

RETURN TO THE THIRD WORLD WAR

A REVIEW OF THE GMT GAMES EDITION OF *MBT*

by Jim Werbaneth

The genesis of *MBT* goes back to 1979 and 1980, when Yaquinto was publishing a series of World War II tactical games by Jim Day, in the *Panzer* family. These consisted of the original *Panzer*, covering the Eastern Front, *Armor*, on the Western Front after D-Day, and '88', addressing World War II in the North African Desert. Then, after the end of Yaquinto in 1983, Avalon Hill picked up the system, if not the subject. In 1989 this company published *MBT*, a modern iteration and refinement of the *Panzer* system, pitting the United States Army and the West German Bundeswehr against the Soviets in Central Europe. Four years later, it was followed up with *IDF*, which extended *MBT*'s system to the Arab-Israeli Wars of 1967 and 1973. The system was essential the same as that to *MBT*'s, and with very minor scenario special rules the components and units could be interchanged, resulting in greater varieties of map configurations. Further, enterprising scenario designers could backdate

MBT's mid-eighties situation to cover early seventies battles in Europe, or write Soviet-American desert scenarios.

Most regrettably, Avalon Hill did little more with this family of games beyond publishing them, with no expansions or subsequent titles. The sole attempt at a supplement came in 1990, when as part of a larger *MBT*-driven issue, *The General* contained new data cards, but not counters, for late-model T-55's and T-62's in Soviet service. Despite the relative ease of designing scenarios for them, no new battles appeared in *The General*, even though a strikingly small number of them in *MBT* particularly made this a crying need. For additional scenarios, one had to turn to other publications, including *Line of Departure*.

The *Panzer-MBT* system underwent a second rebirth in 2012, when GMT published a second edition of *Panzer*. In turn this was followed up by three expansions, two covering more of the Eastern Front, and the third addressing Northwest Europe. Additionally, at this writing there is a fourth expansion on the Fall of France on preorder.

MBT

Designer:

James M. Day

Publisher:

GMT Games
PO Box 1308
Hanford CA 93232

www.gmtgames.com

Price: \$95.00

Scale:

Turn: 15 Seconds to 15 Minutes Per Turn

Map: 100 Yards Per Hex

Unit: Individual Vehicles and Crewed Weapons,
Infantry Squads and Crews

Components:

