

# FRONTLINE GENERAL™ NEWS

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## IN THIS ISSUE...

- **MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR: QUESTIONS ON SCALE?**
- **FEATURE ARTICLE: THE TWO SCALES OF FRONTLINE GENERAL**

## QUESTIONS ON SCALE?

AUTHOR: BYRON COLLINS  
FRONTLINE GENERAL™ DESIGNER

This month's newsletter is a little different than the first two issues. In both issues 1 and 2, I introduced you to some game visuals for Frontline General: Unit Cards and the first Campaign Map, Southern Italy 1943-44. By showing you a preview of the Unit Cards, you've seen and read that I plan to use those cards to represent the statistics associated with the game's units. Cards deliver the mechanics necessary for play. At first glance the map looks like an *operational* scale wargame map... and that is a correct assessment. However, the Cards at an individual level are more suited to *tactical* level wargaming... which is also a correct assessment. In this issue, you will not find any visual previews of the game. However, you will find that the *Feature Article* tackles a very important subject for Frontline General: *Scale*. "What is the scale of this game?" A better question would be, "What are the scales of this game?" Frontline General uses two scales: *Operational Scale*, and optionally, *Tactical Scale*.

At this point you may have some questions such as, "What is in store for players with miniatures? What is the scope or scale of miniatures battles? The Italian Campaign Map looks Operational in scope, yet the Unit Cards I've seen look individual or squad-based. What are the reasons for this and how do these two scales work together?"

The answers are in how I am defining and developing Frontline General- as a 'Hybrid Scale Wargame'- Since this is a self-written definition, I will try to be as clear as possible in the *Feature Article* to explain. My definition is given below:

**"HYBRID SCALE WARGAME- SIMULATION OF A CONFLICT AT MULTIPLE SCALES THAT WORK TOGETHER TO PORTRAY DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THAT CONFLICT, EACH AT UNIQUE LEVELS OF DETAIL, JOINED TOGETHER BY A COMMON SET OF RULES."**

You've probably never heard of a *hybrid scale wargame*. That's partially because I am coining the term and partially because the development of such a game is uncommon. "So why is Frontline General a *hybrid-scale wargame* and what exactly do I mean by this? How does one play a game that has multiple scales? What is the structure for changing or managing those scales? Why attempt to create a multi-scale game? How can this be practical for a tabletop wargame? Can different scales really work together in the same game? Do I have to use both scales to play Frontline General?"

**READ ON TO FIND OUT THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS AND ENJOY THIS BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT THE GAME REGARDING SCALE.**

# FEATURE ARTICLE: THE *TWO* SCALES OF FRONTLINE GENERAL

AUTHOR: BYRON COLLINS  
FRONTLINE GENERAL™ DESIGNER

## INTRODUCTION

### FRONTLINE GENERAL OPERATIONAL SCALE

### FRONTLINE GENERAL TACTICAL SCALE

### Q&A: HOW OPERATIONAL AND TACTICAL SCALES WORK TOGETHER IN FRONTLINE GENERAL

## INTRODUCTION

Setting a balance of scale, realism, historical accuracy, and time required to play is one of the greatest challenges of developing a historical wargame. Frontline General has a unique feel regarding scale. Players will notice that several aspects of the game are *operational* in scale, covering movement and strategy at the campaign level, while other aspects of the game are *tactical* in scale, with a focus on individual units and squads at the battlefield level. Frontline General covers a wide range and depth of play by incorporating both large and small scales driven by the same Unit Cards, Basic Rules, and some optional rules while providing unique differences between the many units in the game.

This “hybrid scale” approach lends itself to a more complete wargame. Naval and air units are coordinated with ground forces to take objectives and support each other. Sea, Air, and Land combat are all factors in the simulation rather than just focusing on one of these forces as the basis of the game. The level of detail in the Basic Rules should not bog down players seeking simplicity. As previously mentioned, more detail may be added by choosing to use some of the Optional Rules included with the game. In this article, I’ll introduce a few of these Optional elements as they relate to Scale and the incorporation of third party miniatures. The basic premise of scale will be explained as it relates to Frontline General followed by a brief Q&A format discussion of some of the specifics.

