Operation Newspaper

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Abstract

*This scenario was one of the first Steve Jackson created. It was designed to showcase the new LGEV units. It first appeared in 1984 and was also published in **The Ogre Book**, which is available in PDF format from http://www.warehouse23.com/products/the-ogre-book. The original document has some cryptic sections (e.g., the **Shockwave** map was new at the time, so it has an 'S' but the **G.E.V.** map does not have a 'G'. I have modified all the hex coordinates to include a map number). Likewise, "all white building counters from the **Shockwave** set" is meaningless in the **Ogre Designer's Edition**, so I did some research and listed the actual building names and SP values. I also found it a little confusing to sort out the scenario information from the embedded story. I have formatted the story to stand out in "Combine Red" text boxes.*

I really enjoy multi-map scenarios. Other than the idea of combining "Breakthrough" and "Raid" into one game, I think this was the first one I ever created that was good enough to share. The idea of a shipping container full of hoverjocks in suspended animation is, I admit, a bit farfetched. But I've seen sillier setups in many an adventure novel, and it does lead to a good game. As with "Appointment with Glory," sometimes it's easier to come up with a really interesting idea for a battle than it is to explain how those forces actually came into conflict. The GEV jocks are named after *Ogre* players who were active at the time this was first published, in 1984.

> The briefing room was noisy, as was to be expected from any room full of hover jockeys. But when the door opened, the rowdiness died down to a buzz. Not that this crew was especially respectful of authority ... they weren't. But they were full of questions, and it looked as though today they would get some answers.
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> The room lights dimmed, and an unfamiliar colonel – Intelligence, by the brassard – stepped to the lectern. "I'm sure you have all been wondering why we pulled you stateside for a month of training on Paneuropean equipment," he began. Stating the obvious, of course, like any briefing officer. Then the bombshell came. "You're going to be using that equipment on the 20th of this month, for a raid on Emden."
>
> Suddenly everyone was talking at once. The colonel calmly waited for the furor to die down. "No, gentlemen, I assure you, we are perfectly aware that the Emden complex is a considerable distance from the front. We're going to put you in there right under the Micks' noses, and we're going to get you out again. And, in the meantime, you're going to kick some ass ... "

I. Introduction

"Operation Newspaper" is a scenario representing a raid and reconnaissance mission on a Paneuropean rear area. Sixteen Combine pilots, using captured Paneuropean equipment, are covertly inserted in a small port facility near Emden. Their mission: recon the area, create as much trouble as possible, and get out again.

II. Setup

- **Map:** Use both the *Shockwave* (S1-North and S1-South) and *G.E.V.* (G1-North and G1-South) maps, with the *G.E.V.* map set up to the east (S1-2301/G1-0101 and S1-2323/G1-0123).
- **Setup:** The Paneuropean player (blue) sets up first. He gets the following forces:

    1. Two laser towers (SP 20) and two lasers (SP 20).

    2. 15 building counters as defined below (i.e., a total of 19 buildings, counting the lasers and laser towers).

        (a) Admin (SP 10)
        (b) Admin (SP 10)
        (c) Admin (SP 10)
        (d) Admin (SP 20)
        (e) Admin (SP 20)
        (f) Admin (SP 20)
        (g) Admin (SP 30)
        (h) Admin (SP 30)
        (i) Admin (SP 30)
        (j) Reactor (SP 60)
        (k) Reactor (SP 60)
        (l) Strongpoint (SP 60)
        (m) Strongpoint (SP 60)
        (n) Strongpoint (SP 70)
        (o) Strongpoint (SP 80)

        Use the appropriate yellow "? BUILDING" counters from *Ogre Designer's Edition* to represent the various lasers, laser towers and buildings. These counters are set up anywhere on the combined maps, with the following restrictions:

        – No more than one building may be located in any vertical row of hexes.
        – No building may be within 6 hexes of any other building.
        – Buildings may be set up in water hexes; such buildings are assumed to be on islands or pilings, and not underwater.

    3. Four 3-1 infantry units, one in each of the following hexes: S1-0215, S1-0710, G1-0404, G1-2203.

    4. Two 3-1 marine units, one in each of the following hexes: S1-2315, S1-0307.

    5. Ten trucks, five in each of the following hexes: S1-1515, S1-1615.

    6. Eight hovertrucks, two in each of the following hexes: S1-1210, S1-1310, S1-1409, G1-1611.

    7. Two Heavy Tanks in S1-2304.

    8. Three GEVs, one in each of the following hexes: G1-0416, G1-1513, S1-1907.

    9. Three LGEVs, one in each of the following hexes: S1-1120, S1-2105, G1-1611.

All building counters are placed yellow side up except for the two laser towers.
The Paneuropean player will also receive reinforcements as listed below.

