



Earth 2264

At first glance, there is not much that differs from the world that we know of, just a rougher, dirtier and more crowded. If you have turned the wrong street corner and found yourself walking down the streets in one of those bad areas that your mother warned you about and your friends bragged about... well I guess you get the picture. Large areas of both cities and the countryside are outside the control of the official authorities. The police, supported by security forces uphold the control in the wealthier areas of the mega cities, around the communication network (intercity highways and airports), food resources and production sites.

The main interest of the authorities is their space programs. New technologies have finally made space travel possible and reasonable cheap. Expeditions have returned from nearby solar systems with reports of habitable planets and the rich and ambitious people are by now abandoning the old planet in large numbers in order to start a new life and leaving all their troubles and the not so fortunate masses to their own fate.

The earth is by now reduced to colonies, sources of cheap products and cheap labor. Outlaw gangs roam the wastelands, pillaging and raiding whatever and wherever they can get their hands on something. As long as the gangs are fighting each other, the authorities do not interfere. However, if any gang gets too powerful or too bold they are likely to attract an unhealthy attention from the security forces.

2nd lieutenant Helen Wakin have just graduated from the Security Academy and been posted as a platoon leader with the 16th Security brigade. Captain Sara Huai, the commanding officer of BRAVO company browse through Wakins file once again, trying to make up her mind if Wakin is ready or not for the upcoming missions. According to the file, Wakin has shown herself to be an optimistic and bold cadet, slightly too keen on making a career. To Huai, who have seen a number of young officers

passing through her company, Wakin looks like just another from the same mold. What makes Wakin different is that she comes from a quite privileged background, a family with good connections high up in the system. Played well, Wakin could be of some benefit for Huai but she could also bring the wrong kind of attention to the company. It was time to see what the young lieutenant was good for.

Captain Huai closed the file and lit up the battle screen instead.

- Wakin, Surita and Philips! Get your asses over here. I have job for you! the captain yelled .

-Sir! Ready for orders, sir! Wakin reported as she stepped in to the shades under the camouflage nettings over the command post. Janette Surita and Thomas Philips, the two sergeants that had called as well, eyed-balled her but said nothing. This was just what could be expected of a fresh lieutenant.

- Last night our drones reported activities in sector DELTA OSCAR TWO FOUR. There are a number of abandoned settlements out there and battalion CO wants us to make sure that they stay that way. Most likely there was a bunch of scavengers from the Boars that were searching for anything to steal.

- Your job is to get up there and have look. I'll attach pair of Surita's walkers for support and two of Philips drones for early warning. All the info you need is on the battle net. If you find any scavengers – clear the area. If the resistance gets too stiff, just secure the area and call for backup, is that clear?

- Yes sir! Wakin snapped.

- Right. Any questions?

- No,sir.

- Perfect. You are all dismissed.

Gaming the scenarios

I intend to game the scenario using the Sci-fi rules Quadrant 13 (Q13) from the Too Fat Lardies (TFL). To generate characters, the opponent forces and their activities, I will use the TFL's scenario generator Platoon Forward.

The Q 13 is a quite open set of rules that leave a lot of details free for the players to define for themselves. The first and most obvious one is to define what "tech level" (how technically advanced) the parties have reached. The rules deal with five levels, 0-4. Tech level 0 is roughly speaking anything prior to the 20th century and tech level 1 is about where we stand today. The tech levels are of course a very general categorization, but it is still important to have a broad idea on what they have developed.

Since my scenario is set 250 years into the future, I find it logical that technology has made another jump to tech level 2. It is described as: Beam weapons are now possible. Smart missiles and drones are the norm. Alternative power sources are available. Limited ability to control gravitational force and generate force fields. Effective space travel and robotics are possible. Computers are not yet as intelligent as their masters. The world of Red Dwarf or the Terminator.

The Security forces

Based on this, the security forces in the scenario are equipped with:

A camouflage uniform that monitor the wearers comfort and health. It is warm in cold weather and cold when it's hot. If the soldiers body temperature rise due to the work load, the uniform adjust to it in order to increase the comfort. The uniform is reasonable resistant to rain but not water proof as a swimsuit. It is resistant to CBRN and to some degree open fire. Finally the uniform monitors the soldier's health and if the wearer is wounded, it sends a stress signal up the chain of command. It is also possible to monitor the wounded from a distance. The uniform is powered by a battery.

A ballistic armour. When prepared for battle, the soldier wears a set of ballistic plates for protection. They are not bullet proof but reduce the effect of ricochets, shrapnel's and such.

