

Light Anti-Tank Weapons

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The purpose of this handout is to provide an overview of the Shaped Charged Weapons (SCW, C13.9) category of Light Anti-Tank Weapons (LATWs) in Advanced Squad Leader (ASL), 2nd Edition. The relevant sections of the ASL rulebook are in C13. This workshop will focus on the use and tactical employment of the Panzerfaust (PF, C13.3), the Bazooka (BAZ, C13.4), the Panzerschreck (PSK, C13.48) and the PIAT (C13.6). The other sections of C13.6 (Anti-Tank Rifles, Molotov Projector, ATMM) are omitted.

Prerequisites for this workshop are a good understanding of the To Hit Process (C3), the To Hit Modifiers (sections C5 and C6), and the To Kill process (C7).

1. Background.

- a. The appearance of the Bazooka in the US Army in WW2 and the contemporaneous fielding of the Panzerfaust by the *Wehrmacht* in mid-1943 represented a significant shift in the ‘balance of power’ between tanks and infantry. The obsolescence of anti-tank rifles due to the increasing thickness of tank armor left the dismounted infantryman with little recourse other than the field-improvised grenade bundle to disable enemy tanks. Naturally, the use of grenade bundles necessitated getting into close quarters with enemy armor – a very unenviable proposition if individual survival was a priority. The pairing of a rocket-powered launch with a shaped charge (High Explosive, Anti-Tank or “HEAT”) penetrator gave the infantryman a significant tool against enemy tanks.
- b. Shaped-Charge Weapons (SCWs in ASL) were not without their disadvantages. The significant noise and smoke from firing them easily gave away the position of the firer, and the backblast of the weapon prevented effective use from cover provided by buildings and enclosed spaces. The long penetrator of the HEAT round required a hard target against which to detonate, thus limiting its use to armored vehicles and buildings. At the same time, tankers of both sides learned to reduce their vulnerability to SCWs by staying outside the SCW’s limited range when approaching likely infantry positions and working closely with friendly infantry. Armored vehicle designers and crewmen developed a variety of technical countermeasures (such as the German *Schurzen*) to prematurely detonate the HEAT round and limit its effectiveness. ASL represents these capabilities and limitations through a variety of rules highlighted below. Meanwhile, the contest between SCWs and armor design and employment continues in the present day with the development of better protective systems, (such as Explosive Reactive Armor and Active Protection Systems) versus longer-range Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (ATGMs) and top-attack weapons (such as the Javelin).

2. Usage

- a. LATW Overview (C13.1). LATWs use their own TH table and are considered Ordnance.
 - b. Panzerfaust (PF, C13.3). Not represented by a counter-on board but inherent with any German unit starting 9/43.
 - i. Usage. PF Check. Use of a SW. Order of Battle limitations.
 - ii. C13.32 Range (10, 8, 6, 4 depending on the year)
 - iii. C13.34 To Kill # is 31
 - iv. C13.35 Leadership modifiers apply
 - v. C13.36 Malfunction. Casualty reduction to operator on a '12'. Inexperienced usage penalty.
 - c. Bazooka (BAZ, C13.4). Represented as a counter with its own TH table. Constitutes use of SW. Americans always get the latest version.
 - i. C13.42 TH and range varies by year ('43, '44, '45).
 - ii. C13.43: TK varies by year ('43 vs '44/45).
 - iii. C13.44 Leadership modifiers apply
 - d. Panzerschreck (PSK, C13.48). BAZ rules apply same to PSK.
 - e. Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank (PIAT, C13.6). SCW without the Backblast (C13.8).
3. Tactical Employment
- a. Location. Woods, Orchard, Grain, etc. Not a vehicle, rubble, pillbox, cave, sewer or building without Desperation (C13.81).
 - b. Surprise
 - i. Concealment (A12)
 - ii. HIP (A12.3-.34)
 - c. Target Facing: Front vs Side/Rear