

**If You Can't Stand the HEAT Get Out of the Kitchen,
Or, How to Use LATW effectively**
By Mike Licari

"Light anti-tank weapon" (LATW) is the generic ASL term for a host of tools available to your squads to kill AFVs. This includes anti-tank rifles (ATRs), Panzerfausts (PF), Panzerschrecks, (PSK), Bazookas (BAZ), the British PIAT, and the unconventional Molotov Projector. ATRs are very straightforward, and do not require any special considerations when firing, so this article will ignore them. I will also ignore the MOL Projector since this weapon is only available in Red Barricades. Instead, this article will focus on the use of the other, more powerful but more difficult to use, LATW. For purposes of this article *only*, LATW will be the term for PF, PSK, BAZ, and PIAT.

General Overview

Firepower

LATW fire HEAT ammunition. As such, they are typically quite effective in dealing with more heavily armed AFVs. Indeed, the German PF has one of the highest "To Kill" numbers in the game, at 31. The only other weapon that probably will ever appear in an ASL scenario with a higher number is the JagdTiger's 128L. The PSK is also very powerful, with a TK number of 26, sufficient to knock out pretty much any Allied AFV from the front. The BAZ and PIAT perform less well, but adequately deal with the "garden variety" of German AFVs, such as the Pz IV or various assault guns. Their TK numbers are around 15, though, so killing heavier AFVs such as the Panther, Tiger, or heavy tank destroyers will require a side shot. In all, LATW are a force to be wary of on the battlefield and are very deadly.

Range

LATW, while powerful, are limited in a couple of serious ways. One is that their range is typically poor. These are truly "close-in" weapons, as ranges of 3 or less are typically needed to have good chances of hitting. Indeed the maximum range of many LATW is 4 (e.g. BAZ 43, BAZ 44, PSK) or worse (PIAT, with a range of 3; PF with a range of 1, 2, or 3 depending on the date). So, avoiding LATW often is simply a matter of staying away from suspected LATW positions. Employing them effectively is thus difficult, and warrants a special section later in this article.

Backblast

LATW are typically rocket-propelled, the sole exception being the PIAT. As such, employing them from closed spaces such as buildings and rubble can be dangerous (see below). Think of this as you position your LATW for a shot.

The Ubiquitous PF

PF are the bane of Allied tankers in/after October 1943. Starting in Oct. 1943, *all* German personnel units (even SMC and crews) get PF capability. Thus, driving your tank near any German unit can be a dangerous move. This is one reason why you don't see too much AFV bypass freeze against late-war Germans!

Using LATW Effectively

General Points About Positioning

Considering the range limitation of LATW, the main factor for effective use is figuring out placement. This means setting up in good locations before the scenario starts. "Good locations" are those that are close to expected avenues that AFVs will have to follow. Try to set up adjacent to these key paths in order to maximize your hitting chances. Even if you never get to shoot, you've probably forced the enemy to stop and deal with your LATW. As often as not, simply slowing the attacker down is the road to victory. LATW and HIP can be a deadly combination. If you are given HIP capability as a defender against enemy AFVs, the best thing to HIP is a couple of halvesquads each with a LATW, perhaps stacking a decent leader with one or both positions. Due to backblast effects, these HIP locations should not be in buildings or rubble. Finally, if your LATW is unable to penetrate the front armor of enemy AFVs in the scenario, try to set up so that flank shots will be available. Few things are better than watching your opponent squirm as you un-HIP a BAZ-toting HS and put a HEAT round right up the tailpipe of his precious Panther.

General Points About Getting Into Position

Having to move into position to fire a LATW can be difficult. Moving infantry towards enemy AFVs is hazardous enough in general. But if your opponent realizes you're moving in for the kill, he'll work that much harder in preventing you from making it to your destination. Thus, it is far easier to deploy (or redeploy) LATW assets in a built-up area such as a city or in otherwise confined terrain, such as large woods. Assault-moving with concealment into position is obviously the best way to go, so consider placing LATW behind your firing line, ready to Assault Move or Advance up into place when needed. Don't forget that if you move and then shoot an LATW in the Advancing Fire Phase, you incur the +2 Case C3 To Hit DRM.

Occasionally, you will have the opportunity to go "tank hunting". This occurs most-frequently in larger scenarios (or campaign games) where you may have a few units to spare and the terrain to move around in. With this tactic, you take a leader and a halvesquad with a LATW and try to work around or through the enemy's lines. This way, you can directly threaten enemy AFVs that may be unsupported. In campaign games, this can be especially useful, since you'll often have "spare" crews (ones that have had their tank or gun destroyed, or ones that have been given with a RG purchase). Crews are nice for this trick, since you don't need to bring a leader along because they have self-rally capability. Generally, however, this is not a viable tactic. Players typically should focus on being able to assault move or advance into firing position instead.