A helmet. The helmet is not only a part of the ballistic protection; it is also a vital part of the soldiers situation-awareness system. It contains a radio that allows the soldiers to maintain vocal contact within their sections. It also contains an advanced "Friend-or-Foe" system that helps the soldiers to avoid "blue on blue" situations. The helmet does also have eye-controlled sight that is connected to the weapon. Just look at the target, point the weapon in the general direction and pull the trigger.

The helmet does also contain a "BIO-sensor" that can detect humans or large animals hiding behind walls and hidden in dense terrain. It also contains a target designator and a night vision devise.

The weapon. Each soldier carries a high power low noise beam carbine. The carbine is of roughly the same size as today's carbines, but lighter. The carbine has a range of up to 300 meters and is powered by a battery of the same type that powers the uniform. Thus in emergency the soldier can replace the batteries to maintain the power in the weapon or in the uniform. One battery last for at least 500 shots.

Command and control systems. Platoon leaders carry a Pad that is connected to the "battle net". On the Pad the officer can monitor their own troop's activities, foes that has been detected, images from drones etc. They can also send reports, give and receive orders.

Company commanders and above have a larger version of the Pad.

Support weapons. Larger and stronger beam weapons are mounted on tanks and APC's etc. Artillery and other weapons for area fire are using rocket propelled and guided grenades fired from magnetic rail guns.

The Scavengers

Most of the scavengers are loosely organized bands that live on what they can pillage from abandoned settlements or raiding each other. Some bands with higher ambitions raid the property of the authorities but face the obvious risk of running into security forces. Some groups do even try to carve out their own small empires.

In general, the scavengers rely on level 1 technology but if they get their hands on more qualified equipment, they will use it. However, most of them lack the know-how and the resources to maintain or copy the more advanced equipment.

Playing the factions

With one exception, the two factions are represented and played along the standard rules in Q13. The exceptions I have identified concern the ability for Big Men to influence their subordinate units. As all Security forces have access to their battle net, any Big man may activate any of his/her units,

regardless of the unit is inside or outside the command radius. However, units acting outside of the command radius may not benefit from bonuses linked to the big man. Actions such as removing shock etc. do still require the physical presence of a big man.

Scenario 1

The set up

The attackers (Security forces)

One mechanized platoon

- Three infantry sections of 8 soldiers each. Standard equipment. Each section ride in one wheeled APC. The APC is lightly armored and equipped with one heavy beam gun.
- Platoon leader Helen Wakin (Big Man level 2). Wakin rides in one of the APC's

Two walkers. Lightly armored and each armed with one heavy beam gun and one heavy rpg.

Two recce drones (helicopter style). They are unarmed, small thus difficult to spot. The drones are controlled from an armed jeep.

The opponent (Scavengers)

The scavengers will initially be represented by a number of blinds, large markers that may, or may not contain any troops. Once the attacker gets the opportunity to spot a blind, its true content will be diced for and the proper miniatures will be placed on the table. The number of blinds in this scenario will be equal +1 to the attackers force.

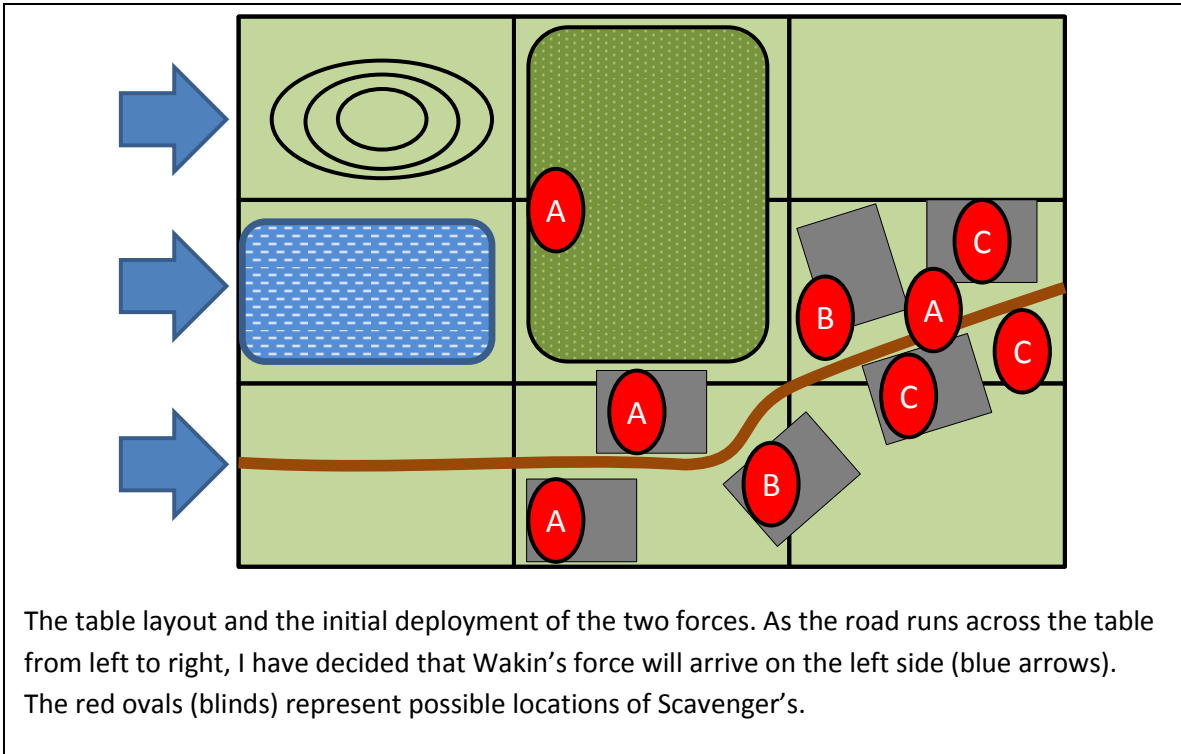
Possible troop types:

- Infantry section: 8-10 lightly armed men tiding on a pick-up
- Support weapons: A heavy machinegun or a heavy RPG team that uses a pick-up for transportation.
- Fighting vehicles: Unarmored pick-ups with mounted heavy weapons or some lightly armored cars (will be diced for if needed)

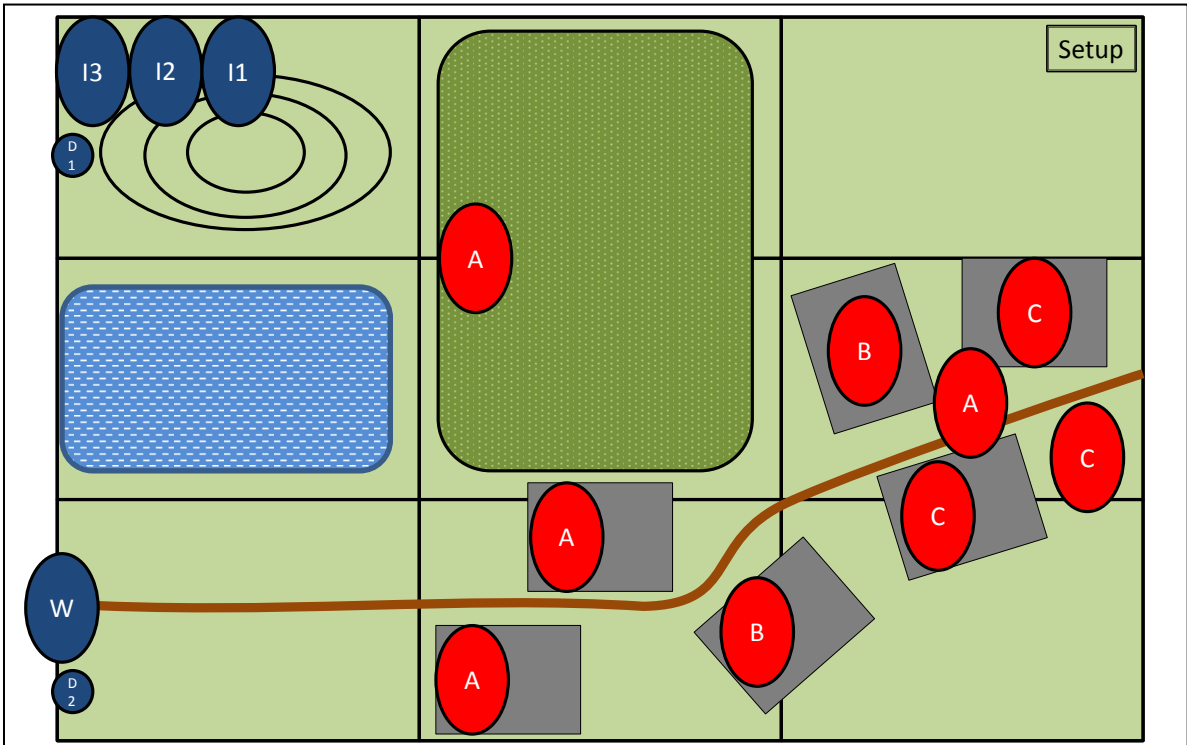
The blinds will be labeled A, B or C. For details, please refer to the section on how to generate a scenario in Platoon Forward.

