COMMAND OPS 2

Quickstart Guide

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*A Steam guide
by Bie*

PANTHER GAMES

LOCK 'N LOAD PUBLISHING

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So you want to be a *WW2 commander*? Charging the bridges at Arnhem, making a desperate stand at Bastogne and basically leading your men to epic victories. Yet it seems that your men are just standing around, not following orders and generally holding you back from greatness.

This guide explains **a few crucial concepts** and aims to get you started playing Command Ops 2 as quickly as possible. It will only cover the **extreme basics** of managing your forces. So, let's get past that first hurdle shall we?

- Basic concepts -

If you plan to play Command Ops 2, you first have to understand *two crucial concepts:*

Chain of command:

Command Ops 2 places every unit in a realistic chain of command. *A core building block of this is the company.* Most of the time if you see counters on the map, they'll be companies. Following military structure companies are grouped together and assigned to a headquarter unit. These HQ's are in their turn subordonate to higher headquarter units. Depending on the complexity of the scenario these links can go four or five levels deep. So basically every unit in the game is linked to an HQ. Except the top HQ ofcourse, which is basically you (and your staff).

Why is this important to know? Short answer: it has huge impact on how you give orders.

Long answer: *you can give orders to companies individually, but this is very tedious and not really what this game is all about.* Alternatively you can *give orders to your HQ's.* They will formulate a plan to best suit your order and let its subordonate units execute the order. Depending on how far up the chain of command you go, this one order will result in setting in motion dozens of companies.

Which brings me to the next concept...

Orders delay:

Every order you give to any of your units will take time to be processed. Ordering large groups of soldiers about doesn't happen in an instant. Even your building block, the company, constitutes most of the time of about 100 to 120 men. So even if the company is represented as one counter, in reality it is a group of soldiers led by a couple of officers.

Imagine giving an order to a company: basically you give orders to its commander. The company commander will in turn brief his platoon leaders, who in their turn brief their squadleaders until finally the soldiers get their orders and ultimately the order as a whole is executed. This all obviously takes time and is modeled in Command Ops 2 as "Orders Delay". *For companies* this results in *a typical orders delay for about 30 ingame minutes.*

If you give orders to higher level HQ's this results in higher orders delay as more echelons need to be passed through for the orders to reach the soldiers. Also the amount of coordination between the subordonate forces is way higher and needs to be accounted for. A whole division for example can take up to an hour or an hour and a half to fully process its orders.

- Understanding the chain of command -

Battalions:

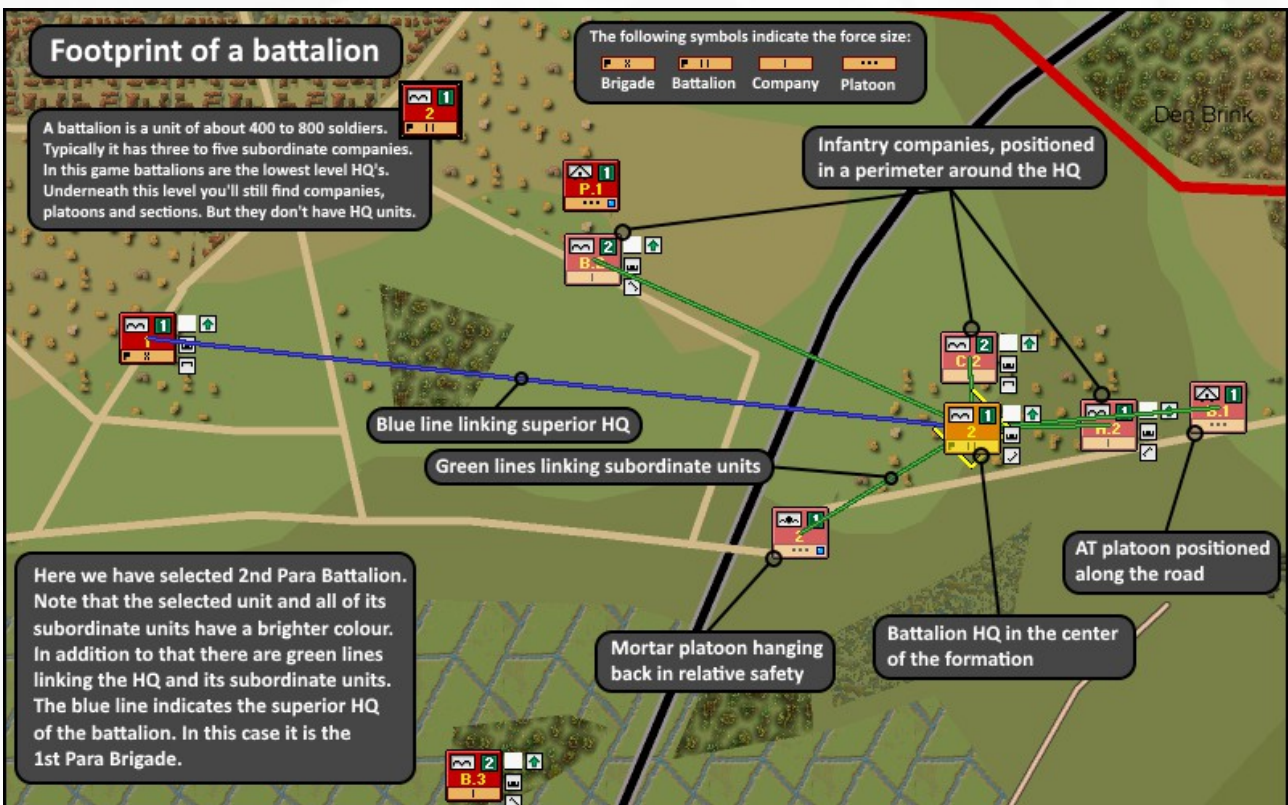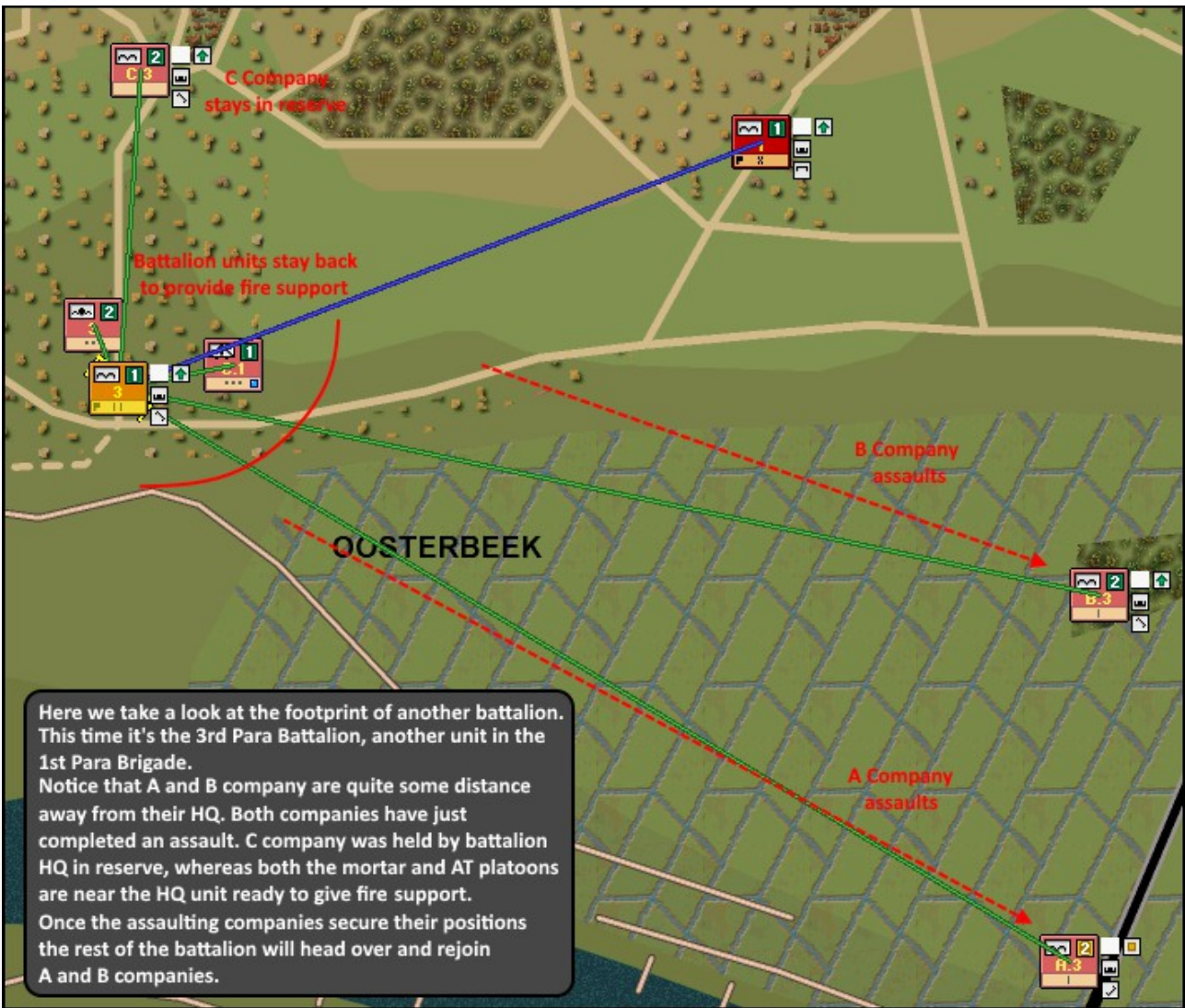In Command Ops 2 the lowest echelon HQ unit is at battalion level. Due to its flexibility and ease of use most players tend to give orders at battalion level. So if the company is the building block, the battalion is your trusty Swiss Army knife, compact and versatile. Let's look into this a bit further shall we?

