My, You Have Attractive Flanks

by Phil Johnston

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One of the perennial problems of miniature wargames is off-board movement: how can you accurately represent the movement of troops away from the tabletop? How can we reproduce the effect of Davout's flanking attack at Eylau or Ney's botched "off-board" movement at Bautzen?

Of course, it's not just a Napoleonic issue. So many battles throughout history were decided by the timely, or untimely, arrival of "off-board" forces. There's Frederick at Leuthen or Jackson at Chancellorsville, as well as Bluecher at Waterloo.

To reproduce these maneuvers, our group has tried a number of expedients. We've made the game table bigger. But we've found that no matter how large the table is (ours is now 12' x 16') somebody wants to try to move around the flank. And, of course, a bigger table stimulates the gamer's psychological need to "fill" it with figures - which eliminates those oh so desirable flanks. Then we're back where we started ... and our game room will burst if we try to make the table much bigger.

We've tried other expedients: abstractly pro-rating off-board movement, "measuring" off-board space to judge distances and assigning arbitrary off-board movement rates. Nothing proved satisfactory. The flanking force, moving 1/2" beyond the edge of the table, always arrived at the correct destination on-time and in good order. An Archduke John or General Fremont would perform a flank attack with the skill of a Soult or Jackson. Players would often assign putzy commanders to such missions, since off-board movement involved no command ability - simply the proper use of a tape measure. The good commanders would remain on the table, where their command ratings had direct influence on the battle.

To further muddy the waters, how can you resolve flanking movements where the moving force encounters an enemy screening unit? You could set it up on another table, but then you might as well just extend the main table to include that area. (The bigger table again.) And often the screening force is seriously outnumbered - is it worth setting up a separate battle to resolve a fight between three corps and an opposing brigade? In many instances, the historic function of such a screen was simply to gather intelligence about and delay the off-board attacker, not to stop him dead in his tracks.

Well, after much soul-searching, trial-and-error and "warm" discussions we developed the following rules. Although they were developed for use with the Napoleonic rules Legacy of Glory, they can easily be adapted to any rule set that employs leader ratings and a chain of command. In Legacy of Glory players are assigned at the corps and army level. For a smaller scale of play - players in charge of divisions or brigades - substitute divisions for corps. Finally, since no one in our group likes to take the role of non-playing umpire, these rules are designed to be used without one.

Preliminaries
Prior to each battle, the scenario designer should describe the off-board terrain along each

table edge, specifying the following:
* The general terrain density: open, light, medium, heavy
* The available road network: none, secondary, primary
* The availability of off-board terrain features for navigation (such as a large hill or town) or the ability to see the on-board battlefield from off board. Note this as obstructed visibility (no line of sight or landmark) or unobstructed visibility.

Each army commander then secretly assigns forces for off-board movement, defense or screening, issuing orders or corps instructions as appropriate. (See below for more details on these orders or instructions.) Screening forces should comprise at least a regiment or brigade (i.e., more than one battalion) - two crippled Neapolitans and their toothless dog don't make much of a screen. General information about these off-board forces (numbers of infantry and cavalry figures) is noted on 3x5 cards, each commander writing one card for each table side and one for the table's rear edge. These are placed face-down on or near the appropriate edge.

Corps Instructions
When the army commander wishes to instruct a corps to maneuver off-board, corps instructions are written normally. Each instruction must designate the intended arrival area with reference to on-board terrain features. Corps command tests and Grand Tactical Formation (GTF) order activation tests are conducted normally.

Sometimes the off-board force will comprise less than a corps, say a brigade or division on a screening mission. In this case write the appropriate GTF order, usually defend or rearguard. Sequence and activate this order normally. You could send a small force - one not directly commanded by a player - on a flank attack mission, but as you'll see, that can be a dicey proposition.

Once the instructions and/or orders are written, the corps commander measures the distance between his force's current location to the furthest point of its destination (measured along the table edge or from "space" in the case of a corps off-board on a strategic flanking position). The perfect arrival time (the point at which the force would arrive in the best of all possible worlds) then must be sequenced as follows:

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Off-Board Sequencing	
Begin with current turn	+?
Each one foot of distance to destination (or fraction)	+1
Starting from or behind friendly table edge	+3
French	-2
Austrian/Russian	+2
No road network	+4
Secondary road network	+2
Primary road network	+0
Open terrain	+0
Light terrain	+2
Medium terrain	+4
Heavy terrain	+8

*Austrians and Russians had notoriously poor staff functions during the Napoleonic wars. Add this modifier to any other topographically challenged army.

Total these values to determine the perfect arrival number. When that TAC (20-minutes - a grand battle turn or GBT is 2 hours) is reached, the corps commander then must take an arrival test. This will determine whether he is on-time and in the right place.

First, the flanking force's player commander examines the 3x5 card containing information about the opposing force in that off-board area. If the opposing army commander has designated any forces (see above for minimum force allocations) off-board in that area, he may examine the card of the flanking force. If not ... well, it's not a good idea to leave your flanks exposed. So prepare for your well-deserved drubbing.

Two ratios between the off-board forces now must be established: cavalry figures to cavalry figures and total figures to total figures. (If an attacking force of a division or less - without a player-commander - encounters anybody, it will halt in place and await new instructions. In other words, it is confused and unavailable on the current game day.)