The table (moderate terrain)

Hill	Orchard or crops	Open
Marsh, stream or river	Orchard or crops	2- 4 buildings. Road
Road	2-4 buildings. Road	Open

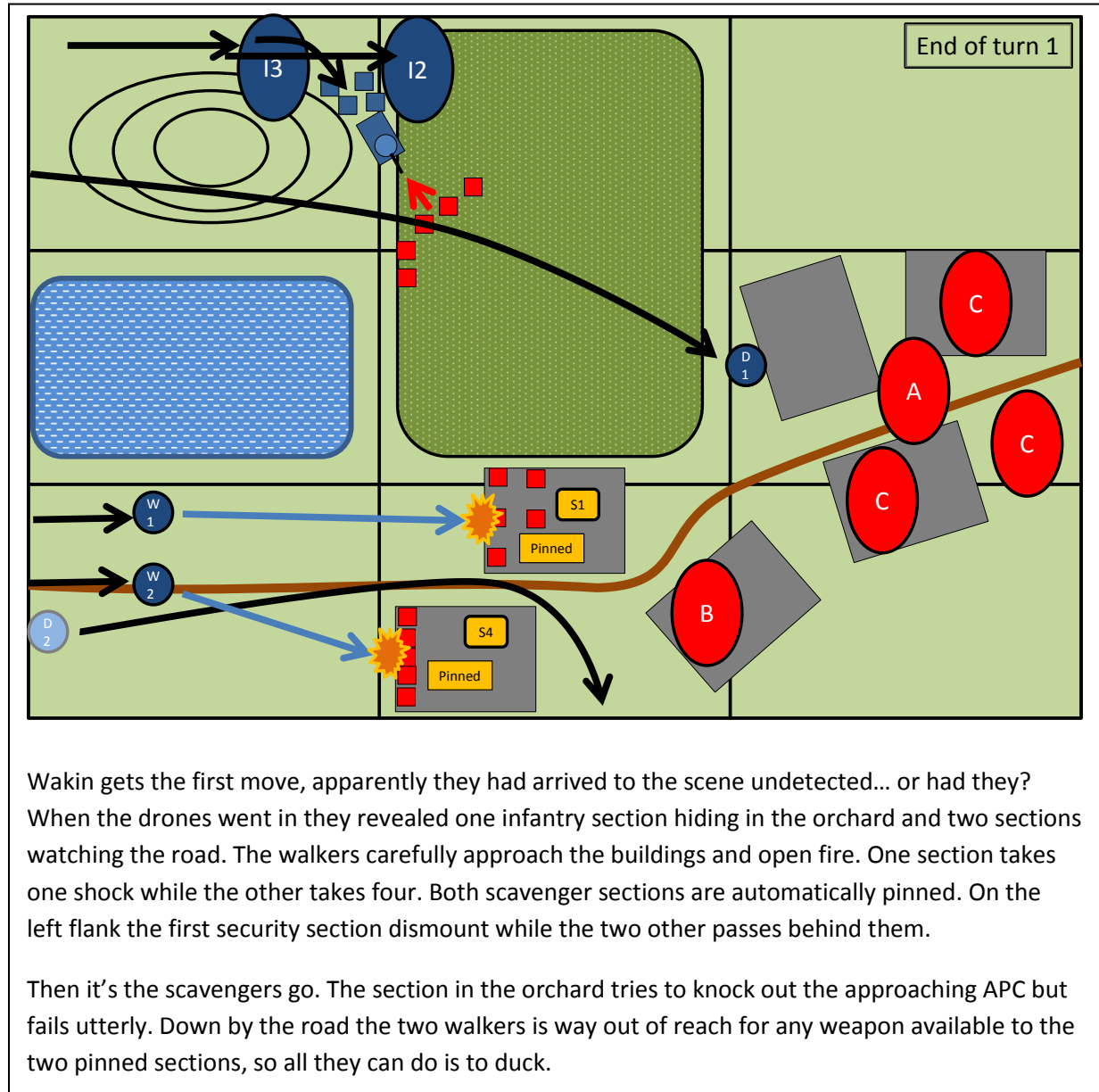


The game



Wakin's plan is to send the walkers up the road to attract attention. Meanwhile the security platoon will sweep through the orchard and enter the village and cut the scavenger's in two. The drones are to go in ahead of the troops to scout.