5 Backprinted, Unmounted, 10" x 27.75" Mapsheets

6 Countersheets

28 Backprinted Data Cards

1 Basic Game Rulebook

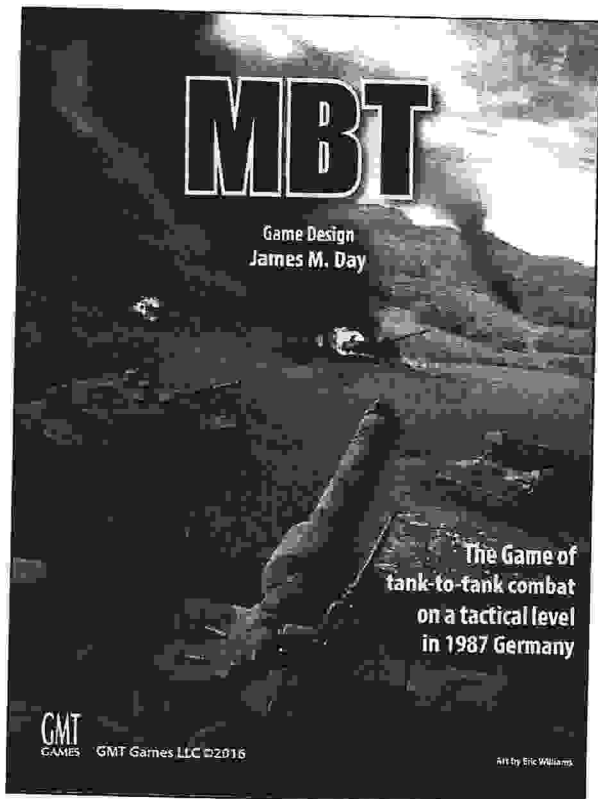
1 Advanced Game Rulebook

1 Playbook

2 Player's Aids Cards

3 Data Card Keys

Packaging: Bookcase Box



MBT too made its reappearance behind the GMT nameplate in 2016. This too represents a refinement of the basic system, but is also smaller in scope than the Avalon Hill version. The new game includes only the Americans as opposition for the Soviets, leaving the Germans for a later expansion. Also, familiar units from the first edition don't make it into this one, starting with the vehicles of the Soviet airborne. However, there are others not in the Avalon Hill box that make into GMT's version of *MBT*.

The sum is that this is no air box, ready to blow away in a moderate wind. Rather, it is a substantial package, no simple, cut down introduction of bigger and better things to come. At the same time, as with the new version of *Panzer*, there are expansions on the way. These will start with *Bundeswehr*, reintroducing the Germans, and then go on to *BAOR*, adding the British army, wholly new to the *MBT* system. Hopefully, some of those forces left out of the core game will find their way back to players' tables.

BASIC AND ADVANCED FOUNDATIONS

The essential basis of *MBT* is fairly simple, though it takes up an entire rulebook. The basic rules regulate a tank on tank game, without infantry or artillery; they and other factors, such as airpower, come in later.

Players assign orders to each of their vehicles. These are to move, fire, or do both in what is called "short halt." Those that have the last can fire, and then move at half their normal rate, in what could have been termed fire/move. This could be a little unrealistic, especially for American vehicles, and specifically the M1 Abrams main battle tank, as their advanced stabilization and fire control gives them a superior ability to move at speed and still put metal on the target. Then there is a fourth order, overwatch, which renders the unit stationary, but enables it to engage in opportunity fire.

Each gamer then rolls for initiative, with the winner getting to go first for the rest of the turn. The first function is fire, which is fairly straightforward in the basic game; there are few basic modifiers, and success is based on an intuitive and easily-implemented decimal dice roll. If the shot hits, then one checks to see if it penetrates the target's armor, which varies based on facing, and then assesses damage. In the basic game, this is dependent on the margin by which the shot's penetration exceeds the target's protection. This ranges from damage to knocked out, to the dramatic "brew up," in which the vehicle bursts into flames.

After fire, units move. Each has three movement rates, for cross-country, path, and road movement. Unlike most tactical games, in *MBT* a unit cannot move cross-country and receive the benefits of a path or road in the same turn; in order to use the latter, it has stay on the route. As a result, players will end up using roads and paths as a kind of strategic movement in a tactical context, and cross-country for everything else, even when following them.

The basic game is somewhat misnamed. It represents the core of *MBT*'s rules for armored fighting vehicles, which are the dominant combat units of the game. However, it would have been better off dubbed the introductory game, as that is what it really is; no player with any interest in the game or modern tactics would stick with the basic game, and nor should they. The real meat of *MBT* lies in the advanced game.

This is contained in its own rulebook. In some ways, it builds on what starts with the basic game, adding detail to the tank combat especially. There is a more detailed approach to being hit by ordnance, and also new classes of weapons, including anti-tank guided missiles [ATGM's].

It does not present a simple, incremental advance over the basic game though. The *MBT* advanced game introduces vital elements of combine arms warfare, including infantry, crew-served heavy weapons, and artillery, along with all that comes with them. Some of the mechanics in the advanced game are fairly simple, and others are more daunting. The rules for fixed wing aircraft and helicopters are among the more complicated, and artillery is handled in an unusually deep level of detail. It is not just a matter of saying "Hit that hex," adjusting for accuracy and then calling for fire for effect, as the pattern of shellfire, and not just the kind of munitions used, have to be planned.

All of this adds technical accuracy. Artillery and airpower rules can significantly add to the burdens on the players too, if they are actually used in the scenario. Fortunately, they are not, so people new to the system can skip over them until needed. People with experience in the original *MBT* and *IDF* might be tempted to jump right into the full experience, and start playing with aircraft and the big guns as soon as possible. For most though, this is not a good idea; there is enough complexity in the more essential mechanics, including new sorts of combat and orders, to keep them busy for a while. Plus, there are changes and refinements from the Avalon Hill original, that one needs a more careful reading of, well, everything. One should not assume that anything is identical to the older titles.