The Combine (red) player may study the setup after the Paneuropean player has placed all buildings and units. He may then pick any six building counters and expose them (these are the installations already known to Combine intelligence). Finally, he places his force – 16 LGEVs – on one of the following three hexes: S1-0313, G1-0413, or G1-2113, and secretly writes down which map [*Shockwave* (S1) or *G.E.V.* (G1)] he will escape from. The Combine player moves first, obeying stacking limits after his first move.

Captain Griffith shook his head heavily. As his eyes cleared and he took in his surroundings, he grinned. "We made it, didn't we?" The small man in gray, bending over him with a syringe, nodded. "Yes, Captain. You made it. Now, if you will help me with the others . . . " Twenty minutes later, the whole team was awake. Griffith shook his head in amazement. Everything was going right, for once. The hibernation drug was better than 95% effective, but he'd been sure he'd lose at least one man.

The 16 hovercraft pilots, and the one small spy, were alone in a cavernous warehouse. All about them were the shadowy bulks of huge shipping containers. One was open; the pilots had ridden to Emden in it. As they watched, the agent used an electronic key to unseal two others. 'Here are your machines, gentlemen. Let's get them checked out."

As they worked, one of the other pilots waved a hand at Griffith. "Sir? Did they tell you how they did this? I mean . . . " He waved his hand at the warehouse.

"Just what they told all of us, Bob," came the reply. "Our boys captured the container ship, threw three cases of tractor parts overboard, and put us on instead. If you want the details, you can talk to CIS." The pilots looked expectantly at the man in gray, but he smiled and shook his head.

III. Sequence of Play

Beginning play: After exposing six building counters (plus the two laser towers that start the game exposed), the Combine player picks his entry hex and escape map, and takes his first move. The Paneuropean player may not move until he has been "alerted" as described below.

The warehouse door groaned open and the little hovercraft slid out into the darkness. Griffith's earphone buzzed. "Red Leader, this is Red Three."

"Go ahead, Red Three."

"I forgot to ask. Why did they call this 'Operation Newspaper'?"

"It's from something a fellow said a couple hundred years ago. A publisher. He said, 'The purpose of a newspaper is to report the news and raise hell."'

"Huh?"

"That's what we're going to be doing, Howie. Reporting the news . . . and raising hell."

Paneuropean alert: Since the Combine units' insertion was accomplished by stealth, Paneuropean units may not act until they are alerted. Alert takes place automatically if Combine units:

1. enter any building hex;

2. make any attack;

3. pass within two hexes of any Paneuropean armor unit;

4. pass within one hex of any Paneuropean infantry or marine unit.

Whenever a Combine LGEV passes within 3 hexes of any building, the Paneuropean player rolls 2 dice. On a roll of 11 or 12, the intruding LGEVs were recognized as intruders and an alert has been sounded. Roll at the end of the Combine turn; roll once for each building approached, regardless of how many LGEVs pass nearby, or when (in the turn) the LGEVs passed within 3 hexes.

When an alert occurs, all Paneuropean units can move and attack immediately. Any Paneuropean attacks made on the first turn after alert are at a disadvantage; subtract 1 from the die roll. Note that if any Paneuropean units are the targets of overrun attacks, they will be alerted by the attack and will fire first – but still at a -1 to the die roll.

Until the Paneuropean units are alerted, they do not move at all; the Combine player just takes one turn after another.

> The raiders spread out over the countryside. Reports came in: an office complex here, a laser there, a nuclear reactor over there, a truck convoy poking along the road somewhere else. It was less than ten minutes before Griffith thought he had the picture. "Red Leader to all units; we start shooting in four minutes. Here are your sectors and first targets . . . "
>
> Four minutes later, Red Team was cruising along a hillside overlooking a brand-new nuclear reactor complex. The countdown reached zero. Guns firing, Red Team hotdogged down the hill toward their first target. Shortly thereafter, the lights went out.

Building identification: One of the Combine raiders' chief objectives is to identify buildings (and to destroy them, if possible). As per section 11.06 of the ***Ogre Designer's Edition*** rulebook, a building is automatically identified if a Combine unit approaches within 3 hexes. Once the building is identified, flip the counter to the identifying side. Remember to roll for alerting, if the Paneuropean forces are not yet alert.

Once he has been alerted, the Paneuropean player may attack with his lasers and laser towers. When a laser attacks, it is automatically identified.

> "Blue Leader to all units. We just made ID on the target at S1-2011, the hard way. It's a laser, and it's active."
>
> "Red Leader to all Green units; it's your target. Take it out. Red Leader to Blue Leader – any casualties for you? You look OK on my screen."
>
> "Blue Leader to Red Leader. We're OK. Bailey got scorched, but they quit tracking him to go after Vail, and I think he'll be moving again before . . . "
>
> "Green Two to all units. Laser at S1-2011 neutralized."