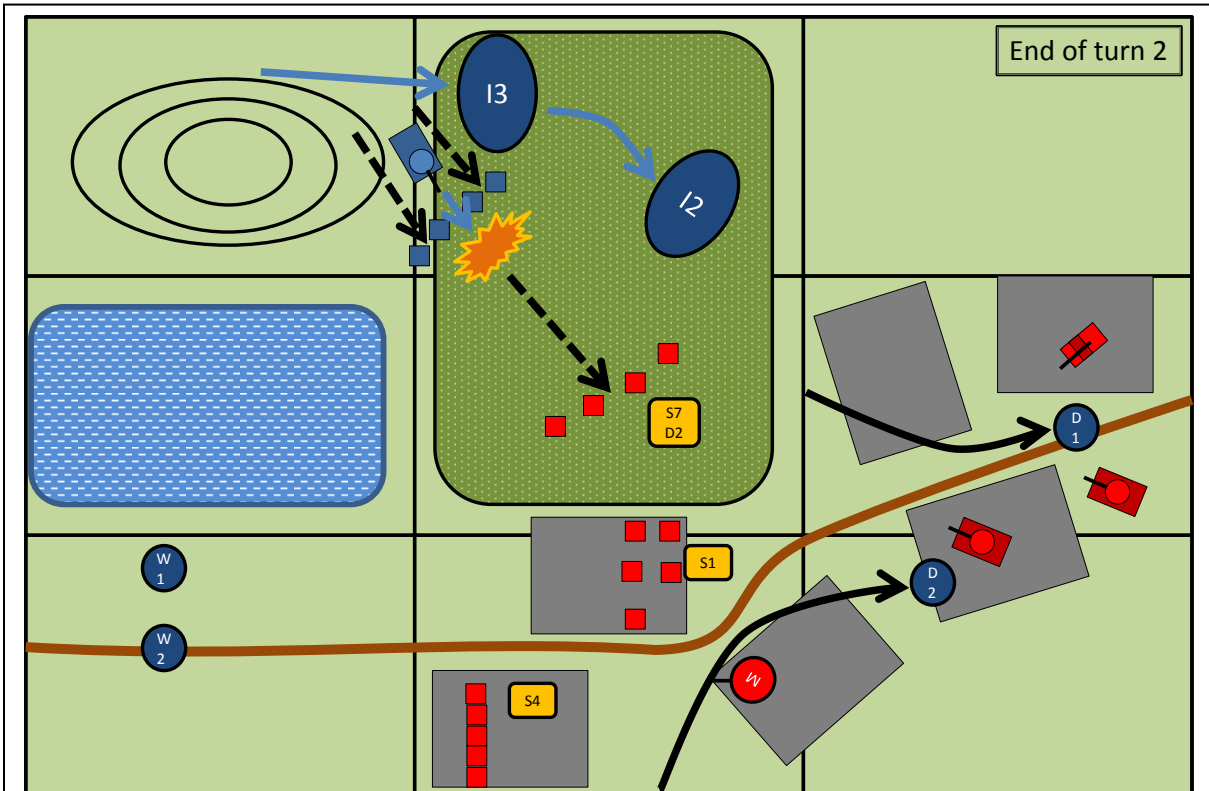
Turn 1



Wakin gets the first move, apparently they had arrived to the scene undetected... or had they? When the drones went in they revealed one infantry section hiding in the orchard and two sections watching the road. The walkers carefully approach the buildings and open fire. One section takes one shock while the other takes four. Both scavenger sections are automatically pinned. On the left flank the first security section dismount while the two other passes behind them.

Then it's the scavengers go. The section in the orchard tries to knock out the approaching APC but fails utterly. Down by the road the two walkers is way out of reach for any weapon available to the two pinned sections, so all they can do is to duck.