### FRONTLINE GENERAL OPERATIONAL SCALE

Frontline General Operational Scale is used for most game play. Players use the Basic Rules, a Campaign Map, Scenario setup guidelines, Unit Cards, Hexagonal Game Pieces, Currency, and more, to play at the Operational level. Some operational aspects of the game

include managing income and purchasing units, logistics and supply, building structures such as airfields, command posts, and fortifications, and employing strategies to take and defend objectives on a large scale.

At the operational level, each Campaign Map hex measures 5/8” wide across the flats, and represents approximately 8-1/2 miles of terrain. All combat can be resolved at the operational scale. This is an approach that I highly recommend for simple battles involving only a few units or for players who do not have the additional time to incorporate third party miniatures. The entire game may begin and end at the operational scale, but this is not my intent for the game. So how do I intend for players to approach Frontline General? Before answering that, I will introduce you to the Frontline General Tactical Scale.

### FRONTLINE GENERAL TACTICAL SCALE

Tactical Scale is the scale at which most rules for miniatures are designed. One reason for this is that it offers considerably more detail at the level of individual units and squads. Individual unit production is common with most miniatures manufacturers. Many wargame hobbyists enjoy painting their own miniatures and creating their own battlefield terrain. However, pre-painted miniatures and ready-made terrain are becoming more common. Tactical elements in Frontline General include making decisions within combat, timing and coordination of units, the selection of which weapons to use, how to take objectives, being aware of morale and more. Tactical game mechanics are usually designed with a focus on individual units, squads, and soldiers. Tactical Scale Miniatures Combat provides further detail for a player’s *combat phase*, and its use for combat engagement is optional.

The default Frontline General Tactical Scale (horizontal scale) is 1"=500 yards. To represent one 8-1/2 mile Campaign Map hex (which is about 15,000 yards), each Tactical Scale "battle hex" or playable area would be approximately 30" at the flats. "Hexes" at the Tactical scale are not required at all, but they are useful for initial setup and for comparison to the Campaign Map hexes they represent. I call this the "default" Tactical scale; this is the scale at which a few key stats, like tactical scale weapon range, are calculated based on their historical effective range. Players wishing to play on a 15" battlefield (at a tactical horizontal scale of 1"=1000 yards) are free to do so by simply scaling a couple of key stats appropriately. For example, halving the scale cuts weapon range in half.

Some additional rules incorporated at the Tactical level (that are generally not used at the operational level) include sight checks for line of fire, movement on the battlefield during combat, morale of units (which can rise and fall, triggering events), negotiation of cease-fires, and more. At the Tactical Scale, additional terrain becomes a factor. The level of detail and extent of this terrain is limited only by the imaginations of players. Buildings and ruins, forests and brush, minefields, tank traps, and more can be very difficult to negotiate for some units. Terrain at the Tactical scale adds to the realism of the game at a more detailed level. These factors and ways to overcome or exploit them are simply not practical or are too time consuming to include at the operational level.

#### **Q&A: HOW OPERATIONAL AND TACTICAL SCALES WORK TOGETHER IN FRONTLINE GENERAL**

##### **HOW WILL THESE TWO SCALES WORK TOGETHER IN ONE GAME?**

Players perform most "regular" game functions at the larger Operational scale. During the game they may choose to fight several large-scale battles with miniatures (or the included Game Pieces) at the Tactical scale, which represents a close-up view of corresponding Campaign Map hexes. Essentially, players "zoom in" on the battle and are provided with tactical challenges. What can't effectively be simulated at the Operational Scale is simulated at the Tactical Scale. Combat is the only portion of the game that uses the Tactical Scale. Keep in mind that resolving combat in this way is purely optional. All combat may be resolved at the Operational level using the

same combat system. Tactical Combat Rules build onto this basic combat system to provide more detail, more realism, and more options for how players may use their units.