On top of the advanced game, there is an extensive set of optional rules. As expected, these add a higher degree of detail and granularity to the system, but it is up to the players to decide if the extra work and difficulty are worth the return. Some are easier to implement than others; weight limitations for bridges amount to one of the easiest and even most sensible, and can be classified as "Why not?" Others require more from the players, but add enough realism to pay off. The rules for morale do much to turn a system that is essentially about hardware first and foremost into one that considers human factors. In historical terms, these would help explain the differences in unit performance of Arab and Israeli forces in the Six Day and Yom Kippur Wars, and are applicable to the hypothetical battles of *MBT*. The same goes for tank fright.

On the other hand, one might want to think twice about using the rules for staggered initiative. Rather than rolling once for each side at the start of the turn for initiative, it is



UM-2A: M1A1 Abrams					253
M: 7T 9-14	B: +5	TR: 0-2	WT: 55.9		
120MM L/44		Tt: 3	Sb: 1	St: LO[T]	RoF: N A: D5



OFFENSIVE INFORMATION										
AMMO TYPE		GUNNERY RANGE					AP DAMAGE			
		P	S	M	L	E	ND	DM	KO	BU
APFSDS (120mm-KE)	R	7	13	23	33	40	1	2	3-6	7-10
	P	136	119	107	97	89				
HEAT-MP (120mm-CE)	R	5	9	16	23	28	1	2	3-5	6-10
	P	100	100	100	100	100				
GP (120mm)	R	7	13	23	33	40	GP EFFECTIVENESS GP Defense = 1-5			
	F	8	7	5	4	3				
AA (HMG)	R	2	3	6	8	10	Open (-10) N/A vs. High Altitude			
	F	1	1	1	1	1				

DEFENSIVE INFORMATION												
SIZE:	0	FRONT OR REAR				FRONT/SIDE OR REAR/SIDE						FALL
GPD:	8A	TF	TR	HF	HR	TF	TS	TR	HF	HS	HR	DK
KE	LEVEL	110	40	100	24	129	59	47	117	47	28	---
	RISE	118	40	107	24	138	63	47	111	47	28	---
GEX2	FALL	104	40	95	24	122	56	47	125	47	28	50

NOTES: Long gun. One tank per company may be equipped with a mine plow. Armor 105/39.

UM-2B: M60A3

The vehicle card for the M1A1, the mainstay of the US Army's armored force in Europe, and the game. The information and layout is much simpler, and on an appreciably smaller card, than in the Avalon Hill original.

done multiple times for higher formations, usually companies. This adds something like impulses, but with enough extra work and playing time that it might not be worth the effort. Also, with smaller scenarios in which the opposing forces consist of one or two companies, there might not be much of a point.

There is one set of optional rules that is so basic though, that it should have been included in the advanced rules set and made mandatory. This is for turrets. Considering that turrets are a defining characteristic to practically every tank since 1917, one has to wonder why they are not standard.

ADDITION AND SUBTRACTION

As a major retooling of the original, there is a lot that experienced players will recognize in the GMT edition of

MBT. That hardly means that there have not been some major changes though, with new elements added and others, including essential ones, eliminated.

The first and most obvious changes are to the orders of battle. The lack of Germans is actually a positive, not for their absence so much as the promise of an expanded Bundeswehr getting pride of place in the first expansion. Going back to the original *Red Star/White Star* (SPI), the West Germans showed up in modern tactical games in two ways; as partners of the Americans, or as a designer's afterthought. Very seldom has a modern game, especially a tactical title, put the focus on the Bundeswehr, even though the battles tend to take place in its home country.

On the other side, there are those missing Soviet paratroopers and their vehicles. Also, while they are mentioned in the rules and presumably will appear in later modules, no army has any trucks.