Turn two

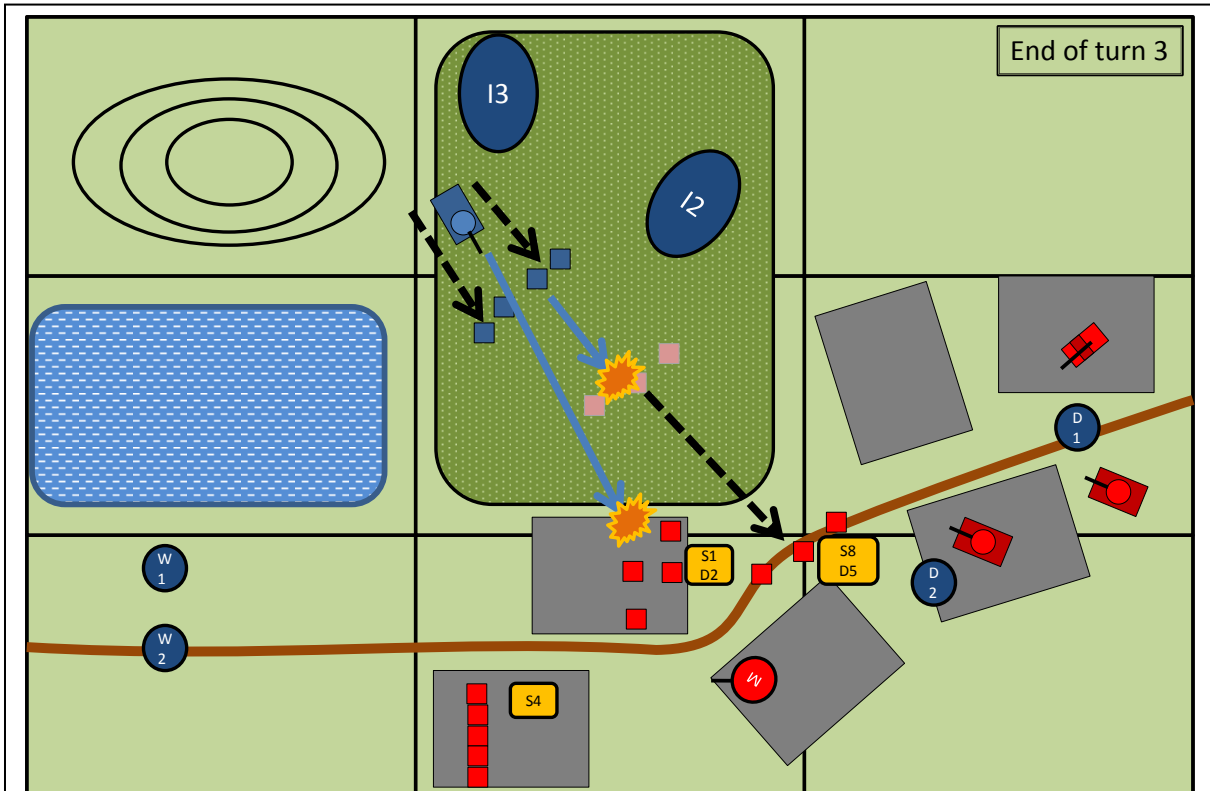


Again Wakin gets to move first. She activates her first section The APC fires on the scavengers hiding in the orchards and kills two of them, leaving the others pinned and with one shock. She then uses her second initiative to lead the infantry in a charge on the pinned scavengers. The charge is just too much for them and they flee head over heels adding six more shock points to their account.

Down by the road the two scavenger sections withdraw to the relative safety further back within their buildings.

At that moment the drones reveal what have been hiding in the other buildings: one HMG, one jeep with a mounted HMG and two light armored cars. As the two remaining security sections advance through the orchard Wakin realize that she is up against something trickier then what she had expected.