Dissecting a battalion:

Detaching units: It is possible to detach units from their HQ's. This is useful if you have specific tasks for them. Clicking on a unit and giving it orders will detach it. Notice the background change color from orange to white to indicate this.

This icon indicates that this is an HQ unit

Battalion level

Company level

Ingame this battalion will be represented like so. This is the Order of Battle (OOB). It keeps tack of all your units and their place in the chain of command.

- 2 Para Bn HQ
  - A Coy 2 Para Bn
  - B Coy 2 Para Bn
  - C Coy 2 Para Bn
  - Mortar Pl 2 Para Bn
  - B Trp 1 AL AT Bty

These are infantry companies. They are the frontline units of the battalion. Here they are aptly named "A", "B" and "C" Company. The 2 behind it denotes the battalion number which in this case is the 2nd Para Battalion.

These are the support units of the battalion. In this case they are a mortar and anti tank platoon. These are not meant to fight in the frontline, but will stay back and give fire support.

Battalions are considered to be quite small formations, but what kind of footprint do they have on the battlefield? That depends on what orders you give them and what kind of terrain they are in. Here are some examples of battalions on the ingame map:
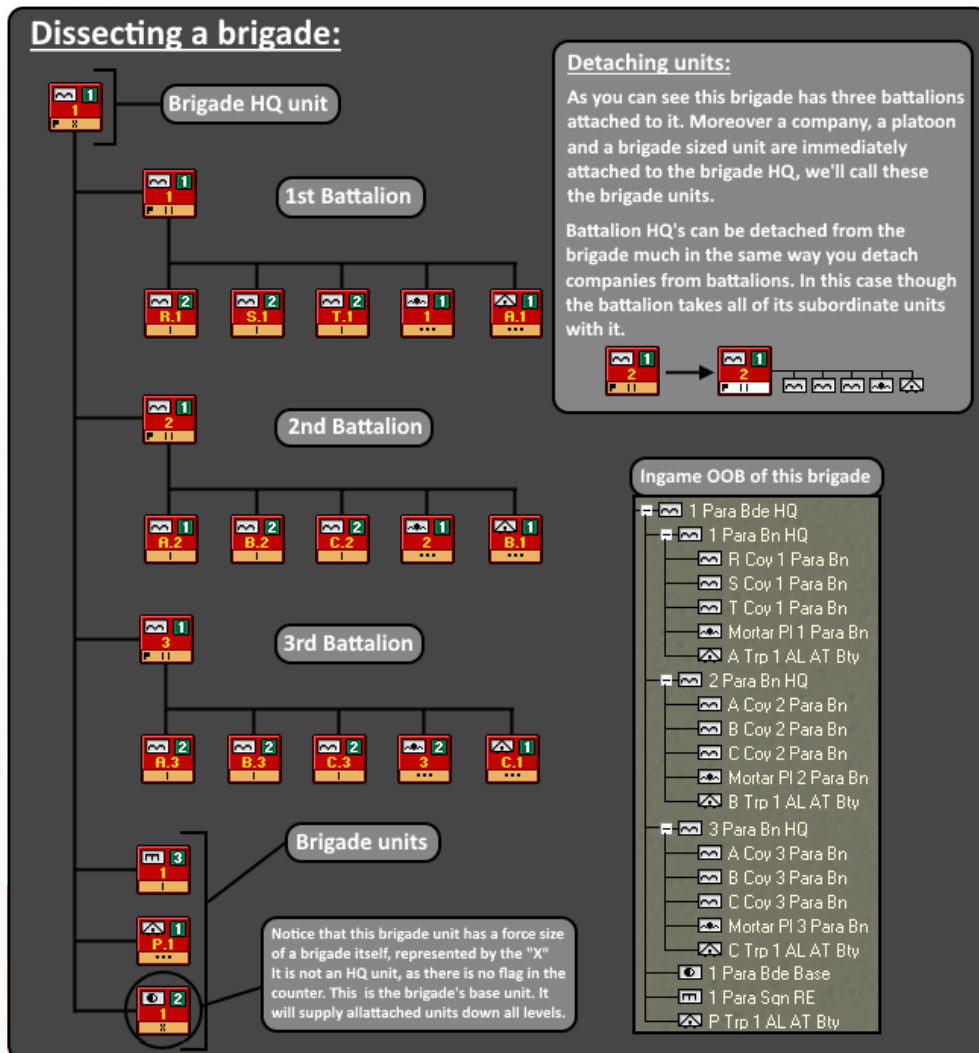
Footprint of a battalion

The following symbols indicate the force size:

| Brigade | Battalion | Company | Platoon |

A battalion is a unit of about 400 to 800 soldiers. Typically it has three to five subordinate companies. In this game battalions are the lowest level HQ's. Underneath this level you'll still find companies, platoons and sections. But they don't have HQ units.

Infantry companies, positioned in a perimeter around the HQ

Den Brink

Blue line linking superior HQ

Green lines linking subordinate units

AT platoon positioned along the road

Here we have selected 2nd Para Battalion. Note that the selected unit and all of its subordinate units have a brighter colour. In addition to that there are green lines linking the HQ and its subordinate units. The blue line indicates the superior HQ of the battalion. In this case it is the 1st Para Brigade.

Mortar platoon hanging back in relative safety
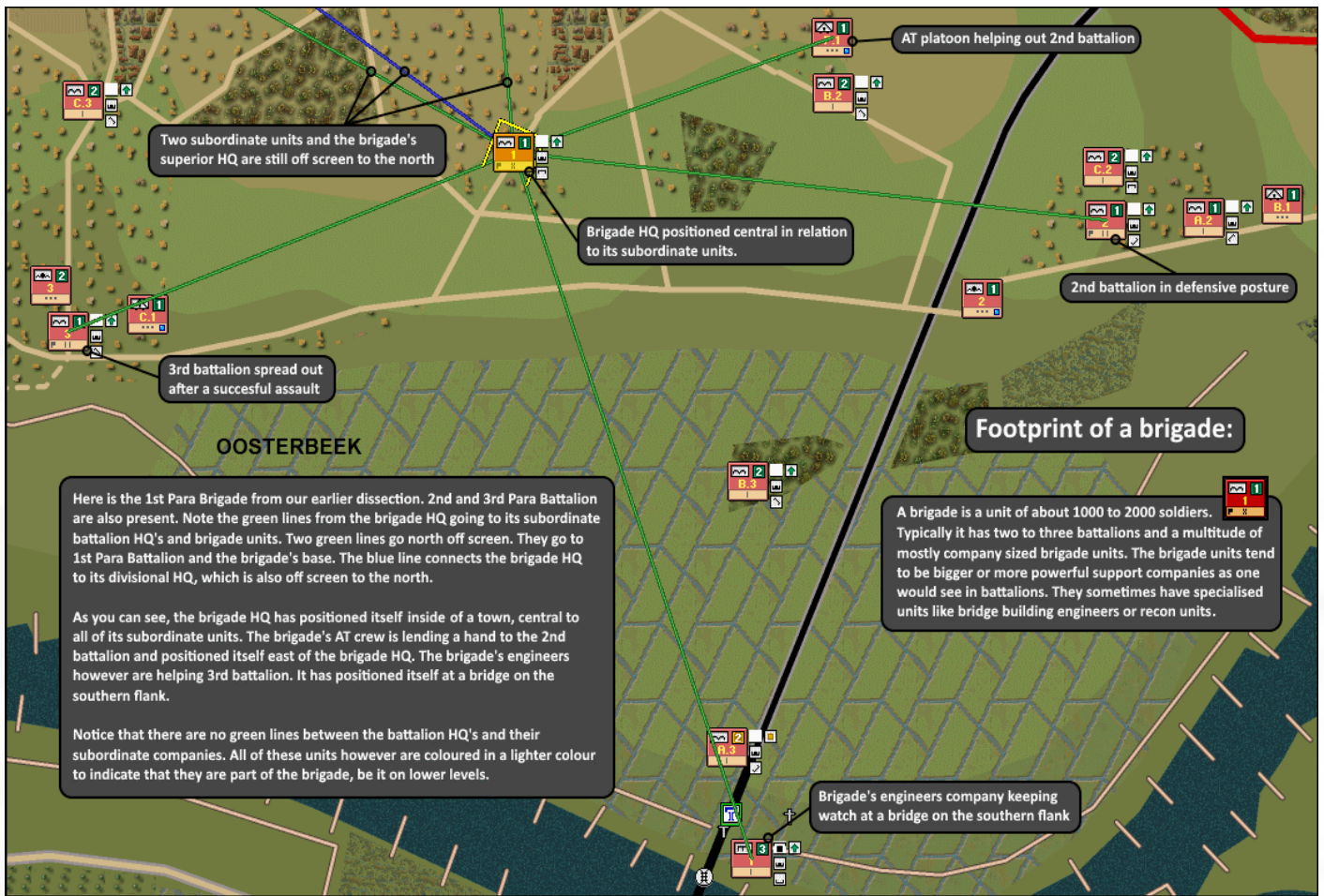
Battalion HQ in the center of the formation

3rd Para Battalion

Brigades/Regiments:

Next up the chain of command is the brigade (or regiment for some nations). The brigade HQ typically commands a couple of battalions and will normally have a couple of support units of its own. Taking earlier the battalion and adding its brigade this translates to the following order of battle:

Dissecting a brigade:

Brigade HQ unit

1st Battalion

2nd Battalion

3rd Battalion

Brigade units

Notice that this brigade unit has a force size of a brigade itself, represented by the "X" It is not an HQ unit, as there is no flag in the counter. This is the brigade's base unit. It will supply allattached units down all levels.