If the "defending" cavalry outnumbers the "attacking" cavalry, the attacker is out of luck; his force won't show up on the table in the current game day. (The inadequate strength of the "attacking" cavalry would force that side to deploy its units into battle formation prematurely and advance in anti-cavalry formations, slowing its pace to a crawl.) If the "attacking" cavalry outnumbers the defender, the resulting ratio produces a die roll modifier to the arrival test. (This reflects the amount of time required to isolate or defeat the defending cavalry.)

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If the defending force consists of at least a division (9 or more battalions), or if it is outnumbered by less than 3-to-1, a separate battle should be set up and fought. (Again, the defending force is of sufficient size to significantly delay the attacker, possibly preventing them from arriving "on-table" during the game day.) If the ratio is 3-1 or greater, a die roll modifier will be added to the arrival test. (These modifiers are larger than those for cavalry, since the attacking infantry would deploy more slowly than cavalry. Also, cavalry combats typically resolve themselves more quickly than infantry combats do.)

In cases where the ratio indicates a die roll modifier, consider the smaller force destroyed (50% casualties for campaign purposes) and routed. Option: the attacking player may detail a pursuit with at least a 2-to-1 cavalry superiority and raise the defeated forces' losses to 75%. For Legacy of Glory, treat as a separate battle and calculate rear-guard and pursuit normally, considering the attacker to have won a decisive victory and losers' GTF FML to be 1. Write GTF orders as appropriate.

Arrival Test	
Add Commander Rating Modifier	+/-?
Unobstructed visibility	+2
No road network	-2
Primary road network	+2
Bad weather	-2
Attacking Cavalry outnumbers defending cavalry by more than:	
1:1	-4*
2:1	-3**
3:1	-2
4:1	-1
5:1	0
Attacker outnumbers defender by at least +8	
3:1	-4***
4:1	-2****
5:1	-1

*Two attacking cavalry GTF's formation morale levels (FML) are lowered by two (consider as fatigued for other rule sets).

**One attacking cavalry GTF's formation morale level (FML) is lowered by two (consider as fatigued for other rule sets) and it loses 10% of the number of defending figures as hits - double number of hits in heavy terrain.

***One attacking infantry GTF's formation morale level (FML) is lowered by two (consider as fatigued for other rule sets), and it loses 20% of the number of defending figures as hits - double number of hits in heavy terrain.

Note: hits in Legacy of Glory are converted to permanent casualties at a ratio of about 2-to-1. Adjust accordingly for your rules.

Roll 2D10 and add the above modifiers to determine the result

7 or less	8-9	10-12	13-14	15-16	17+
Lost	1 GBT delay	4 TAC delay	3 TAC delay	2 TAC delay	No delay

Note: a GBT in Legacy of Glory is the equivalent of 2 hours.

If the result is no delay, the corps commander may immediately begin deploying his GTFs, subject to the two GTFs per road restriction. If the result is a delay, the corps commander must wait to begin deployment.

If result is "lost" roll again using only the CRM as modifier. If second result is also "lost," corps is hopelessly befuddled and won't arrive during the current game day. If the result is delay or no delay, wait the given number of TACs or GBT. The corps commander may then attempt a Daring Test to move onto the board from whatever location he finds himself. (In Legacy of Glory a daring test represents the courage and initiative of a commander in a fluid or unanticipated tactical situation. Some French commanders have it; most Austrians do not. For other rules you'll have to develop an equivalent test.)

Use the daring test results but modify 2D10 by adding Leadership Rating Modifier (LRM) and CRM of corps commander. If the result is "no," the corps will remain off-board. If the result is "yes," the corps may begin deployment.

To determine location of "lost" force whose commander has passed a daring test, roll 2D10 and consult the following chart to determine the corps' position relative to its intended destination.

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2-3	4-6	7-8	9-10	11-12	13-15	16-18	19-20
144" left	108" left	72" left	36" left	36" right	72" right	108" right	144" right

If this result puts the corps beyond the friendly or enemy table edge base line, measure from the intended destination to the appropriate corner of the table and subtract this distance from the result. Then, divide the remainder of the result in half. This represents the location along the friendly or enemy base line. (Being lost is not always a bad thing.)

Army/Wing Commander Off-Board Movement If the off-board force is led by an army/wing commander, follow the same procedure with the army/wing commander, rather than the corps commander, performing the necessary tests. The army/wing commander must specify an order of march for his forces.

In addition, each corps commander (since he will be given a separate deployment area) must perform the arrival test on the TAC in which the army/wing actually "arrives" - not the perfect arrival number. Add the army/wing commander's CRM as an additional modifier. (Exception: the army/wing commander may specify that he is "marching" with one corps of his force. In this case, that corps commander does not take the arrival test. He is assumed to arrive when the army/wing commander does.)

These rules will encourage army commanders to guard their flanks and to send trusted subordinates on critical flanking assaults. An army commander may not judge such an assault worth the risk, as Napoleon did at Borodino. Flanking forces will face the possibility of becoming lost or seriously delayed. Or they may arrive at a time and place they didn't intend, but one which proves to be the critical moment and location on the battlefield - blundering to glory as it were.

In any case, army commanders will have to weigh the potential advantages and risks of off-board movement, making our miniature wargames that much more realistic. That's what we're all striving for.