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# Hunting Tanks is Fun and Easy!

A guide to antitank weapons for TOP SECRET/S.I. game commandos

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## ***From an Orion Titan Team training lecture on "Your Friend, Mr. Bazooka":***

*"The U.S. Marine Corps says that hunting tanks is fun and easy. Remember that when 25' of fire-spitting monster rolls toward you as the rounds from your Hollywood-style assault rifle bounce off it like breakfast puffs. If you're a Special Op on a black operation, nobody's gonna send Tac Air, an armored division, or a hero in a red cape to save the day. Officially, you don't exist. Physically, you won't either unless you outsmart your opponent."*

## **Tanks (the hard way)**

If you're a hero, you can climb on top of a tank and drop a grenade through its hatch. It really works. Israeli and Syrian commandos stopped tanks this way in the battles outside Beirut in 1982. Rioters sometimes do it with Molotov cocktails. However, it is not a good way to collect retirement pay.

In the course of a TOP SECRET/S.I.<sup>TM</sup> game, play out any attempt to throw grenades through a tank's turret using the normal combat rules. One cannot board vehicles traveling over 40 MPH. A character must pass a ½ DEX check to jump onto a slower tank; failure indicates the character has fallen. It is assumed that boarders will approach a tank only from behind, so they do not risk being crushed under the treads. If someone leaps onto a tank from the side, a ¼ DEX check must be made to succeed; failure means a ¼ DEX check to avoid being crushed by the treads, causing 1d3 wounds for 2d10 points of damage each (hit-location rolls must be made). Tanks usually drive with their turrets open, because the crews are practically blind unless they put their heads out. This means commandos can find openings for grenades. It also means someone may jump out of a turret to stop a commando from making his grenade deposit. Remember that a tank usually carries two or three mounted machine guns, not to mention its cannon and any small arms the crew is packing.

## **What to shoot with**

When infantry has to take on tanks, it usually uses guided missiles. The larger antitank guided missiles (ATGMS) work well only between 1,500' and 9,000'. In a city or forest, you might not see a tank until it's too close. At longer ranges, a gunner must stand up and keep the target in his sights to guide the missile. This procedure requires nerve, especially if the tank starts shooting back.

Most ATGMS travel slowly to give their shaped charges time to work. An operator must guide this charge until it reaches the target, so he can correct mistakes in aiming and suffer no penalty for long-range fire. If the gunner flinches, his missile veers into the ground. If an ATGM gunner is fired upon while his missile is flying, he must pass a WIL check to keep the projectile on course, even if the shots miss. The Antitank Weapons Table shows missile speeds in feet per TOP SECRET/S.I. combat turn (two seconds). Use it to determine how many turns a gunner must concentrate on his target. When computing travel time, round up fractions of a turn.

Several missiles function differently. Operators of the Sagger and Swingfire ATGMS suffer a -20 penalty on WIL checks, thanks to the missiles' inconvenient joy stick aiming systems. However, the Hellfire and AT-6 have automatic seeking systems and do not need to be guided. These two missiles were designed for use from aircraft, where the gunner cannot possibly stay in one place to aim.

All antitank weapons have backblast. Anyone within 10' to the rear of a launching missile takes 1d2 wounds, each for 1d6 points of damage. Determine wound location randomly. The weapons labeled BB have particularly large exhausts that cause 1d4 wounds within 10' and 1d2 to everyone within 20'. Backblast also makes hidden gunners automatically obvious once they fire. If the Administrator considers a missile team especially well camouflaged, he might allow it to stay hidden if all enemies fail INT checks.

At close ranges, commandos can use devices like the U.S. Army light antitank weapon (LAW), which is a simple, unguided rocket. One aims and fires it almost like a rifle. LAWS and their kin penetrate armor with shaped charges. The front half of the shell is hollow; the rear half is a conical bomb. When the shell goes off, it produces a blowtorch effect that sears through armor. Most designers build tanks with sloped sides that can deflect the jet of fire. Modern armors also use ceramic composites that don't burn. A few vehicles are swathed with explosive plates that blow up missiles before they blow up the tank. Such improvements make LAWS less effective as tank killers. Fortunately, tank armor is thin in the rear, and tanks have other vulnerable spots. Aiming for the tracks, engine, or external weapons is a good idea.