Two American aircraft are cut from the mix too. In the Avalon Hill edition, the United States Air Force has the F-4 Phantom II and F-111. These are missing from the GMT game. This is not necessarily a crippling loss. The F-4 was an integral part of the USAF order of battle through the eighties, but as a ground attack platform was secondary to the A-10 Warthog upon its introduction. Further, its missions were more in the areas of air superiority and interdiction, so it was less likely to be close to the battlefield itself, at least in the time frame covered by *MBT*. It might be nice to have them available, but their loss is not especially big.

There are new units on both sides. The Americans now have the M551 Sheridan light tank, used in Europe mainly for reconnaissance. A highly problematic design with an aluminum hull, perhaps its most successful use has been at the National Training Center at Ft. Irwin, California. There, modified Sheridans stand in for Russian-built armor in the OPFOR opposition forces in training exercises. Operationally, its service was marred especially by poorly-performing gun, probably too advanced in design for its own good, weak armor, and in Vietnam a tendency to brew up, with secondary ammunition explosions, when it hit mines. The Sheridan was not a successful tank, but in *MBT* American players can put up to eight on the battlefield.

The new edition changes the models of the main Soviet tanks available with the first version. In the beginning, *MBT* presented the T-80A, T-64B, and T-72M1, each with its own data card. The GMT edition now has multiple models of the T-72 and T-80, with the T-64 BV remaining in the game. Also, the newer BMP-3 infantry fighting vehicles joins its two predecessors in the Soviet order of battle.

In a big change from the original, this *MBT* presents all Soviet units that can have reactive armor, as having reactive armor. The Avalon Hill version gave scenario designers the option of including these explosive boxes on their tanks and infantry fighting vehicles. In practice, unless the designer is strictly adhering to limits on strength points for the Soviets, it makes both historical and game sense to outfit eligible vehicles with reactive armor.

The later models of the T-55 and T-62 were added to the Avalon Hill game through *The General*, but they are in the GMT game, complete with counters. As with the Sheridan, there are only eight of each in the countermix, but they are present.

MBT has important changes too to the basic system. One important one is to the concept of unit grade. In the Avalon Hill edition, the game has three grades assigned to units, in ascending order — poor, average and crack. The new edition doubles this to six — raw, green, regulars, seasoned, veteran and elite. This offers double the level of distinction between unit quality levels. Additionally, overall force command receives the same treatment, allowing for overall headquarters and staff to be different in quality to that of their units. Thus one can have an army of deer lead by a lion, or an army of lions lead by a deer, though commonly one can expect top commanders and their troops to be similar.

One of the more interesting changes is a combination of addition and subtraction. Soviet doctrine in *MBT*, and Soviet-schooled doctrine for Arab units in *IDF*, are vital concepts to the Avalon Hill games. Though they differ somewhat between them for infantry, they basically dictate that units in the same platoon have to act as one. The vehicles of a platoon move together in a kind of lockstep. There is just one counter per platoon, with strength indicated by markers. Compared to NATO and Israeli units, which have much more freedom to act individually, doctrine acts as a quite effective force divider.

