

War in the East “Sequence of Play”

Note: you can take actions in any order you like, and there may be some reasons why you would take things out of order, but in general this is how I do things.

0.5 Operational planning phase

Where are you going?

How many AP do you have and are you trying to save up for anything?

Try to get a rough allocation of how you are going to spend your AP

- Reallocating units between formations
- Creating new support units (for the Russians)
- Creating new on-map units, especially an air base
- Reassigning leaders
- Swapping planes in air units
- HQ buildup

How many trucks do you have? Are you getting close to not having enough to move supply? You can get more trucks by putting units on static, just make sure you don't get them cut off by an enemy breakthrough

Is there any opportunity to pocket the enemy and does the enemy have any opportunity to pocket you?

How tolerant of losses are you? How is your manpower situation?

Look at the losses screen on the Info Screens (the little crosses) and see how many losses you took and inflicted last turn.

Are you falling behind in the air? A 3:1 ratio (USSR:Axis) is normal. If Axis fighter losses were more than 30, this is also a problem

How about in ground troops? Here, a 2:1 loss ratio is normal. If USSR losses are more than 100,000 a turn over several turns, this is a problem.

I. Preparatory phase

A. Open Event Log on the Info Screens tab.

- Check weather for next turn (about 95% reliable, apparently).
- See if there are any isolated units. Note locations for future reference.
- See if there are any reinforcements or unfrozen units, note their location for future reference.
- Look at aircraft swaps and see if anything untoward has happened. If, for example, a squadron with cheesy SB-2's has suddenly swapped out for long-range bombers DB-3B or IL-4, make sure to transfer that squadron to the Long Range Air Command and put them on night missions. If a fighter has swapped out for a fighter-bomber, consider putting that unit on bomber missions. Some people put all their air units on manual, but then you are spending AP all the time to upgrade.
- Look at replacements, specifically Rifle Squad elements. Compare “wanted” to “added” and “Pool”. The shortage will give you a rough indication of how understrength your army is and how fast it is rebounding.

B. Open Commander's Report on the Info Screens tab.

- Go to the Units tab and make sure the ToeM level is where you want it.
As a general rule, I have everyone set to 100%, but if you are having a manpower shortage, you can adjust the levels, setting your best units to high levels and everybody else lower. Below 70% is not a good idea. You can click the MAX TOE% button to set all selected units to the same level (you could use the filters below to select certain types of units, i.e., set all panzer divisions to 100%)
- Go to the Air Groups tab, sort by Fatigue, and send everybody with high fatigue to National Reserve. You have to click on the unit name, then send that unit to reserve, open up the Commander's Report, click on the next guy, etc. Tedious, I know. The level you consider too high will vary by circumstance, but 25% is a good place to start.
- Sort Air Groups by Morale, and send everybody with low morale back to the National Reserve. I use 40% for the Soviets, 50% for the Germans.
- Sort Air Groups by % ready and send those with less than 25% or so back to National Reserve. Consider manually swapping out plane types if you have respectable numbers of an earlier plane type in the pool (the AI should have done this for you already, but not necessarily). To swap out plane types, click on the unit name, and down in the lower right corner click on "aircraft change", cycle through to "manual" and pick the plane type you want to use. You can see the numbers of planes in the pool by clicking on the production screen from the Info Screens tab (the gear icon) and looking for your plane type.
- Go to the Leaders tab, sort by Morale, and consider if you have enough AP to replace people with low ratings. Your higher HQ's (Army or Army Group for the Germans, Front for the Russians) don't have to be as good on Morale, but if you have a combat HQ with a commander with a Morale level of 4, you should seriously consider replacing him. Morale 5 is OK, but you would really rather have 6 or above. The first ten turns or so of a campaign game, both sides will be spending a lot of AP getting rid of idiot commanders.
- Go to the HQ tab, sort by CP, and look for HQs with negative values (indicating that they have more units attached than they have command span for). Click on the hex number to look at the HQ and think about possibly transferring some units to another HQ. Normally, you don't want any combat command to be overloaded.
- Consider your supply situation. If some units are out of supply even if they are not isolated – common for Germans in the first winter – you should be thinking about moving them backwards.

C. Go through the Order of Battle screen,

- Look at each combat command (Russian Army, German Corps) to make sure they have the proper number of support units.
- Germans can only move support units around (at a cost of 1 AP), while the Russians also have the ability to create new support units by expending AP (1 for a battalion, 2 for a regiment).
- General rule in the early going: each combat command should have three engineer/construction units and three artillery units. German infantry corps should have some anti-tank capacity, which can come from AAA, AT units, StuG's, or Panzerjaeger units. Air HQs should have respectable AAA capacity; for the Germans, I aim for six units per HQ with at least three being medium or heavy types. You have to decide how many AP you can afford to spend on this. One trick that I mentioned earlier is to take two turns and move everybody automatically up to the high command level using the support level command (set high command to 9, everybody else to 0). Then transfer downwards for free.