Detaching units:

As you can see this brigade has three battalions attached to it. Moreover a company, a platoon and a brigade sized unit are immediately attached to the brigade HQ, we'll call these the brigade units.

Battalion HQ's can be detached from the brigade much in the same way you detach companies from battalions. In this case though the battalion takes all of its subordinate units with it.

Ingame OOB of this brigade

- 1 Para Bde HQ
  - 1 Para Bn HQ
    - R Coy 1 Para Bn
    - S Coy 1 Para Bn
    - T Coy 1 Para Bn
    - Mortar Pl 1 Para Bn
    - A Trp 1 AL AT Bty
  - 2 Para Bn HQ
    - A Coy 2 Para Bn
    - B Coy 2 Para Bn
    - C Coy 2 Para Bn
    - Mortar Pl 2 Para Bn
    - B Trp 1 AL AT Bty
  - 3 Para Bn HQ
    - A Coy 3 Para Bn
    - B Coy 3 Para Bn
    - C Coy 3 Para Bn
    - Mortar Pl 3 Para Bn
    - C Trp 1 AL AT Bty
  - 1 Para Bde Base
 - 1 Para Sqn RE
  - P Trp 1 AL AT Bty

Brigades can already take up quite some space and are definitely a force to be reckoned with. Orders can be given at brigade level. Though considering the amount of units that the HQ has to coordinate, this is most of the times quite unwieldy and takes quite some time to set up.

AT platoon helping out 2nd battalion

Two subordinate units and the brigade's superior HQ are still off screen to the north.

Brigade HQ positioned central in relation to its subordinate units.

2nd battalion in defensive posture

3rd battalion spread out after a succesful assault

OOSTERBEEK

Footprint of a brigade:

Here is the 1st Para Brigade from our earlier dissection. 2nd and 3rd Para Battalion are also present. Note the green lines from the brigade HQ going to its subordinate battalion HQ's and brigade units. Two green lines go north off screen. They go to 1st Para Battalion and the brigade's base. The blue line connects the brigade HQ to its divisional HQ, which is also off screen to the north.

As you can see, the brigade HQ has positioned itself inside of a town, central to all of its subordinate units. The brigade's AT crew is lending a hand to the 2nd battalion and positioned itself east of the brigade HQ. The brigade's engineers however are helping 3rd battalion. It has positioned itself at a bridge on the southern flank.

Notice that there are no green lines between the battalion HQ's and their subordinate companies. All of these units however are coloured in a lighter colour to indicate that they are part of the brigade, be it on lower levels.

A brigade is a unit of about 1000 to 2000 soldiers. Typically it has two to three battalions and a multitude of mostly company sized brigade units. The brigade units tend to be bigger or more powerful support companies as one would see in battalions. They sometimes have specialised units like bridge building engineers or recon units.

Brigade's engineers company keeping watch at a bridge on the southern flank

1ˢᵗ Para Brigade

Divisions and up:

In Command Ops 2 higher level formations include divisions, corps and sometimes even armies. I won't go into detail in this guide, but suffice to say that giving direct orders to divisional HQ's and up is not really useful.
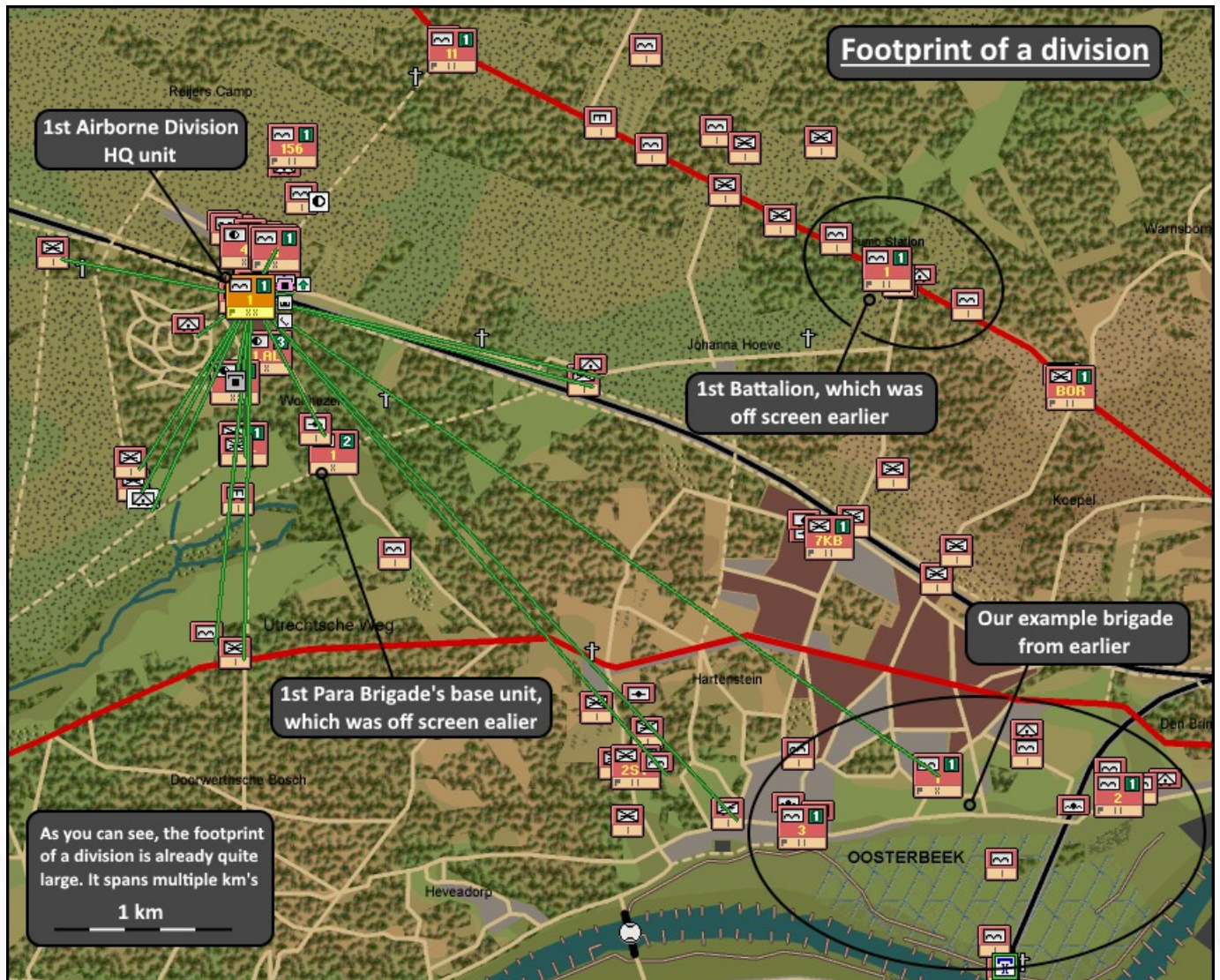
1st Airborne Division in all of its glory

Detaching units:

Detaching and attaching units is a constant routine in Command Ops 2. If you give direct orders to a company it will be detached from its battalion, if you give direct orders to a battalion it will be detached from its brigade and so forth... The detached unit (be it a single company a battalion or even a whole brigade) will operate independently until reattached to its superior HQ. Detaching units will basically let you decide on the spot how much forces you need to get the job done.

So, why not let your units be constantly detached? Detached units get linked the highest HQ. Although you are the one giving the orders, ingame this HQ will still technically be the one that gives the orders. The command load of having lots of detached units linked to your highest HQ will result in an overloaded, inefficient headquarter. This will also result in a higher than normal orders delay.