Turn three

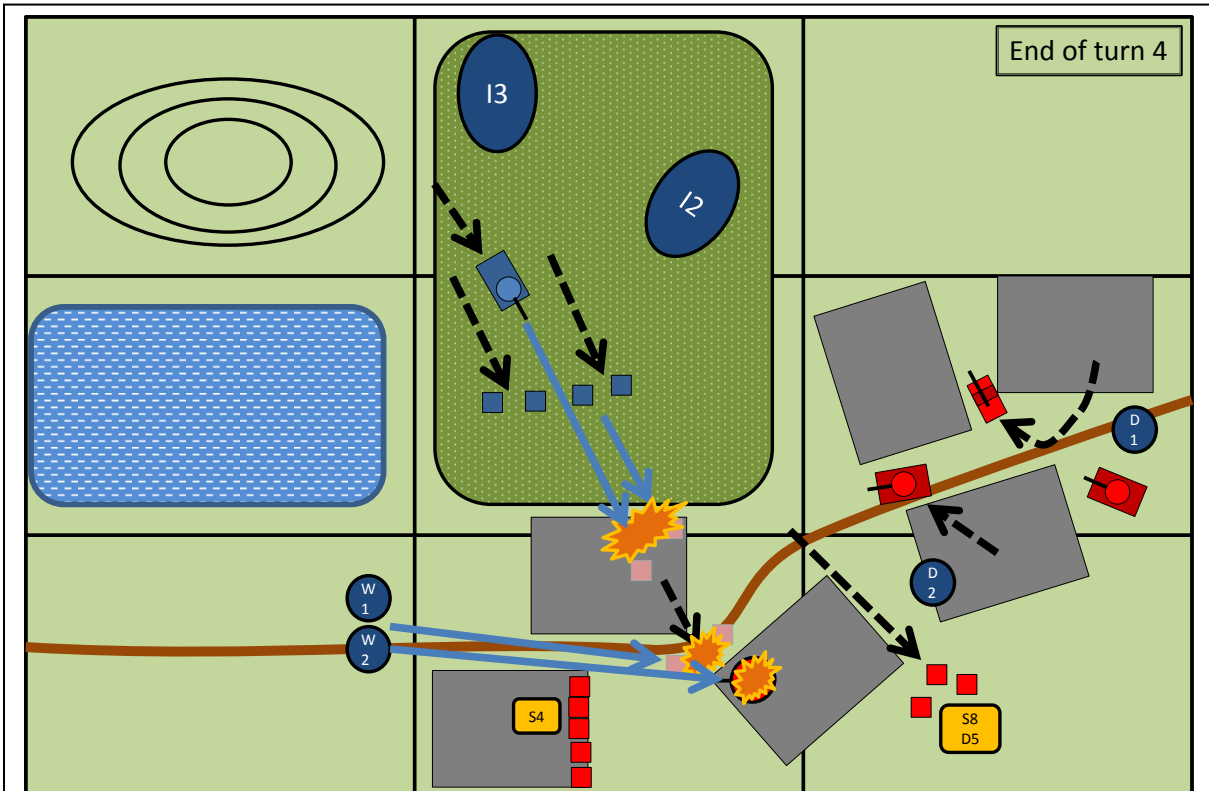


The scavengers in the building close to the orchard were by now safe from the walkers, but the approaching infantry posed a new threat. They reserved one action dice for a possible fire fight and the second for moving within the building. Using just one action for the move wasn't enough to make any substantial changes.

Next unit to go into action was the 1st infantry section. They used two actions to follow the retreating enemy and then fired with the last one. Despite the poor visibility they killed another 3 and inflicted one more shock. The remaining scavengers fell into awe and fled. Meanwhile, the gunner in the APC had noticed the movements in the building up ahead and fired, killing two enemies.

Here the "Break card" came up ending the turn. Looking at the scene it's understandable that most of the units hesitated.

Turn four



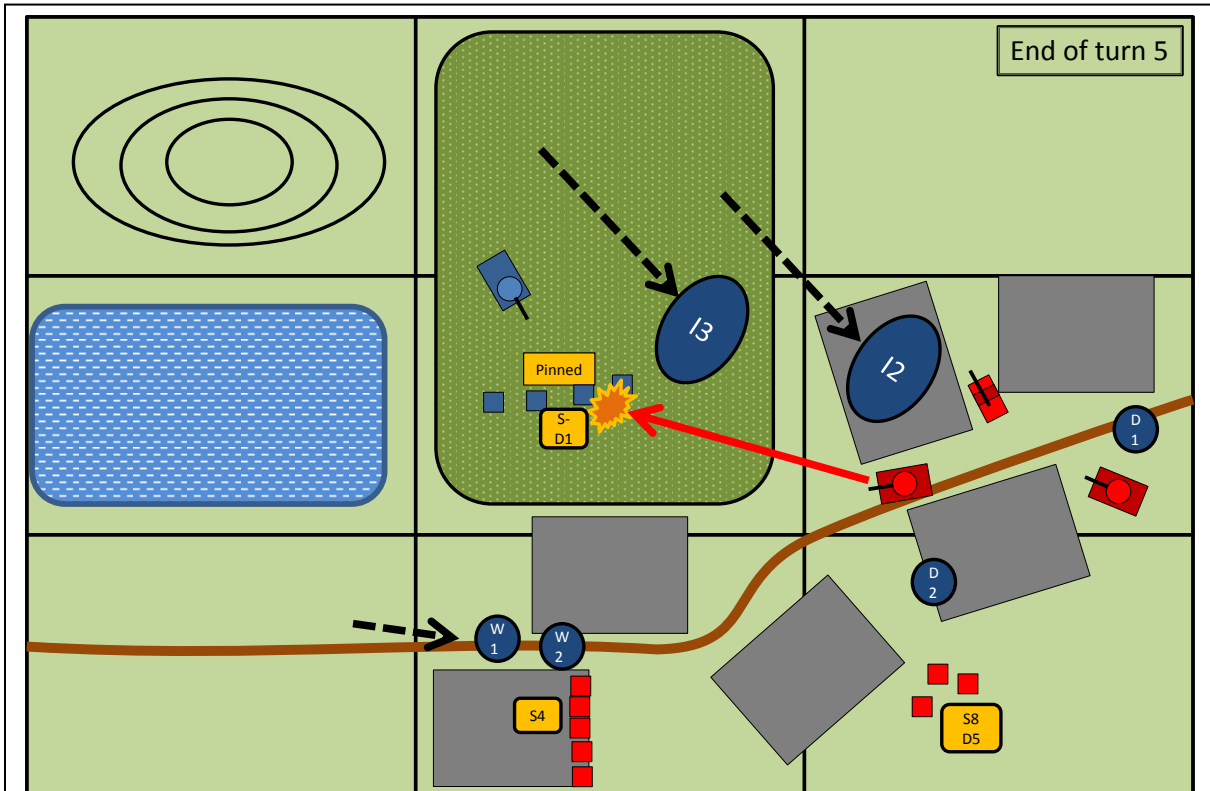
Again Wakin was in charge. She activated the section she was following and then activated the walkers. The infantry and the APC advanced with two dice and fired with what they had left. The result was another four dead scavengers. The remainder fell into awe and fled out of the building and onto the main road, only to be caught in the fire from the walkers.