Backblasts

Firing BAZ, PSK, and PF from a building or rubble location (or a vehicle, cave, or pillbox) subjects units in the location to the backblast of the LATW. This is represented by using the colored die of the To Hit roll as an unmodified attack on the 1FP column of the IFT against all occupants of the location. Sometimes, it's unavoidable. You'll eventually find yourself needing to fire a BAZ, a PSK, or a PF from a building or rubble. Here the calculation about relative risks needs to be made. The factors are: what are the odds that you'll hit the AFV; what are the odds that you'll destroy the AFV once hit; what are the probabilities that the firing squad will break or casualty reduce; are there other units in the firer's hex; what are the consequences to the rest of your force if the firer breaks; how badly do you need that AFV dead. If the odds of the first two are low, then the shot is probably not worth it.

Backblast can be avoided by applying the Case C3 To Hit DRM, but this often makes it impossible to hit the target since it's a +2. "Eating the backblast" rather than taking the C3 TH DRM means that some effect on the location will happen 5 out of 6 times, generating a PTC or worse. A casualty-reduce result has a one in six chance of occurring, and the most likely result is a 1MC (one-third of the time). If you have 8 morale, this may not be a problem, but if you're a 6 morale U.S. squad, that 1MC is a big deal. Probability theory says that the most likely result of an 8 morale squad eating a backblast will result in that squad being pinned, while the most likely result for that U.S. squad is it being broken and DM after the attack.

Another less common way to avoid the backblast is to use Opportunity Fire. This allows unpinned units to fire the LATW from a building (only) without taking the 1FP attack, and it avoids the Case C3 modifier as well. The problem is that there's obviously an enemy AFV nearby, and it may be unlikely that you'll survive its Defensive Fire Phase in order for you to fire in the Advancing Fire Phase. In the 200+ game's I've played, I've never used this tactic, nor have I had it used against me. It's just typically better to fire right away in the PFPh, or just run away.

Firing Your LATW

General Comments

Some relevant points about firing LATW have already been made, but will be summarized here before moving to specific comments about individual LATW. First, Case C3 applies if you have moved and are firing in the AFPh. Case C3 also applies if you want to shoot from restricted terrain without incurring the backblast attack on yourself. Finally, unpinned units in buildings can dispense with Case C3 and the backblast attack if opportunity fire is used.

Units firing the BAZ, PSK, PIAT, and PF do not qualify for the Case L Point Blank Range To Hit modifier. LATW never qualify for Case N Acquired To Hit modifier either. Other firer-based and target-based DRM apply normally.

LATW can be fired at soft-skinned vehicles. The To Hit procedure is the same as firing at an AFV, but the effects of hitting a soft-skin are understandably more devastating. Any hit by

HEAT on an unarmored vehicle has a To Kill number of 11, which means an automatic kill barring a dud.

Finally, LATW can be fired at infantry targets as well, as indicated by the firepower and range numbers on the front of the counters. Since PF don't have counters, players shouldn't forget this ability (but see the limitation below in the PF section). The key is that HEAT may be fired at infantry only under certain circumstances. Infantry targets need to be in buildings/rubble/pillboxes, or be claiming Wall Advantage. Once a hit is secured (using the weapon's own To Hit table and appropriate DRM, including TEM), the IFT is used to determine the effect. A BAZ has 8FP and a PSK has 12FP. PIATs have 8FP and PF have 16FP. No DRM are applicable on the IFT. This means that although it can be tough to get a hit, the effects can be devastating! If there aren't any threatening enemy AFVs, don't forget to get your LATW into the action!

Firing the BAZ and PSK

BAZ and PSK are backblast weapons, so considerations need to be made for that factor. BAZ and PSK use their own To Hit Tables, printed on the back of the counters. The range for the PSK, BAZ 43 and BAZ 44 is 4 hexes. Note that the To Hit numbers are a bit better for the PSK. The BAZ45 is nice, since its range goes out to 5. BAZ and PSK have "X" numbers. Instead of malfunctioning, they are eliminated on a To Hit roll equal to or greater than the "X" number. This becomes part of the equation of whether to take a shot or not. If the chances to hit are pretty bad and it's not a vital target, players will sometimes skip the shot if they're worried about losing the weapon (maybe it's the only anti-tank weapon available and thus it's precious). The BAZ45 is also useful because it can fire WP. This is something nearly all players forget, even though it's printed right on the front of the counter. A squad can fire one BAZ/PSK and still fire its inherent FP, or it can sacrifice its inherent FP and fire two BAZ/PSK. A halfsquad or crew may fire a BAZ/PSK, but at the expense of its inherent FP. 2 SMC may fire a BAZ/PSK at full effect, or one hero may fire a BAZ/PSK by adding +1 to the To Hit roll.