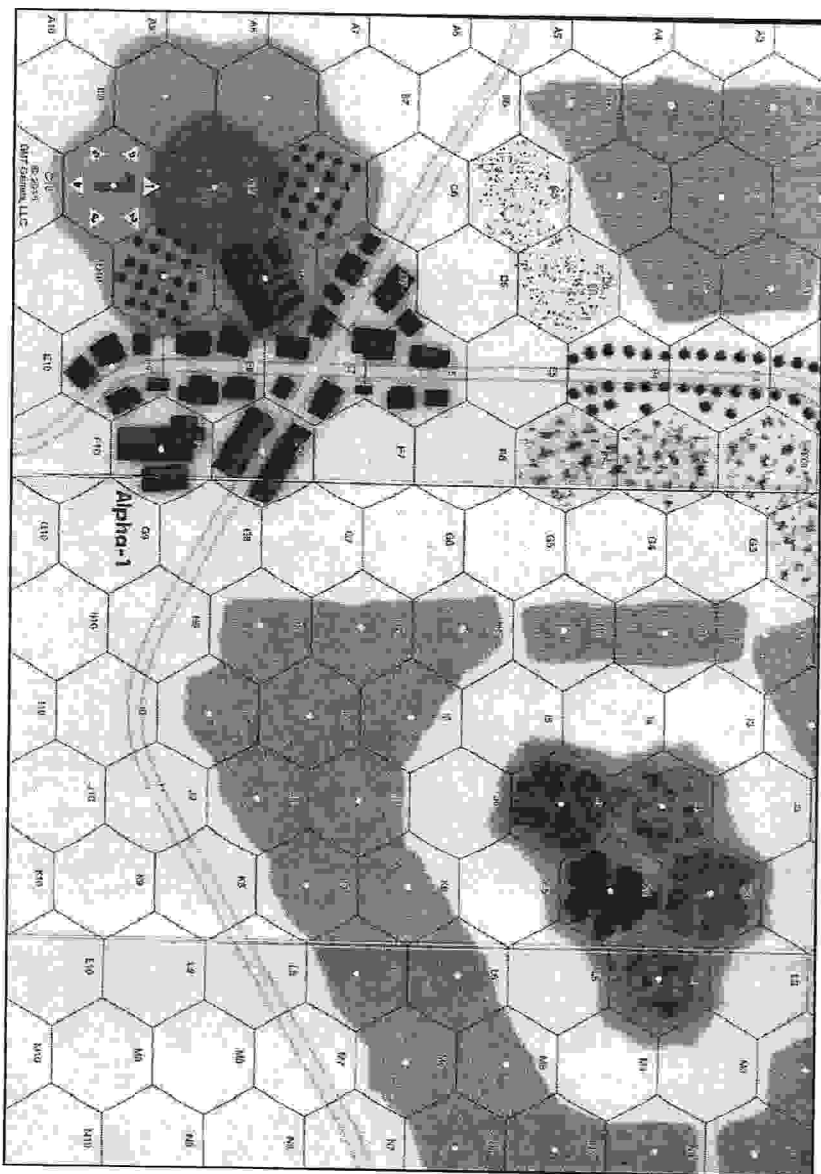
Doctrine is conspicuously missing from the new *MBT*. Instead, there is a system by which formations have a limited number of available commands. In order to get the most of their units, they have to operate closely enough to share command markers; at the three lowest grades, they have to be in the same hex, and seasoned and veteran units must be adjacent to each other. Only elite units can be further apart, and the limit is two hexes. Significantly, this upgrade to the command rules applies to both sides, so in effect, every army will be affected to some extent by what amounts to doctrine.

There are some units too, on both sides, that can always have their own, individually-allocated commands, never having to share with others. The most important among them are reconnaissance units. Also, command ranges are ignored for units moving together on a road or path, provided that they share a move marker.

All in all, this is a major improvement over the old doctrine rules. Personally, I was never satisfied with the Soviet-Arab infantry doctrine rules, and wrote a new version for both Avalon Hill games. However, the GMT *MBT* approach to command in the advanced game is much better than what has come before, and is all the better because it is not limited to one army. The old way had a certain artificiality to it; the new one does not. Furthermore, if it is combined with the optional rules for command units and morale, this game promises to integrate C3i, training, morale, and general cohesion into a central framework that is essentially hardware-oriented.

There is one final element of the original system that has gone missing, provision for nuclear, biological and chemical [NBC] warfare. At one time, this was a staple of most modern tactical and operational games, especially in the late seventies and early eighties. One can hardly imagine *The Next War* (SPI) without an initial Soviet chemical and nuclear preemptive surge. Later, perhaps driven by the basic awfulness of the unthinkable, weapons of mass destruction passed from modern hypothetical wargaming. Thus it is understandable that the newest generation of *MBT* ignores it.