D. Go down the line of ground units,

- Make sure that each ground unit that's going to be in contact with the enemy is attached to a combat HQ and that each combat HQ has no more than its allowed number of units attached to it.
- Make sure that all combat units are within command range (usually 5 hexes, sometimes less depending on weather and terrain) of their HQ.
- Units that have very low TOE levels or morale or very high fatigue levels can be withdrawn from the line and may be assigned to either higher level HQ (Front or Army) or to a special rear area HQ (if you're the Russians) for refit. If you're going to be attacking in a sector, postpone this step until later.

E. Consider HQ buildups for units that are going to be attacking in future turns.

- You can move units a little and still do an HQBU, so you can make the decision after a bit of moving, but you should be thinking who you are going to HQBU.
- One this to do is to save AP's for several turns, permitting you to do an HQBU for an entire Army/Front. Units that have an HQBU have no movement left for that turn, but next turn they will have maximum movement (usually 50 MP's for motorized/armor).
- HQBU's cost both AP's and trucks, so make sure you aren't destroying your entire truck supply.

F. Build fortified zones in places you want to have good fortification levels in the future, like cities and strategic bottlenecks. Good spots for the Russians are Shlisselburg near Leningrad, the north side of the Neva River, behind the Finnish No Attack Line, the entrances to the Crimean Peninsula, and Kerch. Staff them with engineer/construction units once they are no longer in refit status (takes a turn or so for them to become effective, and they will disappear if adjacent to an enemy without a combat unit before they do).

- G. Consider building corps sized units (as the USSR). You will get the ability to combine division/brigade sized units into corps. There is a cost in AP – very significant for Tank and Rifle corps. Do as many as you can. This is the future of your army.

II. First Air Phase

- A. Consider air resupply missions using level bombers. Use only bombers that aren't going to have to move later (so for the Russians, principally the Long Range Air Command, for the Germans Ju88's have long ranges and can generally stay in place for one turn). Level bombers that are going to have resupply missions assigned to them later must not have flown (0 miles used), so you should set them on night missions to prevent accidental use. Of course, you can't rebase them in the next step.
- B. Decide where you want each air group (German Fliegercorps, Russian Air command/Air Army) to go. Normally, they should be 10-20 hexes behind the lines, although under special circumstances they can be closer. Consider the possibility of enemy airbase strikes. Air bases with transport planes and level bombers to be used for supply missions should be placed on operating rail hexes.
- C. Move an empty air base to where you want each air group to be located. Transfer (f10) nine squadrons onto that base. Move a newly-empty base there. Repeat until you have moved all your squadrons to the new location. As much as possible, you should avoid moving air bases with units on them, though you may end up having to move a base one hex or so if you want to stack your air bases three high (better if the enemy is going to be making airbase strikes since each hex can only be bombed twice).
- D. Deploy an empty air base attached to the same air HQ as close as possible to the front. Depending on how many you have, you could have several such "staging bases." This is easier for the Russians since they can build new air bases for 1 AP (and should be doing so every turn, see below).
- E. Move the air HQ near its bases. Try to get within range 2 of all air bases. The more HQ's with AAA near your air bases, the better. This is especially true for the Germans.
- F. Look for enemy air bases within fighter range. Use recon to look around for the enemy's air concentrations. Get to Det level 5 on an air base and see if it actually has any planes on it. Look at the reports for your recon missions to see if any enemy fighters are showing up. Consider strikes at enemy air bases. You may want to wait until later when you have built up fatigue levels on the enemy air units, or you may want to go now and reduce the enemy air power before your turn. Germans won't be doing much of this after turn 1. For a steady drip, drip, drip effect, set level bombers on night missions and bomb airfields at night (to set an air unit to night missions, open its unit window and click under "night missions" on the center left hand side. To call for a night mission, click the little sun icon on the right hand side of the tool bar after you click f7, it will switch to a moon for night missions). Night bombing is less effective but also unlikely to encounter enemy fighters or effective AAA.

- G. Consider ground unit bombing missions. Usually, before you attack you should run bombing missions against the target (during ground unit movement/combat, below), but you may want to run some bombing missions at this time, especially in sectors where you will not be attacking. This is especially important for the Russians, since one of their main goals is to beat down the Luftwaffe with fatigue and attrition losses. Look for spots that are maybe 10-15 hexes from Luftwaffe bases and try bombing them to see if the fighters will come up to play. Try to run up their frequent flyer miles. Also, this will enable your bomber units to get ground kills, increasing their morale and experience.
- H. Consider strategic bombing. Small ports are somewhat vulnerable and important targets in some places. Osinovets (east of Leningrad), or the other Lake Ladoga ports, Kerch, maybe the Baltic ports as the Soviets advance in 1944, all are potential targets. You might consider bombing crucial factories like the IL-2 factories in Voronezh or the T-34 factory in Kharkov, but the Russians will probably evacuate them anyway. If you are the Russians, there is not much you can do (the Axis have large air forces and AAA units stuck back in Germany waiting for bombers; if they can't get any Brits or Yankees, they are happy to practice on you). As Russians, though, you should look every turn at the Report tab (f11) to see if the Germans are bombing any of your ports or factories. If they are, assign many AAA units to that port and put an airbase with a bunch of fighters there. They can be poor quality fighters if you like, since the bombers will probably be unescorted. One turn of big bomber losses should be enough to dissuade the Axis from a strategic bombing campaign.