- Getting to grips with orders delay -

By now you should have a vague understanding of the chain of command and how it is implemented in Command Ops 2. This is important as it also ties in with how orders delay plays out in the game. As a rule of thumb the amount of orders delay depends on how high the unit is in the chain of command. Lower level HQ's will have lower orders delay, whereas higher level HQ's will have higher orders delay.
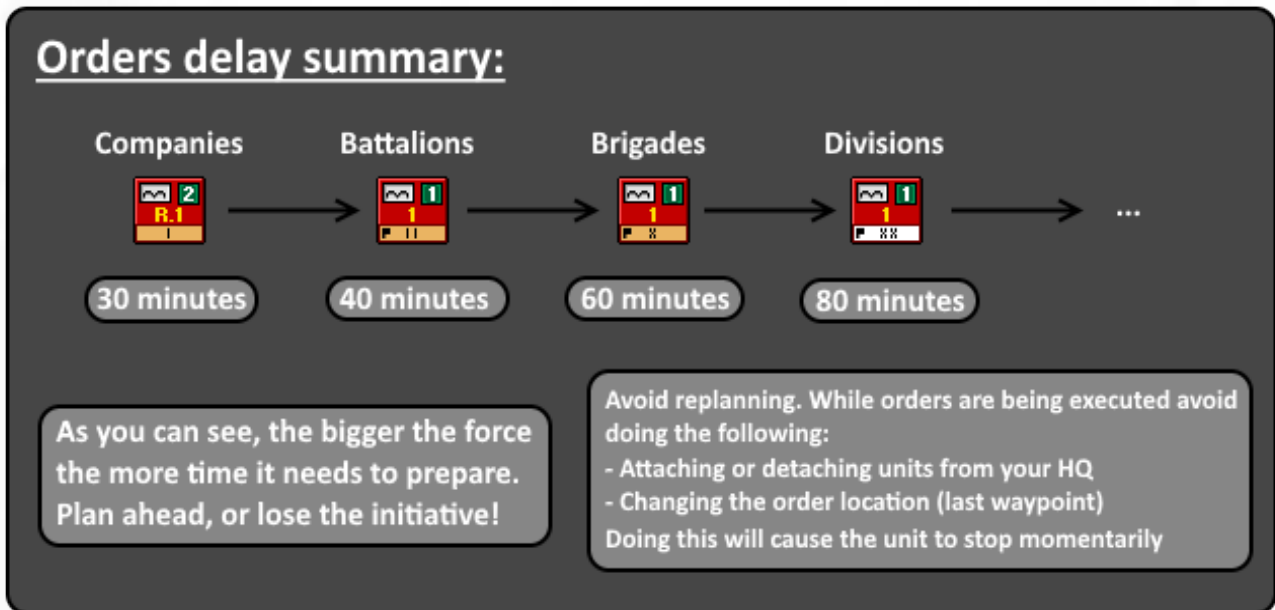
Getting units in motion then takes time. The opposite is also true, but to a lesser extent. Once a unit is executing its orders, it won't immediately stop when you tell it to. It will take at least a couple of ingame minutes for the units te recieve the orders and react accordingly. For example: if a battalion is ordered to stop while it is already attacking the HQ unit will be the first one to recieve the order and be the first one stop. Meanwhile its subordinate units will still be executing the original attack order as it takes time to go through the chain of command. Only a couple of minutes afterward the new orders will trickle down to the lower level units. At that time they will stop and will eventually carry out their new orders.
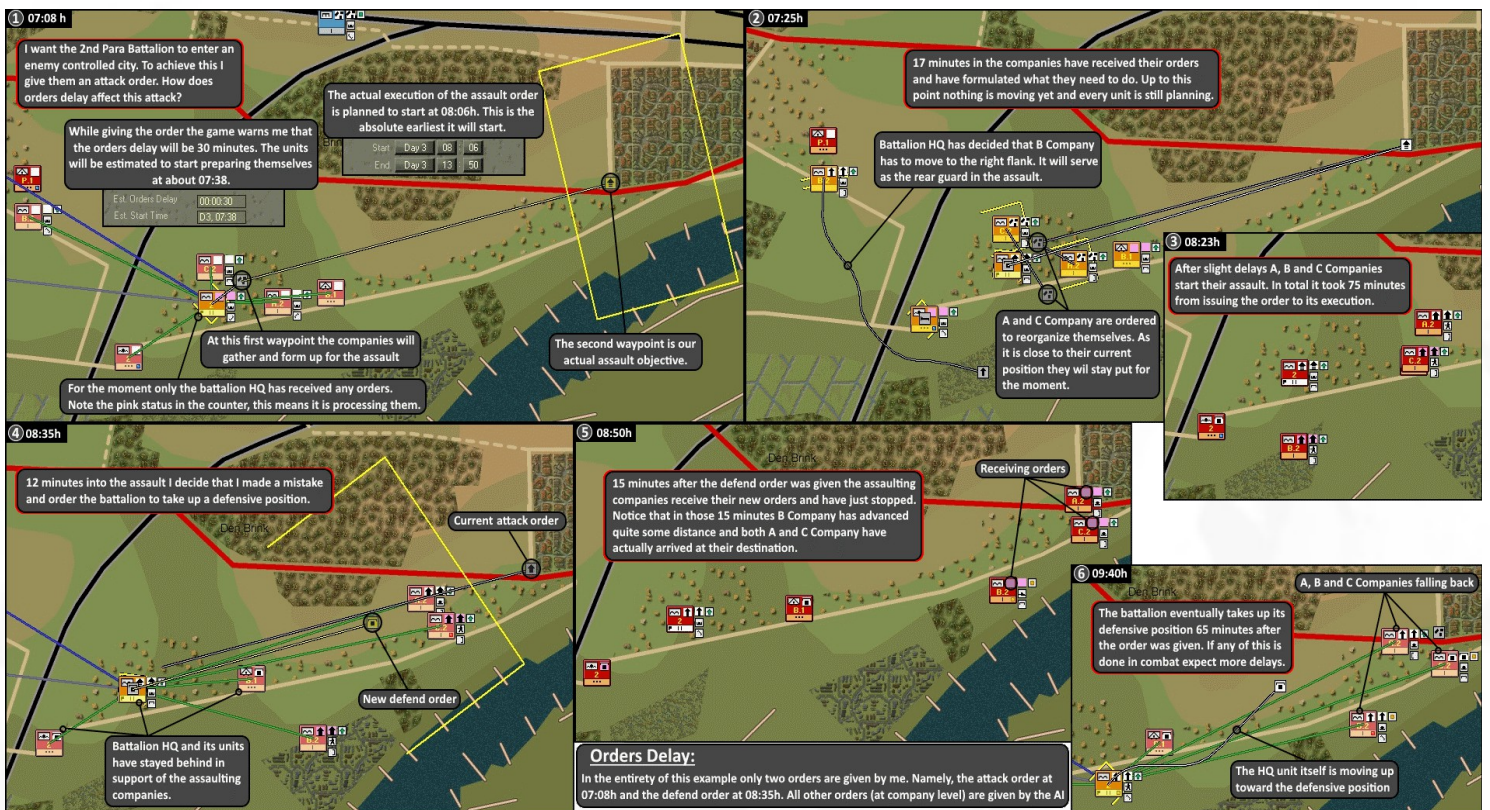
Orders delay is a two edged sword. You must keep in mind that time will pass before your units move, but you must also be sure that your orders are given correctly as altering them mid-execution will take even more time. Correct observations and careful planning are in order then, as a badly thought out plan might easily result in catastrophe.

- Your first steps ingame -

Right, on to actually playing the game. Don't worry if you didn't understand every detail from the previous sections it will become much clearer over time and while playing the game. For now it is important that you have a notion about those concepts.

To start of with I'm going to select the St Vith scenario, which is the tutorial scenario for the game. The scenario is not a tutorial in the usual sence though. It is more of a simple introductory scenario with an interesting mix of units and an advantageous Allied starting point. Lots of tutorial video's have been made using this scenario, so I'll stick to that one for now.
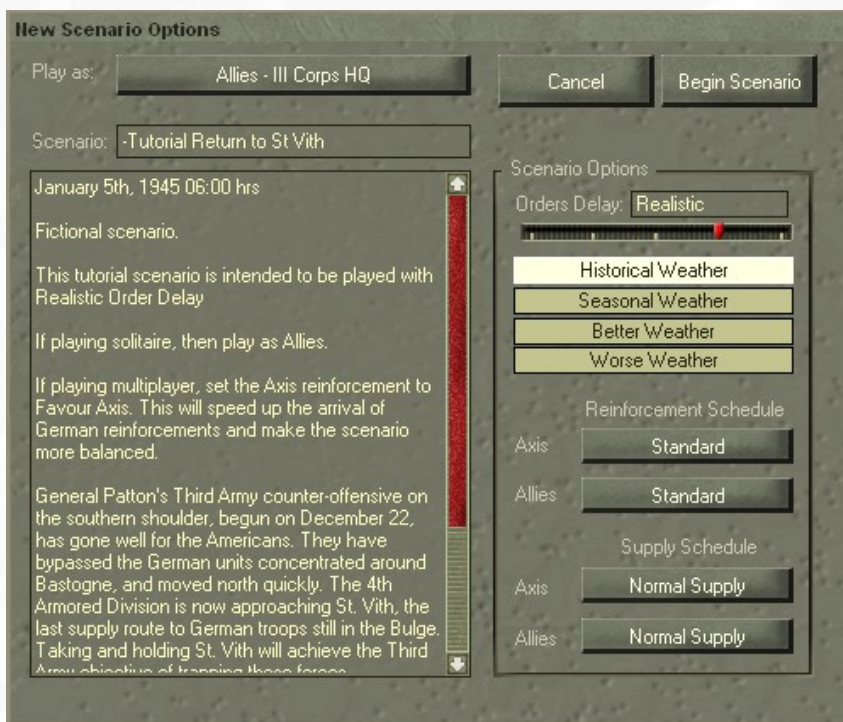
I'll keep all scenario settings as is and choose the Allied side. Be sure to keep the orders delay to realistic. It adds a lot to the game, as explained earlier.

For this quickstart guide I'm going to mainly focus on the absolute basics: moving your units across the map and giving them basic orders. Therefore I'm going to forgo explaining the user interface, map and other features in detail. That will be explained later in other guides.