Firing the PIAT

The PIAT is a nice weapon, even though its range is limited. Its TK number is just under the BAZ 44/45. Furthermore, it is *not* a backblast weapon. It can be freely fired from any terrain. This makes it far more versatile (and less dangerous to its owners) than other LATWs. In addition to this nice feature, the PIAT also malfunctions rather than being eliminated on a bad To Hit roll. The repair number is 2, so a malfunctioned PIAT also has a decent chance of returning to action quickly. Another advantage of the PIAT is that a single SMC can fire one normally, without penalty. Squads and halfsquads/crews fire the PIAT as they do a BAZ/PSK. The key problem with the PIAT is that its range and hit numbers are poor. At just 3 hexes, you're already at the max range of the weapon and down to an unmodified 5 to hit. If the target is moving and/or small, you'll need a good leader directing the shot in order to have much of a chance to hit. So, although the PIAT bring plenty of advantages, they're nearly useless beyond 2 hexes and thus can be difficult to use effectively.

Firing the PF

The PF is complicated to use, mainly due to the availability rolls that need to be made in order to fire one. First, the PF is a backblast weapon, so considerations need to be made for this.

Furthermore, squads and halvesquads/crews fire the PF as they would a BAZ/PSK (i.e. a squad can fire two PF by giving up its inherent FP, while a HS or crew is limited to one PF). A single SMC may fire the PF without penalty.

To fire a PF, an availability dr (not subject to leader modification) must first be made. The final dr must be 1-3. The drm are:

- 1 in 1945
- +2 if made by SMC
- +1 if made by HS/crew
- +1 if unit is CX
- +1 if PF is to be fired at non-AFV

In addition, a +1 is listed in the rules for Aug/Sept of 1943. This is for the PFk, available only by SSR. To my knowledge no scenario exists that uses the PFk, so you can forget about it.

Thus, a CX SMC before 1945 has no chance to fire a PF, while non-CX squads will always have at least a 50-50 chance of passing the roll if firing at an AFV. It is important to note that if an unmodified 6 is rolled, the unit is pinned. If the unit is already pinned, it breaks instead. So, there is some risk involved in making the availability dr. Note that *any* German infantry unit may make availability drs, even crews surviving the destruction of their AFV.

The max range of a PF depends on the scenario date. Prior to June 1944, the max range is 1 hex. Between June 1944 and December 1944, it is 2 hexes, and in/after December 1944 the max range is 3 hexes. The To Hit number is range-dependent, just like PIATs, BAZ, and PSK. The Basic To Hit number is 10, modified by -2 for each hex in range to the target. For example, the To Hit number at a target in an adjacent hex is 8.

The total number of PF shots that can be taken in a scenario (actual shots, *not* availability dr) depends on the scenario date. If prior to 1945, then the number of shots available equals the number of squads in the German OB. If it's 1945, the number of available shots is 1.5 times the number of squads in the German OB. Unless the scenario is small, this rarely is a factor.

The PF may not be fired as Subsequent First Fire or as Final Protective Fire. Regardless of the result, simply making an availability roll constitutes a shot for all purposes (except Gunflash), including SW usage. A squad may attempt to fire a second PF if it has not already used its inherent FP.

Against infantry, the PF is somewhat limited. If fired against a location with several enemy infantry units, random selection is used to determine which unit is hit, unless there's a known unit there manning a Gun/SW in which case the German player can select that unit instead of making the random selection roll.

A Horror Story

To fully understand the potential ramifications of eating a LATW backblast consider the following true story from a recent game I played. I had the Germans in "First and Inches", a scenario out of the Paddington Bears 98 Pack. A U.S. tank destroyer had gotten behind my line and was cutting rout paths, so it needed to be dealt with. I sent two second line squads back to get to a building location adjacent to its position. Both squads survived a hail of MA and AAMG fire from the TD, and were ready to try to fire a PF or two in the Advancing Fire Phase. The first squad rolled and got a PF. The TD was a small target and I was firing after having moved, so that was another +2 to hit. So I needed a 5 To Hit, or a 3 if I wanted to avoid the Backblast. I chose to eat the backblast to improve my chances of hitting. The To Hit roll was a snake-eyes...critical hit! I jumped for joy, as my TK number was 62 vs. the tank destroyer's armor of 3. The K/1 result versus my two 447s from the 1 on the colored die didn't bother me since the tank destroyer was as good as dead (all I needed to roll was a 57 or less). The To Kill roll? Boxcars! A dud! The tank destroyer is alive! AAAAGH! That's bad enough, but then random selection among the two 447s to see which one casualty reduced came up "yahtzee" and so both took the K/1. The ensuing 1MC on each HS was worse: one rolled boxcars and was eliminated, and the other came up an 11, so the guy broke and ELRed. So, I went from a "sure-kill" on the tank destroyer with a critical hit, to a broken conscript halfsquad adjacent to a very much alive enemy AFV.

Needless to say, I lost the scenario. But now I have a great horror story to regale my future opponents with, and the terrible sequence of dice rolls was incredible enough so that my opponent and I had a pretty good laugh at the time. As I said, if you can't stand the HEAT, get out of the kitchen!