In a way though, this is a mistake. The NBC environment was a major concern for NATO, and it had its own stockpiles of tactical nuclear weapons too. Also, while Iraq did not use chemical weapons, and by then did not even have them at hand anymore, in 2003 Iraqi chemical weapons were enough of a concern that American troops invading the country did so dressed in their chemical warfare suits, ready



Map detail. The look and feel is brighter and less cluttered than in the first version of the game.

to put on their masks and seal themselves up at the first encounter with Saddam's chemicals. Furthermore, as Iraq had already used them in its war with Iran (and its own Kurdish citizens), American fears were not the paranoid products of overactive imaginations.

Thus a case can be made that MBT needs its NBC rules, perhaps as an option, as was the case with the Avalon Hill edition. Today, the idea of either side using weapons of mass destruction on a European battlefield might be somewhere from horribly inconceivable down to just plain silly. But it was not always the case, especially in the time frame covered by *MBT*. In a way, ignoring NBC conditions in a modern wargame is a kind of revisionist history.

PHYSICAL SYSTEMS DESIGN

The first graphic element that a player is going to notice is the box art. Conceptually, it is similar to that of the Avalon Hill edition. It is also probably going to be the last major component that the GMT *MBT* gamer will closely associate with the older game.

Inside, the game represents a major upgrade, particular in terms of aesthetics. To start with, the 2016 package is dominated by color, whereas the 1989 one is basically monochrome, a relic of its era. There is also a much greater use of graphics within the rulebooks and play book. For example, the basic rules have large, clear, full-color illustrations of line of sight examples. Also, in a major upgrade, this game has detailed order of battle information, as in the original, but this time it is presented more graphically. The original *MBT* does this in textual form, but with a tiny font and a generally cramped layout. Thus in 2016 a player can find and process needed information without either using a ruler or going blind.

The basic organization of the rules follows the pattern set in the earlier edition, with excessive division of major rules section into granular cases. For example, section 6.7 covers the "Advanced Game 2nd Air Phase," which actually covers the first air phase as well. Putting all the air functions, including helicopters and anti-aircraft combat along with ground attack under 6.7 results in a hierarchy of rules that seems to go on forever. The rule of anti-aircraft fields of fire is case 6.7.8.1.2. As a developer, my own preference is for more major sections and fewer such cases. On the other hand, *MBT* has comprehensive tables of contents in each rulebook, and the

advanced game rules end with a comprehensive table of contents. Additionally, the charts and tables are all augmented with references to the specific cases in the rules that apply to them. Thus the problems with a scheme of organization that gamers, including me, will probably find questionable, are mitigated. While the basic organization can make the system more intimidating than it probably should be, the commitment to indexing, and connecting charts to the rules that explain them, make reference much easier than in most games of any complexity.

Further, there is a comprehensive chart of units, with their point values for all six grades. Previously, this was spread out to the data cards. Unfortunately, whole platoons and companies no longer have their points listed, as they are

Vehicle Data Card Key

Unit Identifier
National symbol, card number and name. Also include special notations.
BU=Special Brew Up

General Information
M: cross-country speed and mode of traction.
T=tracked, W= wheel, followed by path and road movement factors.
B=bog modifier; R=dual-controls (FRG);
A=amphibious
TR: transport - towed-leg
WT: weight in metric tons

Open-topped/AA tracked vehicle

2 TR: Under cover transport

TR: Under Armor Transport

TR: Under Armor Transport & Combat

Point Information
Notes: included in Notes Section

Formation symbol

Weapon Data
Main Weapon Description
T= Turret turn factor in hexesides or Fof: 60°/120/180; S=Stabilization Rating: 0/1/2/3; St= Weapon Sight:
O=Optical, M=RMG (BAOR), S=Stereo, L=Laser, D=Laser Designator, R=AA Radar, G=Ground Based Radar, [Night Fighting]; T=Thermal Imager, IZ=Image Intensifier, IR=Infrared Searchlight, WL= White Light Searchlight, P=Passive IR; ROF: N=Normal, Q= Quick, R=Rapid, F=Fast;
A: ammunition limits and special ammo depletions, A=AP Special; H=HEAT, HESH; G=GP; S=Smoke; I=illumination; C=Chemical dischargers; and ability to fire Smk=Smoke or I=illumination