A movement order:
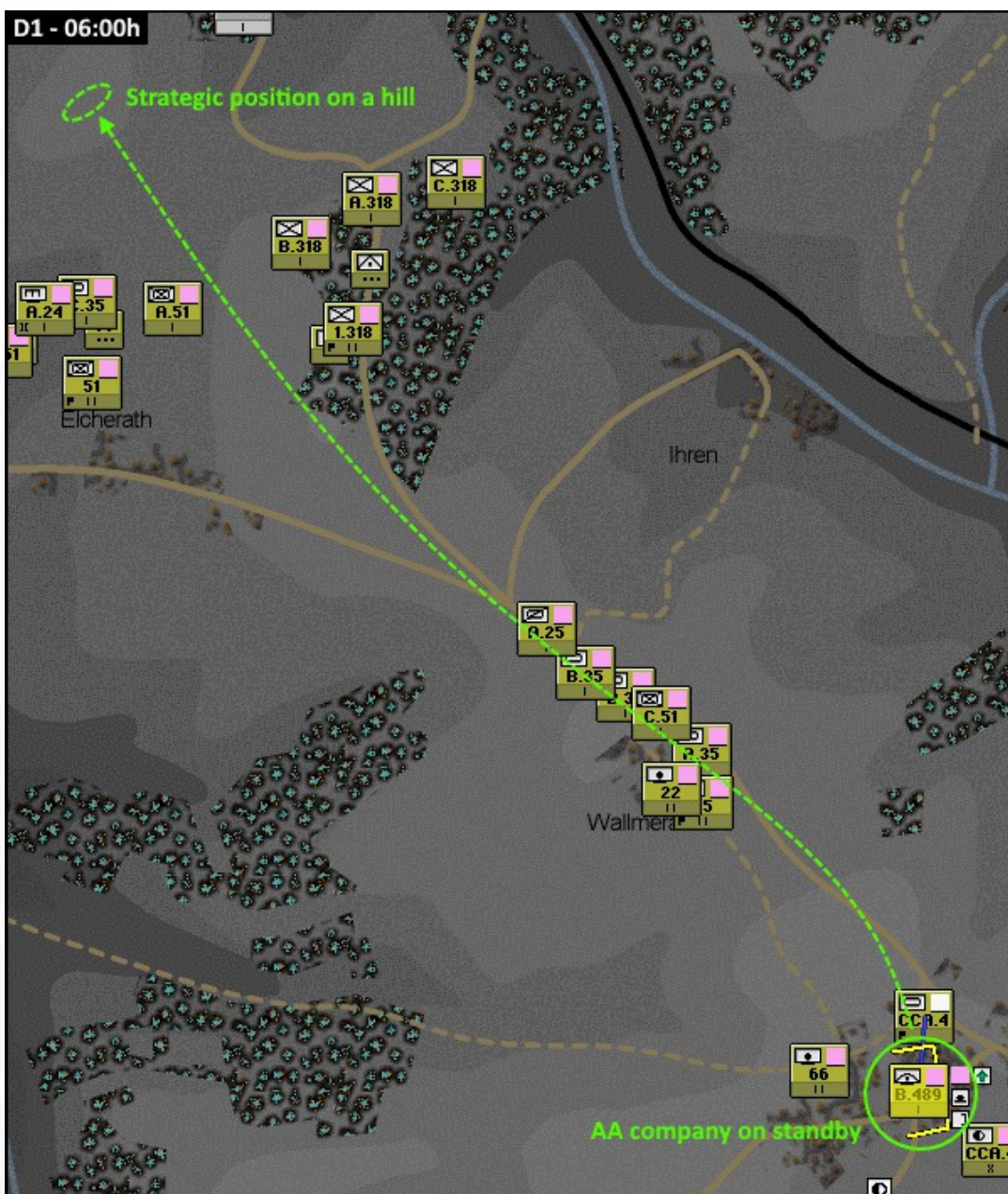
Glancing at how my forces are situated I decide to bring up an AA company from the back of my lines to a strategic position on top of a hill. How do I do this in Command Ops 2?

Brighter counter colour than usual

Superior HQ

Footprint bracket of the company
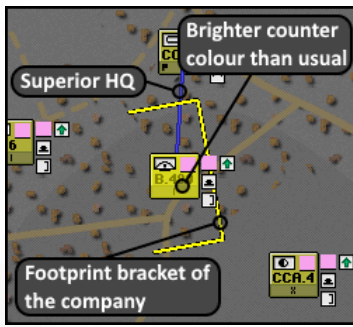
First click on the unit. Notice it will light up and have a brighter colour than usual. It will also show its footprint as shown by the bracket beneath the counter and any superior or subordinate units. Then press the "Cntl", "Ord" and "1TE" buttons on the taskbar. It will pop up the Control, Orders and Edit Task dialogs. Slide them anywhere on the map.
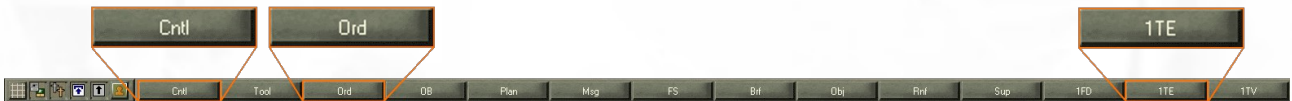
Press the move order button or use the "M" key and click on the hill. A move box with the footprint of the company and a line between the current location of the unit and its destination should now be shown on the map.


Click the move order

Click on the map

Edit your order

Notice that some orders are greyed out. This means that the selected unit is not able to be issued these specific orders

Your orders will initially always have a straight line to its destination. This is not necessarily the route the unit will take. Once orders are processed a route will be chosen and the line will be adjusted accordingly.

Edit Task

Move

Formation Unspecified

Start Static
End Day 1 06 54

Speed Normal Fastest
Route Unspecified Quickest
Avoidance Shortest
Covered Safest

Aggro Min Norm Max ☐ Ambush
ROF Min Norm Max ☐ Attacks
Losses Min Norm Max ☐ Bypass
Ammo Min Norm Max ✕ Stragglers
Basics Min Norm Max ✕ Basing
Fuel Min Norm Max

Frontage Auto Facing:
Depth Auto
✕ Auto ✕ Auto

☐ Arty Direct Spt Only ☐ Secure Crossing
☐ Avoid Friendlies ☐ Retake Position
☐ Defend In-Situ

Rest None Min Norm Max

Est. Orders Delay 00:00:20
Est. Start Time D1, 06:20

Dismiss

For simplicity's sake we are not going to change anything to the move order. Though we can already see on the Edit Task dialog that our company is expected to arrive at its destination at 06:54h by looking at the "End" time.
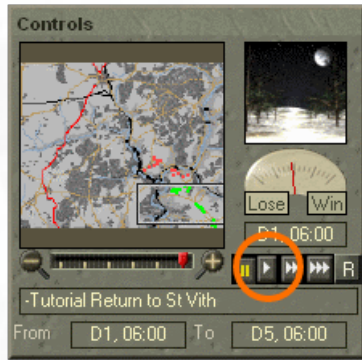

Let's get things rolling. Press the play button or the "." key and watch things unfold. At any time you can press the pause button or the "," key to stop time.

See how the footprint is long and drawn out while the company is moving. Units on the move travel in a road column, which is fast and efficient at moving. But detrimental when attacked.
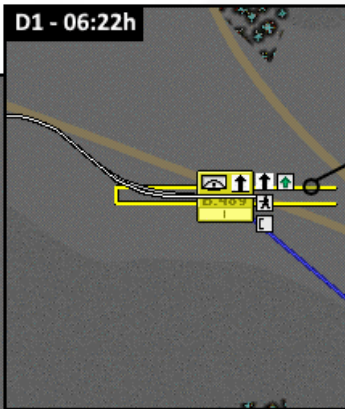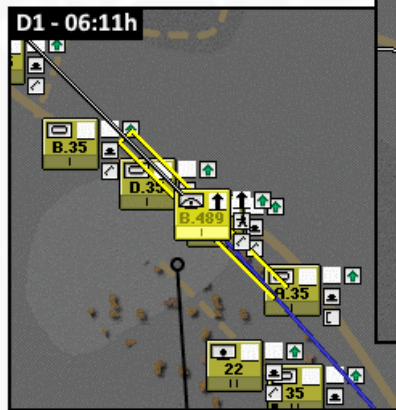
Note that the unit has started moving even faster than its order delay. This is often at the start of a scenario. Don't be fooled though after some time, most of the time a couple of hours, orders delay will be in full effect.
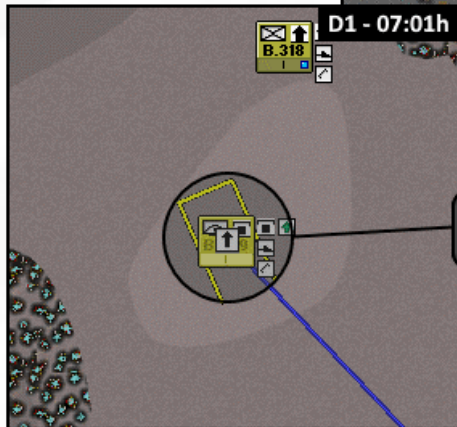
The unit arrives at its destination and widens its front towards the enemy