Reinforcements: Once the Paneuropeans have been alerted, the Paneuropean player rolls two dice at the beginning of each of his turns, and references Table 1 to determine the type of reinforcing unit(s) to appear on that turn. Then the Paneuropean player rolls two more dice and references Table 2 to determine where to place the reinforcing unit(s).

Roll	Unit Type
3, 4	Heavy Tank
5	Missile Tank
6	Two Light Tanks (same location)
7	3-1 Infantry
8	LGEV
9	GEV
10	GEV-PC carrying 3-1 Infantry
11	3-1 Marines
12	Two Light Tanks (same location)

Table 1: Paneuropean Reinforcements: Unit Type

Roll	Unit Location
2, 3	S1-0401 (on road)
4	S1-1801 (on road)
5	G1-0401 (on road)
6	G1-2304 (on road)
7	G1-2315 (on road)
8	G1-1822 (on road)
9	G1-0422 (on road)
10	S1-1822 (on road)
11, 12	S1-0422 (on road)

Table 2: Paneuropean Reinforcements: Unit Location

The entry hex of a reinforcing unit counts as its first hex of movement; reinforcing units are eligible for the road movement bonus on their first turn. If the road is cut, blocked by rubble, or occupied by an enemy unit, reinforcing units may enter on another hex, as close as possible to the designated one, but do not get the road bonus. The Paneuropean player may decline any reinforcement that he does not want, but may not delay it until a later turn.

IV. SPECIAL RULES

Destruction of reactors: There are two Paneuropean reactors on the map. Their destruction will cause fluctuations in the local power net, temporarily damaging the defenders' ability to communicate with local CPs and therefore to target enemy units. (Since this is a rear area, the system is not as multiply-redundant as it should be.) If one reactor is destroyed, the Paneuropean player must subtract 1 from each attack roll he makes for the next 3 turns. If the second reactor is destroyed, the Paneuropean player must subtract 1 from each attack roll he makes for the next 5 turns. If these time periods overlap, the 5-turn period starts as soon as the second reactor is destroyed.

V. End Game

Escape: The game ends when all surviving Combine units have escaped. To escape, a Combine unit must leave the map on one of the water hexes, S1-0106 through S1-0114, or G1-2306 through G1-2314. From there, they can reach the ocean for pickup. Before the game starts, the Combine player must secretly designate which map he will escape from; the hexes on the other map are considered part of a lake, and are not valid escape hexes. This does not represent any Paneuropean uncertainty as to the location of the ocean, but rather the shock value of the sudden attack – the defenders aren't sure what is going on, or what the real tactical picture is.

Some Paneuropean units (i.e. trucks) may wish to escape to avoid destruction by the raiders. They may escape by leaving the north or south edge of either map; the raiders won't follow them that far.

> The seven remaining hovercraft buzzed toward the harbor. Griffith studied his screen. Nothing ahead but some infantry in the buildings – and those could be evaded. He activated his mike and gave orders. But, even as he did, the screen image changed. Some of those infantry units were moving east, into the water. That meant one of two things. Either their commander was crazy, or those troops were marines.

Winning the game: Only the Combine player accrues victory points in this scenario. He scores as follows:

- 40 points for each strongpoint destroyed

- 40 points for each reactor destroyed

- 25 points for each admin building destroyed

- 20 points for each laser or laser tower destroyed

- 10 points for each 1-hex "river" bridge destroyed (including railroad bridges)

- 5 points for each small bridge destroyed (including railroad bridges)

- 3 points for each truck or hovertruck destroyed

- 1 point for each point of fire directed into a town hex by either side. (Each point of fire does one point of damage to a town hex. 12 points of damage turns a town to rubble, and no further damage can be done to that hex. For overrun combat, count each unit participating in the combat, regardless of type, as doing 1 point of damage to the town.)

- Standard victory points for each enemy combat unit destroyed. See "Victory points" on page 12 of the Scenarios Book from *Ogre Designer's Edition*.

If some of the LGEVs escape, the Combine player scores further victory points as follows:

- 20 points for each LGEV that escapes. However, no more than half the Combine's VP total can be from escaped LGEVs, to prevent the Paneuropean player from firing a few token shots and then withdrawing his whole force.

- 10 points for each building identified (regardless of whether or not it was destroyed). The 8 buildings identified at the start of play do not count. No identification counts for points unless at least one LGEV escapes after that ID is made . . . somebody has to carry the word back!