LO Commander Independent Sight (FRG)

GP/AA Gunnery Sections
DF=Direct Fire information (default), IF=Indirect Fire information, AA=Anti-Aircraft Fire information
Underscore indicates limited front field-of-fire.
Overscore indicates limited rear field-of-fire.
Min indicates the unit's minimum range in hexes.
R=Range, F=GP factor
P=Pointblank, S=Short, M=Medium, L=Long, E=Extreme

GP Dust Fire Weapon
GP Effectiveness vs. A-Type and P-Type vehicles

Boxed point blank GP factor indicates coaxial MG.

AP Gunnery Section
Shell type: AP=Armor Piercing, APFSDS=Armor Piercing Fin Stabilized Discarding Sabot, APDS=Armor Piercing Discarding Sabot, HEAT=High Explosive Anti-Tank, HEAT-MP=High Explosive Anti-Tank Multi-Purpose, HESH=High Explosive Squash Head (BAOR), Songster-ATGM:
P=Penetration, GP: Fixed GP Factor, CL=Class 1/2/3/4, Sp: Speed, KE=Kinetic Energy, CE=Chemical Energy
Underscore indicates limited front field-of-fire.
Overscore indicates limited rear field-of-fire.
R=Range, P=Penetration; P=Pointblank, S=Short, M=Medium, L=Long, E=Extreme
AP Damage=d10 results

AP Dual Fire Weapon

Armor Data
Hit locations at Front, Front/Side, Rear/Side or Rear angles at Level, Rising or Falling elevations.
TF=Turret Front, TS=Turret Side, TR=Turret Rear, HF=Hull Front, HS=Hull Side, HR=Hull Rear, D=Deck

CEX1.5 CE armor multiplier

ERA Explosive Reactive Armor. L=Light, H=Heavy

GP Defense
Factor & defense type:
A=armored
P=protected
S=soft
C=close assault modifier

Notes
Includes other information, alternate types, notations and the vehicle's Basic Game Armor Values: Front/Rear

Vehicle Target Size
From: +2 to -2

Vehicle Image

with line drawings on solid backgrounds. There is no data on the counters either, outside of the general type and an identification number. Related units share counters; for example, all models of the M1 Abrams are represented by general M1 counters, and all types of the M113, starting with the basic armored personnel carrier and ending with specialized mortar and anti-tank variants, are simply M113's. This is not necessarily bad, as it always worked in the past, and is somewhat reminiscent of miniatures gaming. Besides, it adds a level of fog of war, as an enemy might not have all the time and opportunity to distinguish between similar vehicles on the battlefield.

The new MBT takes a different approach. Now, counters are specific to the vehicle, to the point that different models of the T-72, T-80, M1 and Bradley have different counters. Additionally, they use more color than in the past, and that is not just for appearance. Differing camouflage patterns offer cues to the specific unit type.

There is new information on the counters too. Vehicles have their cross country, road and path movement allowances prominently displayed at the bottom, so that the player does not have to go back and forth to the data cards to find this. Units with modifiers for bogging down

have this on both counters and cards too, though it is not explained very well in the rules. Basically, one has to just kind of figure it out.

As in the original, counters usually portray two types of units, one on each side. The exceptions are helicopters; there is one per counter, with one side being the chopper flying in normal mode, and the reverse at nap of the earth.

The data cards are less than half the size of the old ones, and do not contain quite as much detailed information. Then again, it is not as necessary as in the past. For example, in the first edition there is a detailed treatment of weapon hit probabilities, with ranges sometimes given one hex at a time. The new version cuts it down to pointblank, short, medium,

The data card keys, and thus the cards themselves, end up being more comprehensive than complex.

in the original. Instead, when formulating their own scenarios, players have to calculate formation values unit by unit. This will add time and effort to the design process, but is probably unavoidable.