There we go, our AA company is now in position to start shelling the enemy. Easy enough wasn't it?
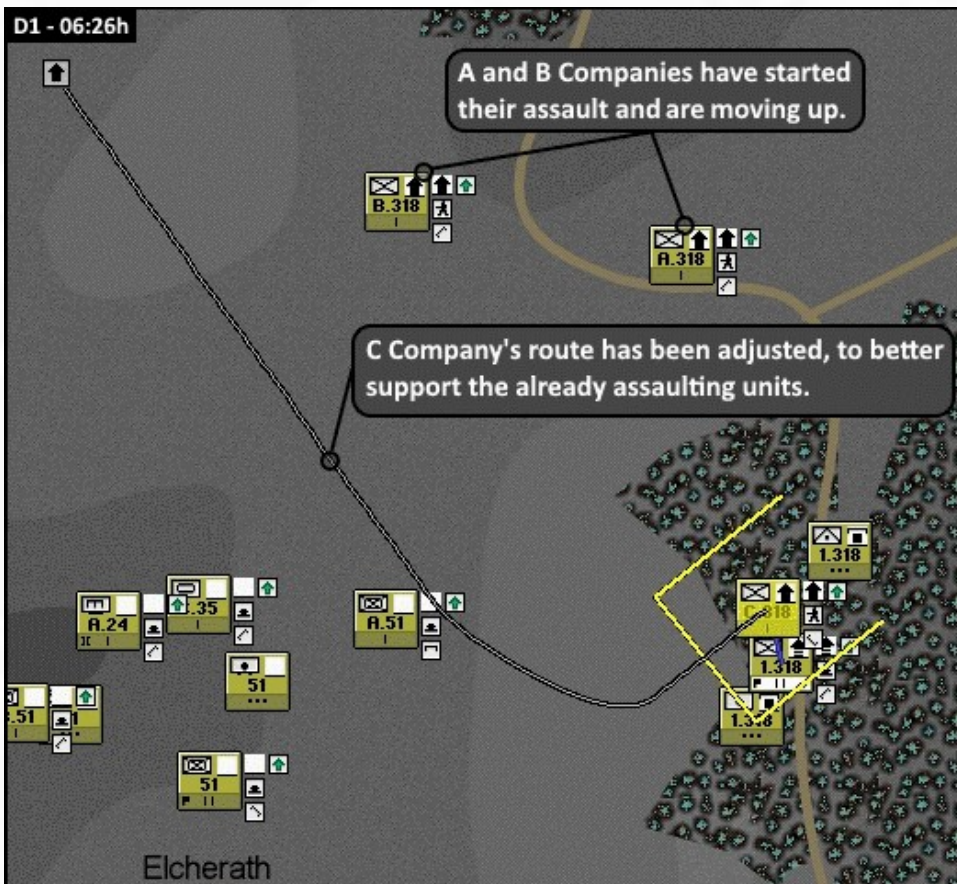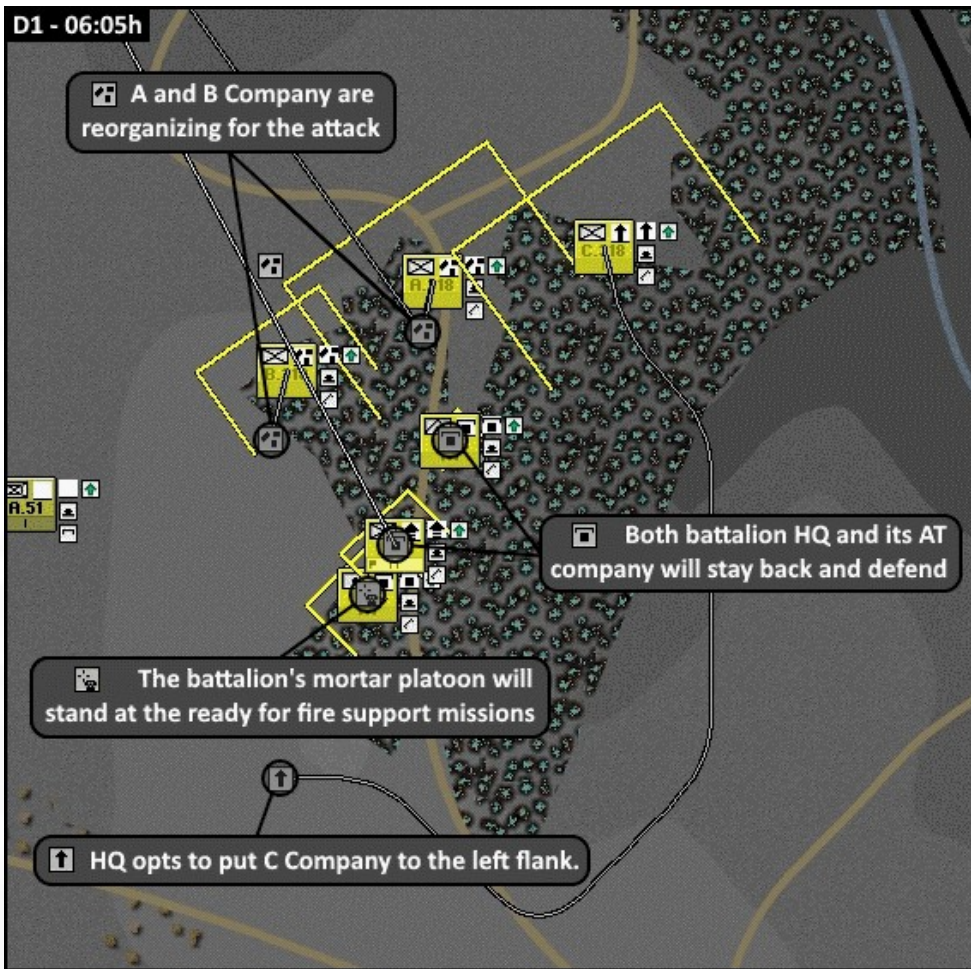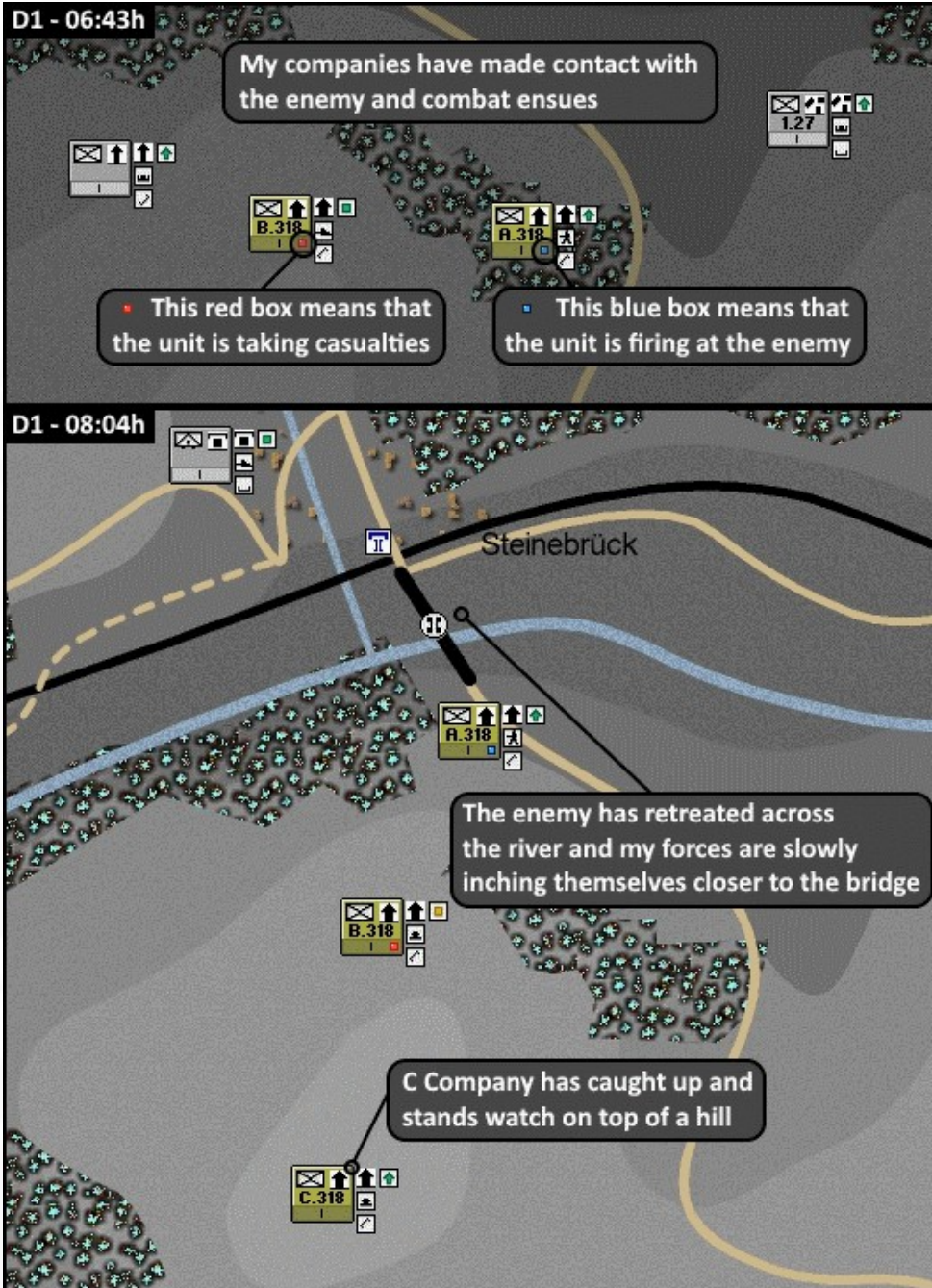
An attack order:

Moving on to the attack order. My forces are poised to strike an important river crossing but German troops are in the vicinity and they will surely impede my advance. I'm planning to go straight through them and seize that bridge. Seeing that there is quite some opposition I'll be using a battalion to do the fighting. Let's see how to order this assault.
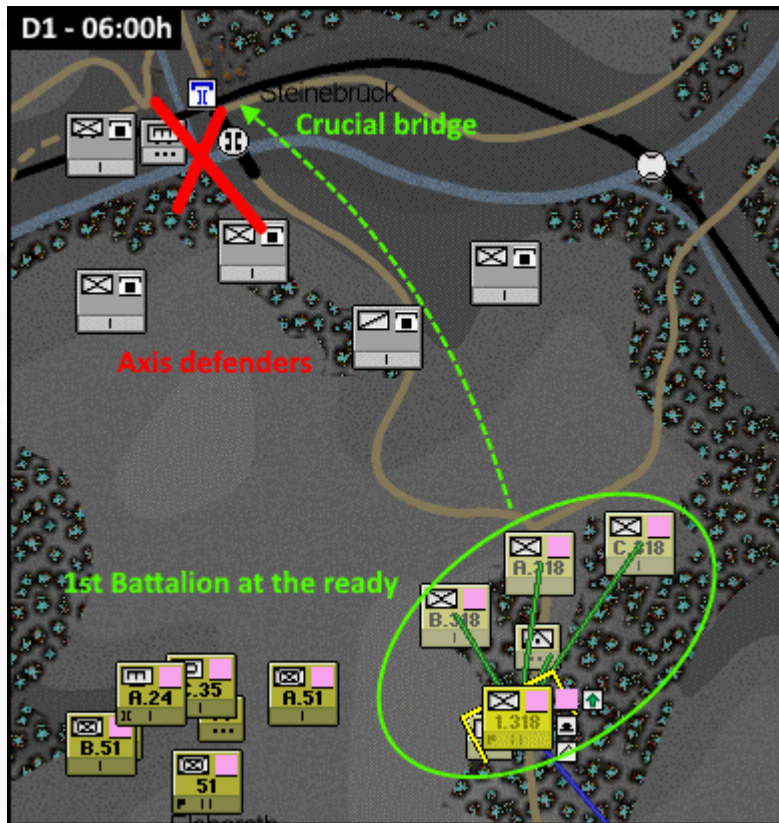
It is important to understand that an attack order in Command Ops 2 optimally has two waypoints. The first waypoint will be used to organize the units and is called the form up point. The second waypoint is the actual target location.

First select the battalion HQ. Notice that the whole battalion lights up. Now pick the attack button in the Orders dialog or merely press the "A" key. Then keep pressing the shift key as it will allow you to create waypoints. Finally click on a part of the map where your form up point will be and click a second time on the map where your target is situated. The game will automatically assign the first waypoint to a reorg order and the second one to a attack order.

Note that, in contrast to our earlier example, there are barely any greyed out orders for this unit.

Click the attack order

Steinebrück

Put a second waypoint

Orders

Reattach

Dismiss

Keep pressing shift!

Put a first waypoint

Edit your order

Edit Task

Attack

Formation Unspecified

Start
End   Day 1   11   52
Assault At: ✕ Auto
Speed   Normal   Fastest
Route   Unspecified   Quickest
         Avoidance   Shortest
         Covered   Safest
Aggro   Min Norm Max   ☐ Ambush
ROF   Min Norm Max   ☐ Attacks
Losses   Min Norm Max   ☐ Bypass
Ammo   Min Norm Max   ✕ Stragglers
Basics   Min Norm Max   ✕ Basing
Fuel   Min Norm Max

Frontage Auto   Facing:
Depth   Auto
         ✕ Auto   ✕ Auto

☐ Arty Direct Spt Only   ☐ Secure Crossing
☐ Avoid Friendlies   ☐ Retake Position
☐ Defend In-Situ

Rest   None   Min   Norm   Max

Est. Orders Delay   00:00:30
Est. Start Time   D1, 06:30

Dismiss

As we are attacking I opt to put aggro and ROF (rate of fire) on max. This will ensure that my troops will go in guns blazing.

C.318
A.318
B.318
1.318
1.318
P II
1.318

.35
A.51
51
51

Now I can already hear you say: Why have two waypoints? Why not immediately charge ahead? While it is possible to do so, this will result in the units charging off from their current positions. With a single company this is not a problem, but with a battalion or anything higher level this is very disadvantageous as it will result in an uncoordinated attack. But if your units are already in a good position, and frankly they were in this example, you can save quite some time. So in a pinch, you can pull it off.

D1 - 06:05h

A and B Company are reorganizing for the attack

Both battalion HQ and its AT company will stay back and defend

The battalion's mortar platoon will stand at the ready for fire support missions

HQ opts to put C Company to the left flank.

D1 - 06:26h

A and B Companies have started their assault and are moving up.

C Company's route has been adjusted, to better support the already assaulting units.

Elcherath

D1 -10:15h

Battalion HQ assessed that the attack on the bridge has stalled and directs C Company to the northeast for a flanking maneuver. Meanwhile A and B companies stay near the bridge and keep fighting

1.27

Weppeler

Urb

C Company will need to push back this lone enemy company and make its way through these woods in order to reach its destination

Ultimately C Company should arrive at this position just north of the bridge

C Company adopted the road collumn formation for this long trek

Steinebrück

A.318

C.318

This yellow box means that the unit is being shot at

B.318

Congratulations commander! You have just captured your first objective.

Now keep in mind that the execution of this order can have many different outcomes. In this case the battalion HQ sent C Company all the way to the northeast, leaving A and B Company to fend for themselves. If you recreate this specific order this might not happen and another plan might have been formulated by the HQ. It all depends on the actual situation on the battlefield.