III. Ground unit movement/combat

I can't lay out a step by step approach for this since it is so dependent on the situation.

However, the key principles are:

- Pocket enemy units, then attack and destroy them next turn (when they have isolated or beachhead status). If you are establishing a pocket, break up your divisions/corps into their constituent units on their last few movement factors to make them harder to surround. Try to establish a double solid line of units around enemy units that you pocket.
- Prevent your own units from being pocketed.
- If you are defending, defend in depth. You should be working against the enemy's movement points, not his combat value. Use terrain and operational depth to prevent the enemy from breaking through your positions and romping around your rear. Best practice on defense is to have a lightly-held first line, just powerful enough that it can't be swept away by a hasty attack by enemy motorized/armor. Then, the main line of resistance is one or two hexes to the rear, hopefully far enough that enemy infantry can't wade through the front-line defenses and still conduct a deliberate attack against it, and powerful enough to resist any conceivable hasty attack. Behind the MLR, you have a line of units on reserve status, hopefully screwing up at least some of the attacks against the MLR or front-line positions. Behind them, a "checkerboard" of smaller units slowing the enemy with ZOC's and forcing hasty attacks.

- When attacking, use infantry deliberate attacks to break the enemy's main line of resistance and armor/motorized/mech units with hasty attacks to clear space behind the line. Don't use motorized/armor to attack towns or enemy strongpoints, move past them and leave them for the infantry to clean up.
- If the enemy has broken through and pocketed some of your units, look for opportunities to break the pocket. Any connection to a pocket prevents those units from being relegated to isolated status that turn, meaning that they live another turn and slow the attacker longer. If you can break a pocket in two places, you also pocket the attacker's armor in between the breaks, further slowing his attack.
- Before attacking, bomb the target hex twice if you have air parity in the region and aren't overly concerned about fatigue/losses. Preparatory bombing will increase enemy fatigue levels and thus reduce their effective combat value even if the reported CV doesn't change much.
- Before attacking, do your best to make sure that all attacking units report to the same HQ. If you have a number of HQ's units participating, make sure to select a unit from the best HQ/one that contributed the most units first when choosing units to go into the attack – that HQ will be the lead for that battle and units from all other participating HQ's will have their CV's nerfed
- Move rail repair FBD units.
- Move reinforcement units up to the front. Newly-arrived Russian units normally just be cadres. You should put them on "refit" for a turn, then ideally they should be put someplace behind the line where they won't get in trouble for several months. For the Russians, experience 35 or more means a unit is ready to fight and experience 50 is good. German units that are rebuilt will have 50ish experience and will be combat-ready, though weaker than their more experienced comrades for the first month or two.
- Depending on the circumstances, you may want to save some rail capacity for evacuating factories (as the USSR, principally). Generally, you would rather have more ground units at the front, but there are some factories that you really really don't want to lose (the aforementioned T-34 factory in Kharkov, the KV-1 factory in Leningrad, and the two IL-2 factories in Voronezh spring to mind).

IV. Final Air Phase

- A. Another opportunity to do air resupply missions, this time with transport planes. Mostly, this is for armored/motorized units that will have trouble drawing fuel next logistics phase (far from HQ, far from railhead, used all or almost all MPs).
- B. Bomb units, especially for the Russians in quiet sectors. Don't want those Germans to get too much sleep. I run my bombers up to about 75% of allowable miles.
- C. Assign new air units from National Reserve if they are full or nearly full of planes and have adequate morale and fatigue levels.

VI. Production Phase (Russians)

A. Build a new air base. Go to a city in the rear somewhere, click on the production screen (the tank icon on the Map Information tab), and select a base.

B. Build eight new air units. Don't use a type of aircraft that you are not producing a lot of or one you already have a lot of units using on the map. The NBAP units (night bombers) are a waste of time; they cannot convert into regular day bombers. However, if you create a Shap or Bap unit (day bomber) and the system equips them with U2VS bombers, it's OK. You have tons of them, they are better than nothing, and once they get some experience and morale you can always swap them out for IL-2. Think how happy they will be to get actually useful planes!

C. You might need to build new Army HQs. They are expensive. If you have all your divisions on the map, though, you will not have enough armies for all of them. I build Combined Arms or Tank armies, then put cavalry and tank corps in them and give them good leaders.

D. Build more support units.

E. Very rarely, you might want to build a new ground unit. Artillery brigades/divisions are worth having. Sometimes, if you have plenty of extra AP, you might want to build new cavalry divisions, so you can form cavalry corps.

F. Evacuate Soviet factories.