When units engage in combat, players simply set up miniatures to represent them, terrain to approximate the map hex where the engagement occurs, and then resolve the combat. Once resolved, players continue the game back at the Operational scale.

##### **HOW CAN TWO DIFFERENT SCALES WORK TOGETHER USING THE SAME UNIT STATS AND RULES?**

The same Unit Card stats are used at both scales, with a few exceptions. Let's take *movement* of a unit as an example. At the Operational Scale, a particular tank moves "2", where "2" represents two hexes, at 8-1/2 miles each. At the Tactical scale, "2" now represents two inches, at 500 yards per inch. Note that tactical movement may only occur during a player's *combat phase* after Operational-level movement is complete. Movement cannot exceed the bounds of the hex where combat was initiated, but units at this scale may still move around on the battlefield.

Another example is range of weaponry. For range, two values will be given for each weapon on every Unit card separated by a "/". The top value indicates range in "hexes" for the Operational scale, while the bottom value indicates range in "inches" for the Tactical scale. Take the effective range of the American M1919A4 Light Machine Gun... 1500 yards. Its range value is "0/3". Since 1500 yards is not much on the scale of a hex on the Campaign Map, a value of "0" indicates that in order to fire at a target the target must be within the same hex as the LMG. On the Tactical scale, players look at the lower number which indicates that the target must be within "3 inches" to be within range. Some large guns like artillery have values of 1 or more at the Operational Scale.

##### **WHY DO THIS? WHY NOT DEVELOP A SYSTEM FOR JUST ONE SCALE, LIKE MOST OTHER WARGAMES?**

I like aspects of both scales and I wanted to create a game that simulates a wide variety of situations and challenges. I think it gives Frontline General a unique feel. This game can function alone on the Operational

or Tactical scales, but using them both together is very rewarding. Two scales using the same combat system gives players more options for game play. Have time for just one detailed miniatures battle? Then set up a Tactical game without the Operational portion. Since the game uses the same mechanics at both scales and all stats are card-driven, the difficulty is on my end, the development side. It's relatively easy to use once you get used to it.

#### **WHY INCLUDE MINIATURES?**

**M**iniatures add a more tangible, dynamic, view of any given battle. Resolution of combat using miniatures provides more flexibility for each player. Miniatures battles provide more realism, more memorable battles, more of a challenge, and more room for command decisions at the level of individual squads and units.

#### **MUST I USE MINIATURES TO PLAY AT THE TACTICAL LEVEL?**

**N**o. If you don't have miniatures or don't want to buy them, it's not a problem. Players may always use the game pieces included with the game as Unit markers for either scale. Personally, I prefer to keep Unit markers on the Campaign Map as placeholders for where the battle is occurring, and then set up miniatures to represent those units one-for-one on the Tactical scale battlefield.

#### **THERE ARE MANY MINIATURES SCALES OUT THERE. WHAT "VERTICAL" MINIATURES SCALE WORKS BEST FOR THIS GAME'S TACTICAL LEVEL?**

**T**he choice is entirely up to you. Several scales will work fine using the default "horizontal" scale. 15mm is a common size and there are a lot of companies that make 15mm WWII miniatures. 6mm miniatures are available cheaper but offer less detail. 10mm miniatures are gaining in popularity and offer a good mid-range level of detail. Players should use a consistent size. No matter the height of the soldier, the rules governing that soldier are the same. Generally, scales that offer individual planes, tanks, artillery, and squad-level or individual soldiers, work best.

#### **WHY THE DIFFERENCE IN HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL SCALES FOR MINIATURES?**

**T**his is the case for most games that use miniatures. The horizontal scale is quite a bit more compressed than the vertical scale. Having two different horizontal and vertical scales for miniatures play is nothing out of the ordinary. For 30" to represent 8-1/2 miles, each soldier would have to be incredibly small at the same scale. Therefore, soldier height is usually exaggerated.