A bombard order

The last order I'll touch on is the bombard order. With our troops attacking that crucial bridge I want to give them the proper support they need. I want to take one of the brigade's artillery batteries and start pounding the enemy companies at the bridge.
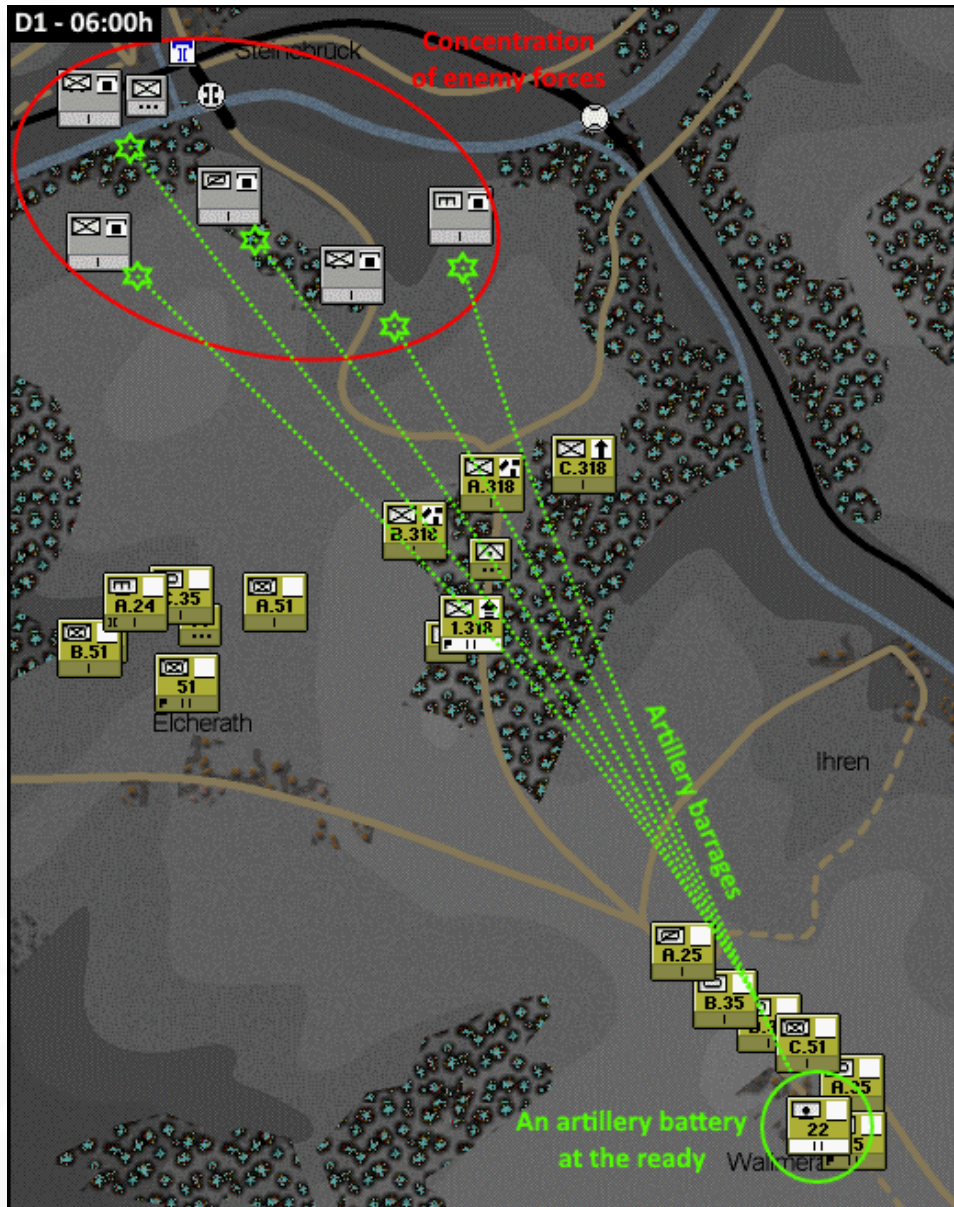
Setting up the order we'll first click on the bombard order button or just press the "B" button. Then chose a position on the map. Notice that around the target there is also a yellow box. In the previous orders this indicated the footprint of the unit at the end of the order. In this case it is the area where the artillery will drops its shells.
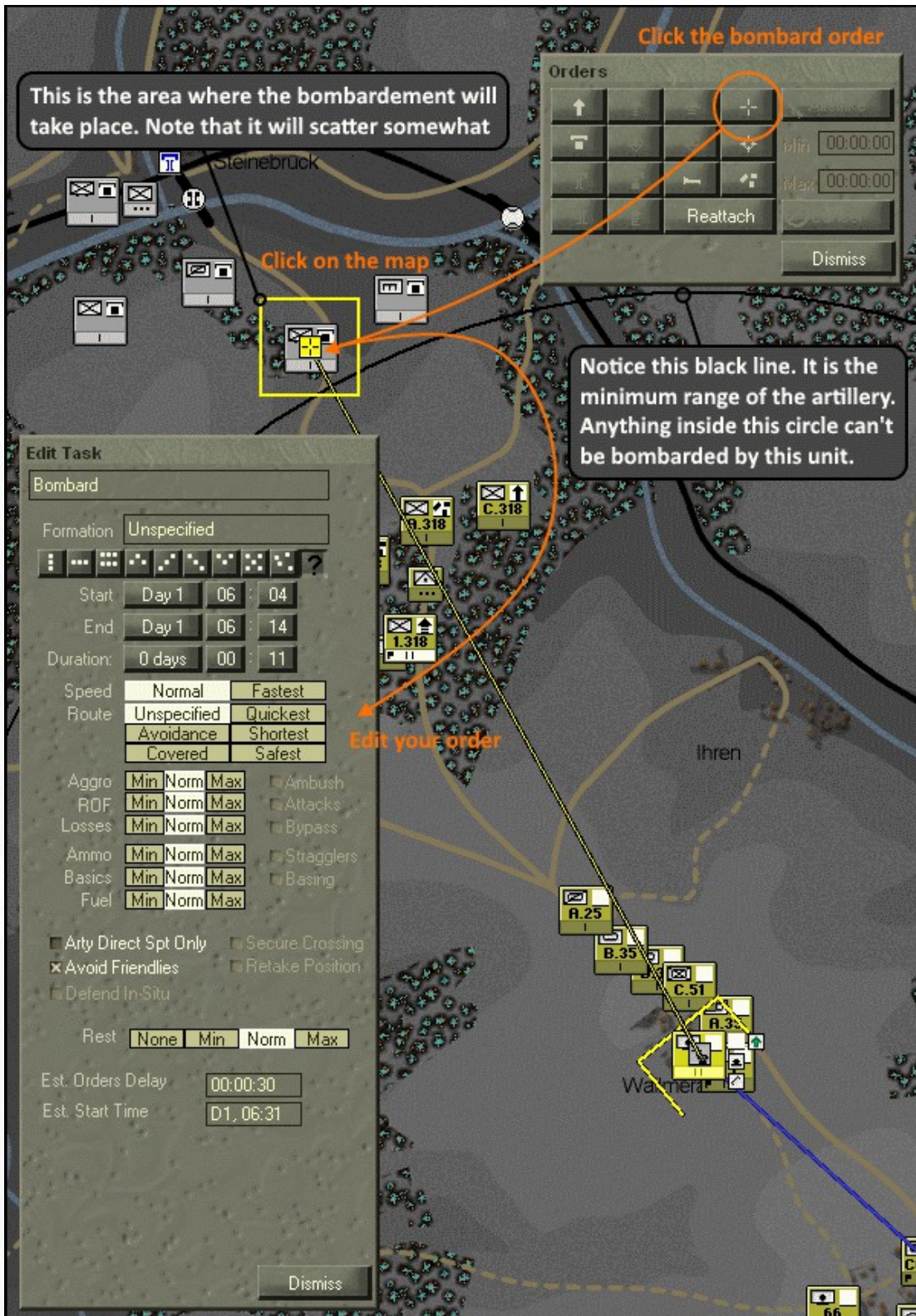
In this instance I'm not going to change anything to the order. Notice that the Edit Task dialog lets you change the duration of the order. Standard duration of a bombardement is 11 minutes, which is ok for me in this example. Let's look at this in action, shall we?
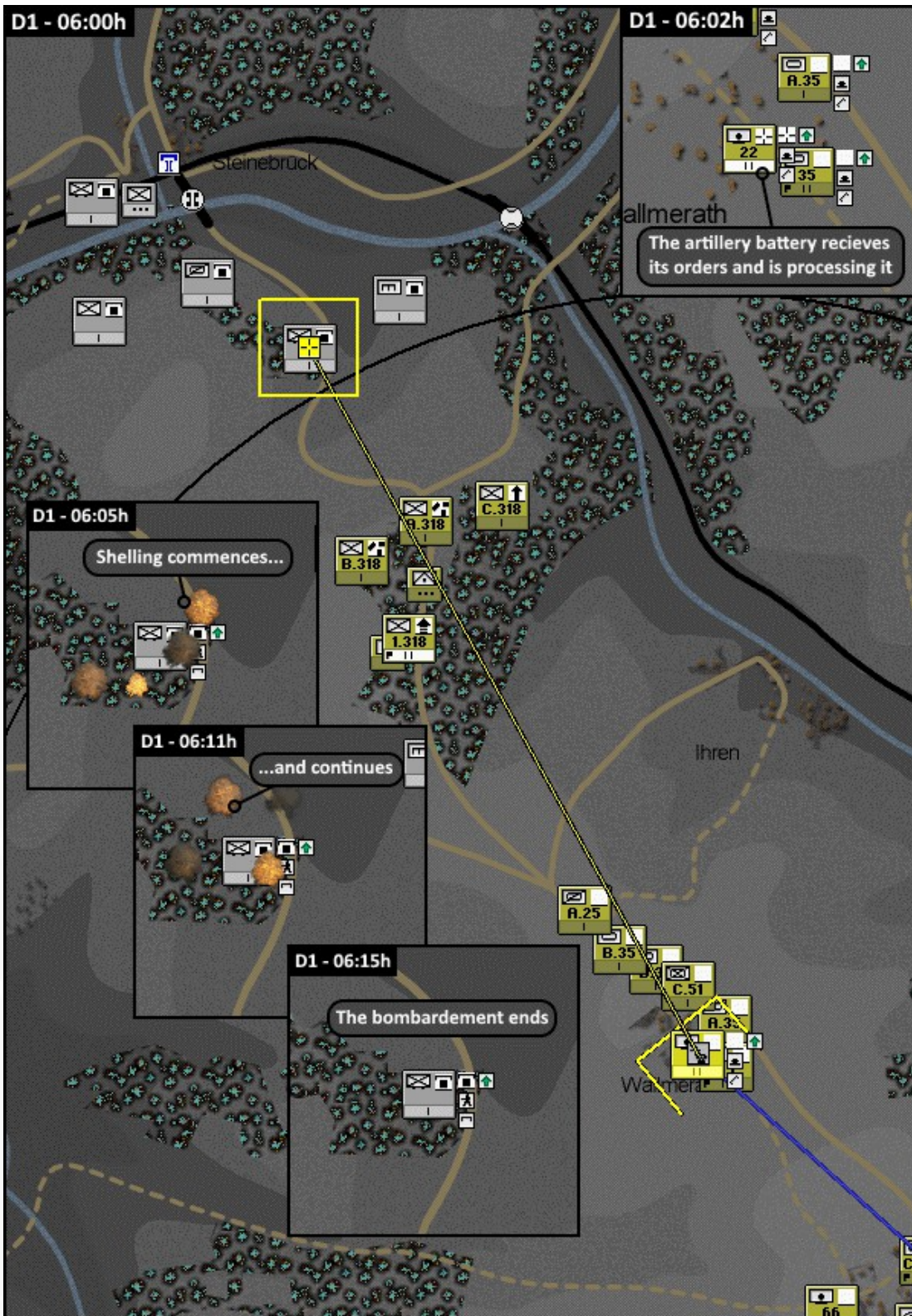
Done! We've bombed the enemy to smithereens and turned the landscape to a barren wasteland. Well..., while artillery definitely causes casualties, it is best used to demoralise dug in enemies so they start to flee or to dissuade enemies from taking certain routes. But that is for another time...

- Closing notes -

This Quickstart guide to Command Ops 2 is herby at an end. I know it is not really that "quick", or rather not as quick as I had hoped, but this is the bare bare minimum you need to start playing the game. If you want a deeper guide, consider checking out my Basic Guide to Command Ops 2.

To close off, here are some useful links:
Command Ops 2 introduction walkthrough - This video shows the basics of the game. It also includes the developer's opening moves in the Return to St Vith scenario.

TortugaPower's Let's play of the Return to St Vith scenario - An excellent playthrough of the St Vith scenario. Well explained and can basically be considered an in depth guide to the game.

The Command Ops 2 manual[forums.lnlpublishing.com] - All details concerning the game can be found in the manual. It is a hefty tome, but it explains just about everything of the game.