This scenario requires more victory point "bookkeeping" than most *Ogre/G.E.V.* games. Players are advised to set up a sheet of scratch paper at the beginning of the game, and to use the BRIDGE OUT and/or ROAD CUT counters as well as the damaged town and rubble terrain overlays from *Ogre Designer's Edition*.

Victory levels: The degree of success of the Combine mission is determined as follows:

- Less than 125 points: Total failure. Mission planners will be demoted in rank or court-martialed.

- 125-250 points: Poor results. Mission planners are not likely to be promoted again.

- 251-500 points: Routine results, barely justifying the expenditure for the mission.

- 501-750 points: A successful mission, well worth the expenditure of men and material. Commendations all around.

- Over 750 points: A smashing success. Mission planners will be promoted. Surviving raiders will be promoted and decorated.

VI. Variant Scenarios

Solitaire play: This is a good solitaire scenario. The player sets up the buildings upside-down and randomly, except for the laser towers and lasers. These four units start right-side-up, and the player turns 4 more buildings over at random. Since the player is thus prevented from strategically locating the buildings for a good defense, and from attacking the LGEVs with laser fire before lasers are identified, adjust all VP requirements by 50 points in the defender's favor.

Suitcase nuke: The attacker may take one "suitcase" nuclear charge. This is carried by one LGEV; designate that unit by stacking the "missile" counter underneath. The LGEV carrying the nuke has a movement of only 3/1 until it drops the nuke (which it may do at any time). Once the nuke is dropped, it may not be recovered, and enemy forces may not interfere with it (they don't know it's there). The Combine player may set off the nuke at any time; its effects are exactly the same as those of a Cruise Missile in section 10.04 of the *Ogre Designer's Edition* rulebook.

Note that the nuke is a good tool for destroying town hexes. An "X" result on a town turns it to rubble; a "D" result has (for game purposes) no effect. Because of the power and expense of the nuke, adjust all VP requirements by 150 points in the defender's favor.

> The darkened streets roared with the passage of Griffith and his men. Fire jumped from a building ahead of them. One of the oncoming buggies slewed and recovered. Return fire demolished the building and its unlucky occupants. Then they were at the harbor. The machines jinked and skidded, seeking a smooth transition from land to water. They found it. Then the surface of the water, ahead of them, lit up.

"Hit them together, boys! Follow me!" The other hovercraft followed the leader, adopting an arrow formation, charging toward the line of waiting marines, rocking on the water in their battlesuits. Then contact – and everything was chaos. The ocean boiled with men and explosions. The LGEV to Griffith's right vanished in a fireball; the one behind it ran into a swell and broke up. A Mick trooper emerged from the water right in front of him, swooping low like a jet-assisted dolphin. Then, as Griffith's gun tracked him, the trooper simply fell apart – more like a machine than a man. A hoarse scream came over the radio: Griffith couldn't tell who it was, but a light on his board went out as the screaming stopped.

Then it was over. Four tiny GEVs sped across the water toward a North Sea rendezvous. Behind them, Emden was burning.

VII. Scenario Notes

This scenario was conceived as a "showcase" for the new LGEV unit. It's cheap and fast-moving, but not too hard-hitting . . . and it cannot stand up to a firefight! The only tactics that will work for an all-LGEV force are hit-and-run. The farther into the game you get, the less time the LGEVs will have to "hit," and the more they'll need to run!

The attacker can bring off a substantial victory by patient, cowardly tactics. Don't fight unless it's necessary – but don't miss a chance to destroy enemy units before they can hit you. With a unit as weak as the LGEV, instituting an overrun is purely a desperation tactic. Unless, of course, the enemy can't shoot back. A single LGEV can raze almost any building in a single turn, just by making one overrun after another. Each movement point spent in overrunning is worth 1 attack strength $\times 4$ overrun multiplier $\times 2$ fire rounds = 8 structure points of damage – for each LGEV. That's a lot of damage – but then, four minutes is a long time when you're firing tacnukes at a large, helpless target!

The defender is at a disadvantage until he can get organized and pull some sort of force together. Protect the buildings – especially the laser towers – but your first priority is organization! Don't ignore reinforcements just because they seem badly placed. Between the speed of the LGEVs and your own uncertainty about their objectives, no unit on the map is guaranteed worthless until the game is over.

Game balance: The easiest way to change the balance, if you find that one side wins consistently, is to change the number of lasers the Paneuropeans have. Even one laser makes a big difference. For a smaller change, let the Paneuropean lasers be 30 or 40 SP instead of 20.

Variation: Try the same thing with 8 regular GEVs instead of 16 LGEVs. The bigger GEVs are tougher, but they can't be in as many places at once! And attrition from lasers is more damaging when you start with only half the number of units.