Facilitator Notes – Wargaming

1.   In the base game (no advanced rules), how do platoon battle drills impact the outcome? describe the balance between momentum and organic platoon-level fire support (base game) for each assault?

        a.   Due to the granularity of the game design, it is not possible to show intersection movement; however, the general concept of fire and movement of the sections can be shown. While the chance of hitting is determined by the game designer, it is reflective of the effective range of section-level weapons. Platoon weapons only become reliable at suppressing the enemy once the platoon is within 300 metres and if 2/3rds of the platoon are remaining stationary and firing on the enemy position.

        b.   Without support, the platoon will find it hard to take the objective with a score of less than 10. However, once the platoon is 300 metres from the objective, and assuming the platoon is not "spent" from enemy fire, then the fire of two sections becomes reliable enough to suppress the enemy (75% chance of one hit) and this allows the third section to take the objective.

        c.   It also underscores the value of mechanized infantry that has organic fire support from the LAV6. The game also encourages the platoon commander to remain with or adjacent to their sections in order to maintain the momentum of the attack.

        d.   Further questions: All games have approximations and simplification somewhere in the design. Does it make sense for a section that ran 100 metres to be unable to apply effective fire on the enemy position (the moving section becomes "spent") and possibly ineffective for the remainder of the assault (if they fail to rally)?

2.   How does company-level fire support impact the assault (Blue Fire Support, Rifle Platoon, GPMG, and 81 mm mortars rules)? Try them one at a time, then add them together.

        a.   Receiving fire support from the company-level weapons or from of a neighboring platoon represent the attacking platoon being the main effort of the company. If each platoon attacks in sequence, then it is possible to support all three platoons, but if it is required that two platoons attack concurrently, the commander must decide how to support. While the effectiveness of different support weapons in the game are set by the designer, it is important for a company commander to know what assets are available and at what ranges they can be most effectively employed.

        b.   Smoke is an interesting exception to the standard support weapon. In order for the smoke to be effective, it needs to be taken advantage of by the platoon commander. The platoon commander should order the sections behind the smoke to advance and order the sections with a view of the objective to apply suppressive fire, if at a suitable range. This might mean re-tasking a section if the smoke falls on the wrong hex; knowing when to change the plan and when the plan is still good is critical for a platoon commander. This is an example of flexibility in executing the plan, which can be reinforced and practiced with training.

3.   How do obstacles impact the assault? Does your decision-making change before the strength of obstacles is known?

      a.   Since knowing the strength of an obstacle is often difficult until you are in it, an attacking commander must plan for needing more time to recce and breach obstacles. This time is gained through the maximum application of fire from higher-level assets. Higher-level commanders should be aware of the difficulties of sending subordinate commander to attack defended objectives without additional support.

      b.   Minefields in the game are not able to stop movement and an un-spent section will always be able to move out of a minefield even if it takes a hit in the process, it simply ends up spent on the other side. This design encourages momentum and attacking at any cost, it is quite different from how obstacles were approached during the war in Afghanistan. Where the availability/superiority of close air support often allowed advancing Canadian to be more patient when they were closing with and destroying the enemy. The larger condition of the operation will indicate to the platoon commander what approach is best.

4.   What factors change when there is the potential for enemy depth positions?

      a.   While the position in depth is not technically an objective, if it is not suppressed it will be much more difficult for the platoon to complete its objective. The suppression of the depth position is an implied task. The suppression of a second position requires the attacking platoon to either get fire support from its company or move closer to the objective to make the platoon fire more effective, and thus able to suppress two locations. This aspect of the game illustrates the generally accepted force ratio of 3:1. If the force ration is not possible, then additional force multipliers like snipers and artillery must be utilized or the attack will fail.

      b.   The presence of a depth position can cause the platoon commander to change their approach at the last minute and alter which section will take the objective. Flexibility can be built through training and battle drills.

5.   How does enemy fire support (mortars) impact your assault and decision-making process?

      a.   In the design of this game, enemy fire support cannot be disrupted by the attacker and becomes more effective as the game continues. This encourages the attacking commander to spread out their forces and attack with at least two sections in case one gets hit by the defender's indirect fire. This requirement prohibits the attacking platoon from being able to reliably suppress the objective with only one section providing fire support, since two are moving, and requires the platoon to have further higher-level assets. The responsibility to suppress a defender's indirect fire assets is that of the higher commander. Attacking platoon commanders must conduct their attacks in line with the higher-level indirect fire plans.

      b.   Again, when attacking an enemy position that is either dug in, has positions in depth or supported by higher-level assets the force ratio ceases to become a straightforward 3:1. In order for an attack like this to be successful it will require additional higher-level assets.

6.   What does a win (score of 10 or less), draw (11-15) or loss (16 or more) represent in this game?

        a.   The score is a combination of both speed (measured in turns taken) and the preservation of combat power (number of friendly hits). A winning score represents a platoon that has secured the objective within the expected timeframe and has taken an acceptable level of casualties. A draw represents a platoon that has secured its objective, but has advanced too slowly or taken too many casualties and may require consolidation. A loss represents a platoon that is probably combat ineffective and at risk of being overrun if counterattacked. Due to the nature of company orders, this platoon may not have any follow-on objectives and therefore a draw is acceptable to the commander. If, however the company commander's plan requires the platoon to attack a second position, then it becomes more critical to secure the win (the commander would dedicate higher-level assets to the attack to ensure a quick victory). The win conditions of this game can be thought of as "did the attacker maintain the initiative/tempo through the attack". After the attack whose plan needs to change? Does the defender now need to react to the attacker's success or does the attacker need to adjust their plan and brace for a counterattack? A discussion about the allocation of company fire support can flow from an understanding of these victory conditions.

7.   How did the outcome of each turn influence your decision making? Did you stick to your original plan or did you modify it during the assault? Why?

        a.   What factors caused you to adjust your plan? Obstacles? Effective enemy fire? The inability to suppress the enemy? Surprise enemy depth positions? What is the critical distance when you must commit to a course of action? 300m? 200m? 100m? Does this change based on the conditions (i.e. using the advanced rules)?

        b.   How does a platoon commander ensure that they understand the situation, make rapid decisions, and communicate those decisions to their section commanders? Where is the platoon commander best located to make these assessments and lead the assault? Does the game correspond to doctrine?