### **What to shoot at**

The Antitank Weapons Table shows what ranges and effects these weapons have. A prepared shot (see page 74, Players Guide) at the side of an armored fighting vehicle (AFV) gains a +10 bonus to the gunner's weapon skill. A prepared shot at an AFV'S rear gets a +20 bonus. Characters can also aim for specific machinery by using a called shot (see page 73, Players Guide). The gunner must roll against  $\frac{1}{4}$  skill because, although the target is large, it is usually protected by streamlining and armor. Furthermore, only weapons with antivehicle ratings of +50 or higher can be used in called shots against AFVS. When these shots hit, they cripple whatever device they strike. Typical targets are radio antennas, guns, and engines or treads.

When a normal shot (not called) hits its tank target, the target must immediately roll on the Crash Table (see page 74, Players Guide). After checking the Crash Table, roll 1d6. On a 1 or 2, the target loses its largest functional weapon. This damage can be fixed only at a military garage by a character with the appropriate Weapons Skill (Tank Gun for the cannon, Machine Gun for the machine gun, etc.)

### **A question of friction**

Many countries build ATGMS in small numbers, test them insufficiently, then store them

until the propellant is of doubtful quality. Commandos must pay 10 friction points (described in TSACS *Commando*, pages 36-38) to use most antitank weapons. Soviet missiles incur 15 friction points, due to especially poor care. However, the TOW, Milan, 106 mm recoilless rifle, and LAW are well tested. They cost only five friction points each.

### **In summary**

The only smart way to take on a tank is to surprise it. One can use mines or concrete obstacles to "canalize" enemy vehicles into going where one wants them to go. Both commandos and Administrators should remember that a tank shoots only when its crew sees something to shoot at. As a general principle, a tank crew can see only straight ahead when inside the tank. A crewmember must put his head outside to see more, and tankers are reluctant to do this when bullets are flying their way. The Administrator determines how NPCS react to fire. A clever agent will hide in smoke, trees, or buildings, wait for a tank to reach stone-throwing distance, then fire a LAW and hope it works.

### **Bibliography**

The information in this article is authentic, although standard trench/obstacle/ grade data has been extrapolated to cover Soviet tanks where such information is unknown. The following sources were consulted:

- Bond, Ray, *Modern Weapons*. London: Salamander Books, 1985.
- Dunnigan, James F. *How To Make War*. New York: Quill, 1983.
- U.S. Army. *The Army Almanac*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950.

### **NOTES**

Antitank weapons never get a short-range modifier, and some do not suffer a long-range penalty, either. However, guided missiles have minimum ranges. Weapons without a speed entry do not need to be guided after firing. Therefore, the speed of the projectile is irrelevant in TOP SECRET/S.I. game mechanics.

**Anti-Tank Weapons Table**

Weapon (nation)	Antivehicle rating	Dam/Exp	Range			Wt, in lbs.		
			Min	Med	Long	Load	(Inchr/rd)*	Speed
TOW (U.S.)	50	Mis BB	195	900**	9,000	4	184/40	300
Dragon (U.S.)	40	Mis	900	--	3,000	3	32/27	150
Hellfire (U.S.)	50	Mis	900	1,500**	18,000	5	X/95	450
LAW (U.S.)	30	Gre	15	--	225	--	5.5	--
Sagger (U.S.S.R.)	50	Mis	900	3,000**	6,000	5	X/25	225
Spigot (U.S.S.R.)	50	Mis	150	600**	6,000	5	57/30	300
AT-6 (U.S.S.R.)	40	Mis	3,000	--	12,000	5	X/60	450
RPG-LAW (U.S.S.R.)	35	Gre	15	--	600	--	6	--
RPG-7 (U.S.S.R.)	40	Gre	15	900	1,500	5	15.4/5	300
RPG-16 (U.S.S.R.)	40	Gre	15	900	1,500	5	12/16	300
Milan (France)	50	Mis	75	600**	6,000	4	X/26	270
HOT (France)	50	Mis BB	225	1,500**	12,000	4	X/46	300
Swingfire (U.K.)	50	Mis	450	1,500**	12,000	5	X/75	225
Carl Gustav (Sweden)	40	Gre	15	900	1,350	2	34/5.7	--
Armbrust (German)	40	Gre	15	--	900	3	14/2.4	--
106 mm RR***	50	Mis BB	30	900	3,300	5	460/37	--

\* When only one number appears, both launcher and round are parts of the same device.

\*\* This is not a medium-long range but a medium-short range, Any shots at closer ranges (but above the minimum) suffer a -40 penalty to hit.

\*\*\* The 106 mm RR is a recoilless rifle that is issued everywhere, especially in the Third World.,

BB = big backblast (see text); Gre = grenade-type explosion, Mis = missile-type explosion (see Explosives Table, page 80, TOP SECRET/S.I. Players Guided; X = nonportable system.