the manual capability is there when you need it.
- If units stray more than you want, you can use Attack/Ignore Losses to keep the formation concentrated and moving to the objectives that you set (but be careful when using this near enemy units).
- Some scenarios use formations with large numbers of units. These are more cumbersome to move and you’ll quickly notice that you have less flexibility and “finesse” compared to more numerous formations with lower number of units. In some of the scenarios, it may be worthwhile going into the editor and creating more formations and breaking up the larger formations before you start the game.

Formation Orders

The scenario editor section in the manual does a good job in explaining the different formation orders. When the AI-assisted mode is invoked, the AI will take over and move all units of all formations. To review formations for scenarios with large number of formations, it’s often easier to cycle through the formations using the right-hand formation arrow buttons vs. just clicking on the formations on the map – it’s easy to overlook a formation when accessing units directly on the map. The following are tips when using some of the orders in AI mode to help you get started.

Attack/Advance – Under AI control, this works pretty well in moving formations towards objectives and setting up attacks. Sometimes, this is the only way to move units. However, units with attack will do so and artillery tends to use up supplies very quickly so you do need to monitor the readiness and supply ratings. You can also use Attack/Advance to move units/formations behind your lines, particularly the reinforcements.

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Defend – Under the old TOAW AI routines, using Defend meant that units stayed static and very rarely moved. Under OPART III, units will migrate towards an objective now in Defend mode which is particularly useful when in contact. However, if units seem stuck in contact, then use manual movement to disengage a couple of hexes before invoking the AI movement. If a friendly objective is close to enemy units, friendly units in Defend Limit/Ignore Losses will sometimes attack.

Secure – This is useful for games with large numbers of units in a formation since it has less concentration around the objectives, although units will tend to “stray” from the formation.

Screen – In old TOAW, units would automatically subdivide so I never used this mode. In OPART III, this is much better and can actually be used for the larger formations to cover more ground. Sometimes, units will still subdivide so you need to watch this one carefully to see if you get the results you want (if not, stick to Defend).

Independent – Obviously, units will stray quite a bit in independent mode. I normally use Attack mode even for higher level formations just to keep the units closer - but this is useful for artillery support.

Fixed (Manual) – This is a special formation order for the AI-assisted mode which allows the player to retain manual control over specific formations. The AI will ignore movement/combat orders for units in the Fixed mode. At time of testing, this is not “sticky” and will need to be reset at the beginning of each turn (defaults to Attack for the next player turn).

Formation Orders Emphasis

This does affect how units move and how they concentrate under formation control.

- **Ignore Losses** – Under the old TOAW AI, sometimes this was the only way to move units towards objectives. The OPART III AI does move units in Attack and Defend modes with Limit and Minimize Losses emphasis. Still, if units don’t seem to move, use Attack/Ignore Losses to help them get “jump-started”. This also tends to concentrate/maximize stacking and prevent “straying” units – but will use up readiness and supplies at an alarming rate so don’t always leave formations on this setting.
- **Limit Losses** – works pretty much like you would expect. Like most players, the Limit Losses emphasis tends to be a good default choice for the AI as well. In Defend Limit Losses mode, the defending units may attack – to prevent this, set the units to Fixed/Manual mode if placed properly or use Minimize Losses.
- **Minimize Losses** – units will actually move towards objectives with Attack Minimize Losses emphasis and is useful for keeping the AI from “over-attacking” and advancing (useful for counter attack situations). In Defend Minimize, this reduces the tendency of the AI to attack adjacent or nearby enemy units although the AI will sometimes “retreat” units in contact.

Formation Objectives

The objectives are easy to use but are very subtle in achieving the AI movement that you planned and expect to happen. The use of formation orders combined with setting/changing objectives gives the player a reasonable amount of control over the formations. Playing a few games will give you the feel on how to handle the formations and objectives- here’s a few tips to help.

- In most cases, you only need to set 2-4 objectives to give the AI guidance when moving. A lot of scenarios use 10+ objectives and you may want/need to delete all but 2-3. The AI movement seems more predictable with fewer, closer objectives and is less likely to be confused on what line of approach you really want the formation to take. It also seems to reduce the “strays” in the formation.
- In Defend Mode, objectives set at least 4-5 hexes from current units will now (well, most of the time) cause defending units to pull back if you have Disengagement turned off. If not, then manually move

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the units back a couple of hexes – at this point, you can even change to Attack order as long as objectives are set where your units don't re-engage again.

- When moving units up to the front or behind your lines, use Attack/Advance mode. Be careful when setting objectives near enemy units since the AI does have a tendency to stray and attack units it can reach.
- As noted above, objectives set near enemy units may trigger attacks even when the formation is in Defend mode. Also, objectives in enemy occupied territory may cause the AI to change the formation's order (from Screen to Secure and Defend to Attack).