The play book too includes additional order of battle information. There is a short, general overview of the strategic situation in September 1987. This includes a divisional, partial order of battle for both NATO and the Soviet Union on the inter-German border, though it does not include the Soviets' Warsaw Pact allies. One might conclude that this centers mainly on forces planned for later MBT expansions, and that the likes of East Germany, Hungary and Poland are not likely to make the cut.

Two of the most definitive components to MBT and its systemic kin are the counters and unit data cards. In the original, the counters and their art are basically monochromatic,



While not as rich, or cluttered, depending on one's taste and perspective, as the counters in LnL's *World at War* series, the new *MBT*'s counters now have a lot more information than just the unit type, an image and identification.

long and extreme ranges, but with definitions of each, for each weapon.

Another big difference is in the way they are printed. Following the general approach of the new game, they are in color. Also, while the Avalon Hill *MBT* and *IDF* cards are printed on thin cardstock, the GMT cards are on the same relatively thick stock as the counters.

The geomorphic map sections are much different in this version. The old ones are green for the most part, and clear enough to function, and unlike the newer ones, mounted. The newer ones are primarily tan, with shades of brown for higher elevations. Contrast is actually a lot better in the GMT maps, and they are bigger too.

Also, GMT starts to fix one of the initial game's biggest drawbacks, a lack of terrain variety. Avalon Hill published four maps with *MBT* and four more, more desert and hill-themed ones, for *IDF*, but no more. They are functionally compatible, but aesthetically do not match. The GMT *MBT* has ten maps altogether, but these are backprinted onto five sections, limiting the combinations that can be employed. From a player's perspective, it would have been better to have eight separate maps to maximize possible combinations, but four backprinted ones are still better than what gamers have had to date. Hopefully, as new modules get published, they will have additional mapboards as well as new units and entire armies.

CONCLUSIONS

Players expecting a basic reprint of the old *MBT* in the GMT box are certainly going to be surprised. This is not a straight reprint of the initial game, with more colors, by any stretch of the imagination. It is a substantially upgraded and refined version, not quite a reimagining, but still a largely different game. The graphics and production values are not just cosmetically updated either; they serve the new generation of the game system, and in some ways make it more accessible.

Even *MBT* and *IDF* veterans from their introduction are going to be reacquaint themselves with this game with care. There are numerous changes and refinements, and one should not just take it for granted that anything is going to be substantially the same as it was in the Avalon Hill version. The most obvious indication of this is that there are now two rulebooks, one for the basic rules and another for the advanced game, plus a play book for scenarios and order of battle information. In the original all of this is squeezed into one rulebook. The current approach is much better, as it makes the system easier to learn, as well as simply presenting everything in a more attractive manner consistent with current graphic standards.

New players especially will need all the help they can get, as this is game system that, while intuitive and playable for those who know it well, is not the easiest to learn. Maybe the misleading part of the game is on the back of the box, where *MBT* is rated at six out of ten on the complexity scale. In practice, the basic game is probably lower, and while this always subject, one could even say that it is a four out of ten. But as advanced rules and then options are added, complexity steadily rises. My own view is that it with the full advanced rules, including for air units and artillery support, and a smattering of options, *MBT* is easily an eight or nine. Yet not all advanced rules are applicable in all situations, reducing complexity in the most practical terms.

Further, there is an implicit programmed instruction approach to the rules. First, players are introduced to the basic game, and the core for armored combat. They will not remain satisfied with that though, and will move on to the advanced game, with infantry, artillery, and finally fixed wing and helicopter aviation. Non-hardware factors are also crucial at this level. Finally, players will add at least some optional rules, probably starting with vehicle turrets.

This new iteration of Jim Day's venerable system is a very good one, and for veterans of the first edition, it is close to an essential addition to one's wargame library. For those already familiar with *Panzer*, particularly the GMT edition, it is also recommended. I am definitely looking forward to the West German and British-oriented expansions, and hope that there will be even more. GMT *IDF*, anyone? Or even post-1973 battles in the Middle East and Persian Gulf? One can hope, especially as GMT appears committed to giving the system all the support that it and its players deserve.