#### **DO I HAVE TO USE THE TACTICAL SCALE FOR EVERY BATTLE?**

**N**o. Miniatures are certainly not recommended for every battle. In fact, resolution of every operational engagement at the tactical level would take far too long to play the game. Resolving minor combat engagements on the Campaign Map is encouraged because it saves time. I encourage players with miniatures to incorporate at least one or two miniatures battles into each game, centered on key objectives or major struggles during the Campaign.

#### **SO HOW AND WHEN DO PLAYERS "SWITCH SCALE" DURING THE GAME?**

**E**ither player may suggest that a particular engagement be resolved at the Tactical Scale using miniatures during the game. Another option is to pre-determine that engagements involving a certain minimum number of units or battles for major and minor objectives be resolved this way. To "switch scale", one player simply initiates an engagement on the Campaign Map during his turn, and then either player may call "Resolve By Miniatures" at which point the action essentially 'zooms in' to the battlefield where the engagement occurs. There are more specific guidelines that I won't cover here, but all will be explained in the rules in more detail.

#### **WHAT KIND OF TERRAIN IS REQUIRED?**

**T**errain should be adjustable and dynamic, meaning that the same terrain will most likely not be set up the same way twice. In order to place terrain at the beginning of a major battle players simply refer to

the main Campaign Map as a feature guide to incorporate rivers, bridges, and shorelines, and then place additional terrain in the areas of their choice once the basic features are agreed upon. Terrain may be of any type, but should basically try to mimic the space(s) where the battle occurs on the Campaign Map. Players have creative freedom to mold the battlefield terrain, taking turns choosing and placing terrain on the large hexes. Terrain may be 3rd party or self-made 3D terrain, 2D cutouts, or sketches on paper representing different types of terrain (towns, rivers, bridges, water, beaches, shell holes, ditches, swamps, trees, mountains, and so forth).

#### **WHAT DOES EACH UNIT REPRESENT, IN TERMS OF QUANTITY?**

Units are on the individual or squad level. To keep the game playable, the Basic Rules do not approximate the actual numbers of units on the battlefield. Many thousands of soldiers represented by individual squads on a large-scale map, such as the Southern Italy Campaign Map, would take a much longer time to play and a much lower level of combat detail. Most games at an operational scale represent divisions of units rated on raw strength, but I would rather maintain an individual feel for the units involved. Players manage and fight with a portion or “sample” of historical armies, which results in a mixed use of land, air, and sea units, albeit in lower-than-historical quantities. The reason for this is to balance historical accuracy with the time required to simulate that accuracy. This results in a game that is playable in a reasonable amount of time without sacrificing much realism or the factors that make each unit unique. In *Frontline General*, all units provided make up the basic building blocks of historical World War II armies. Players may easily group several units together in a historical way based on historic Tables of Organization and Equipment (TO&E).

#### **WILL GUIDANCE BE PROVIDED FOR THE SETUP OF BATTLES AT THE TACTICAL SCALE?**

Yes. Scenarios will provide setup suggestions for Units involved with particular battles, such as for Monte Cassino, Rome, a particular bridge, or other objectives. In addition, I plan to take suggestions for battles and post player-submissions of setup guidelines

for both historical and fictional situations within any given campaign.

#### **HAS THIS EVER BEEN ACCOMPLISHED IN A PUBLISHED TABLE-TOP WARGAME?**

Not to my knowledge.

#### **IN SUMMARY**

In summary, two scales work together in *Frontline General* to simulate various aspects of World War II Campaigns. By incorporating elements of an operational simulation, economics and supply become factors in the game. By adding tactical elements and miniatures combat, a focus on individual units and their unique differences comes into play, using a much greater level of detail. Both scales work together by using the same basic combat mechanics. Tying all of these elements together yields the definition of a *hybrid scale wargame*.

#### **I HAVE QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ABOUT THIS ARTICLE. WHAT SHOULD I DO?**

Send me an E-mail at [thegeneral@frontlinegeneral.com](mailto:thegeneral@frontlinegeneral.com). I'd love to hear from you. If you have a question about this article or anything else related to the game, I'll answer it to the best of my ability. Alternately, you can post your questions or comments in the forum.

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## **THANKS FOR READING!**