

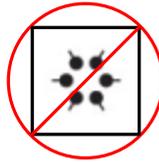
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WHY I DON'T BUILD FORTS!



by Rob Carl

Introduction

I have always tried to copy my idol's philosophy. What would George Patton do? ATTACK ... let the enemy defend! And that is what forts are for ... DEFENDING. That is the reason I will "almost" never build a fort. There are times when a fort can be useful to make the game last a turn longer, like at Berlin or, more rarely, Berchtesgaden. But for the most part, fixed fortifications are "Monuments to the stupidity of man." (G. Patton)

Don't Stop, Go Around!

Most people treat a fort like it's a red light or stop sign. But what is standard military doctrine to deal with an enemy strong point? GO AROUND IT! That is exactly what I do against an enemy fort if it is in any way possible. As the German player, I have bypassed Russian forts to keep those units out of the Russian front line. And then I laugh about how I have self-supplied prison camps with just a few Rumanians, Hungarians, replacements or even Italians to guard it. And when I start the attack on the French, I certainly don't go through the Maginot line (unless somehow it's the weakest point). As the Japanese player I can't ever remember taking Singapore from the fort side.

Once, with a German 5-6 armor unit, 4-6 armor unit and a 1-3 airborne stuck in my prison, my

opponent voluntarily eliminated the 5-6 armor unit and air dropped the 1-3 airborne unit to get them to Berlin before the T34s arrived. As the Russians, I have shocked many opponents by leaving Warsaw to be captured later. The rear troops marching to the front (those Russian hordes) can take Warsaw after its defensive value is reduced by isolation. A fort in Paris is the same thing as a fort in Warsaw. (GO AROUND, Col. Abrams! G. Patton)

Troops, Troops, Troops!

Except for Japan, each fort costs a research point. I have better things for my top scientists to do besides going out in the fields to teach peasants how to dig trenches. To me, RPs are always in heavy demand, and wasting them on forts is the last thing I want to do. I would much rather have more troops to defend, if defend I must. Those troops can not only be rebuilt if lost, so they can defend over and over again - when the time comes they can also attack, while a fort just sits uselessly behind the advancing lines. And if the defense fails, the RP used to build a fort is gone forever, along with the fort, but troops can be rebuilt again and again.

All those beach defenses in France look great until the Western Allies concentrate on a single weak spot and successfully invade - then the Atlantic Wall looks like a pile of wasted resources. Which it is!

Alright, Maybe

The Japanese are at least smart enough to know how to use picks, shovels, trees, volcanic rock and whatever else is handy – as opposed to precious RPs. When playing Japan, I will gladly build my defenses up as best I can. Forts and beach defenses at least help the Japanese army, which can only put one regular unit on each one hex island.

As Russia I had NEVER spent an RP for a fort until the production rules were amended to limit production in the first few years of the war. Since then I have found one scientist to spare for Leningrad, just in case it gets isolated (I learned this from one of the best players I have ever encountered).¹ But even spending that one RP hurts if it gets wasted, as when there's no attack on Russia because the Axis adopt an anti-British strategy.

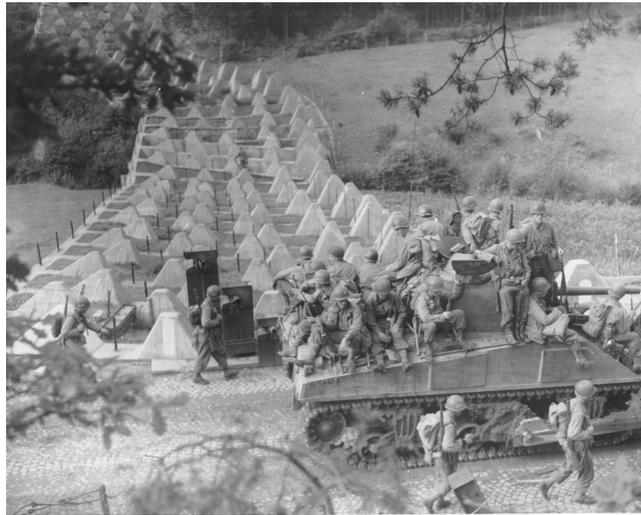
There are times when a fort can be useful in attack, for example, to allow the Western Allies to stay ashore after invading France ... IF you have the time, unit construction capability and BRPs to build it. It can't be attritioned, let alone taken as a hex result.

But Ships and Force Pool First!

That brings me to the next point. I must have all my ground troops built first, and as Japan, my shipbuilding must be maxed out, before any forts get built. Forts are worthless unless you have the troops to put in them, or if building them makes another place in the line weak or void of units. As the Germans I will build a key fort or two - in Berlin and possibly in Berchtesgaden - before I start taking too many losses to rebuild.

A Russian fort in Leningrad can easily be built before war starts, because at that point Russia's unit construction limit is not a problem. But once Russia is at war there are ALWAYS too many troops to build to even think about a fort. As the British, I find BRPs and unit construction

limitations make it impossible to keep my four-factor battleships advancing down the shipyards, let alone building a fort. Of course the U.S. doesn't do enough defending to even need a fort, but it has the unit construction for one in Normandy, if Axis zones of controls don't prevent it.



American armor going through the famed West Wall like it's a walk in the park.

Final Advice from a Maverick

I have always been a bit of a maverick² in the way I play. My partners will tell me I should build a fort here or there. But when that position never sees an enemy unit because there were too many troops in the way for my enemy to get to it, my partners have to agree in the end. And on the attack they tell me I have to take Warsaw or Paris to move on. But I am one that you can't tell I MUST do this or that. Only the rules of the game can do that!

I try to follow the examples of my idol, Patton, rather than listen to advice from the descendants of B. Montgomery. When my partners are my opponents in the next game, they sometimes find they dislike the way I play even more!

¹ Mark Yaeger, a medical doctor in Adelaide.

² Editor's note: Or perhaps "iconoclast", but actually "maverick" might be the more accurate term – and the two are hardly contradictory.