The walkers had advanced with two dice and then fired their heavy RPG's. The first walker hit the routing scavengers, killing them all. The second walker put its grenade right on the spot of the HMG in the building. The gun and its crew disappeared as part of the building collapsed on top of them.

The last remaining scavenger foot section moved back and prepared to abandon their position

On the far right the scavengers vehicles started to move but the all-seeing drones kept track of their positions.

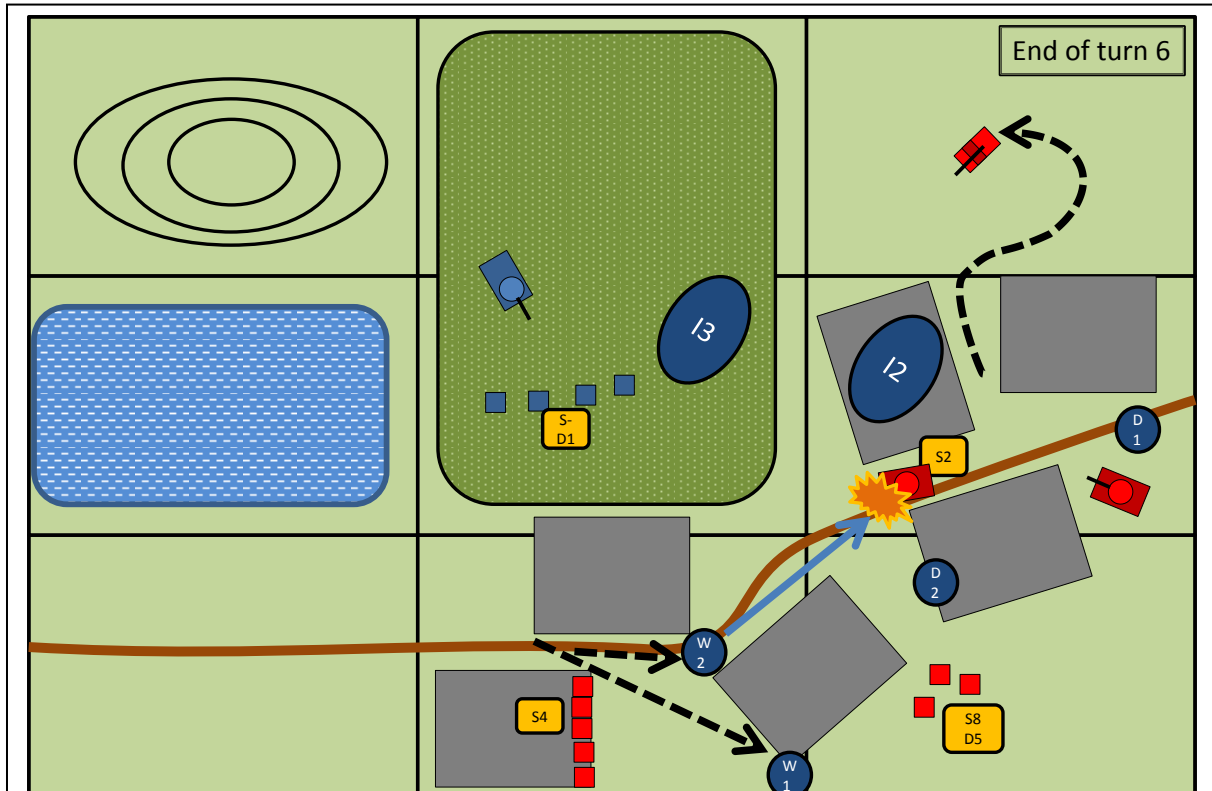
Turn five



The commander in one of the scavengers lightly armored vehicle had no idea on what was going on, other than there was bursts of firing all over the village. From where he was positioned he had seen the HMG and one of the foot teams disappear in the cloud of exploding shells and had no intention to move forward to see what was coming down the road. Instead he went into over watch.

From the other end of the road, the two walkers advanced, keeping a careful eye on the buildings but detected nothing to shoot at. And in the orchard the two infantry sections, still hidden by the blinds finally moved forward. The noise from the advancing sections drew the attention of the scavenger on over watch and he fired the vehicles auto cannon towards the 1st section. Immediately, Wakin was notified through the battle net that one of the soldiers had been killed on the spot.

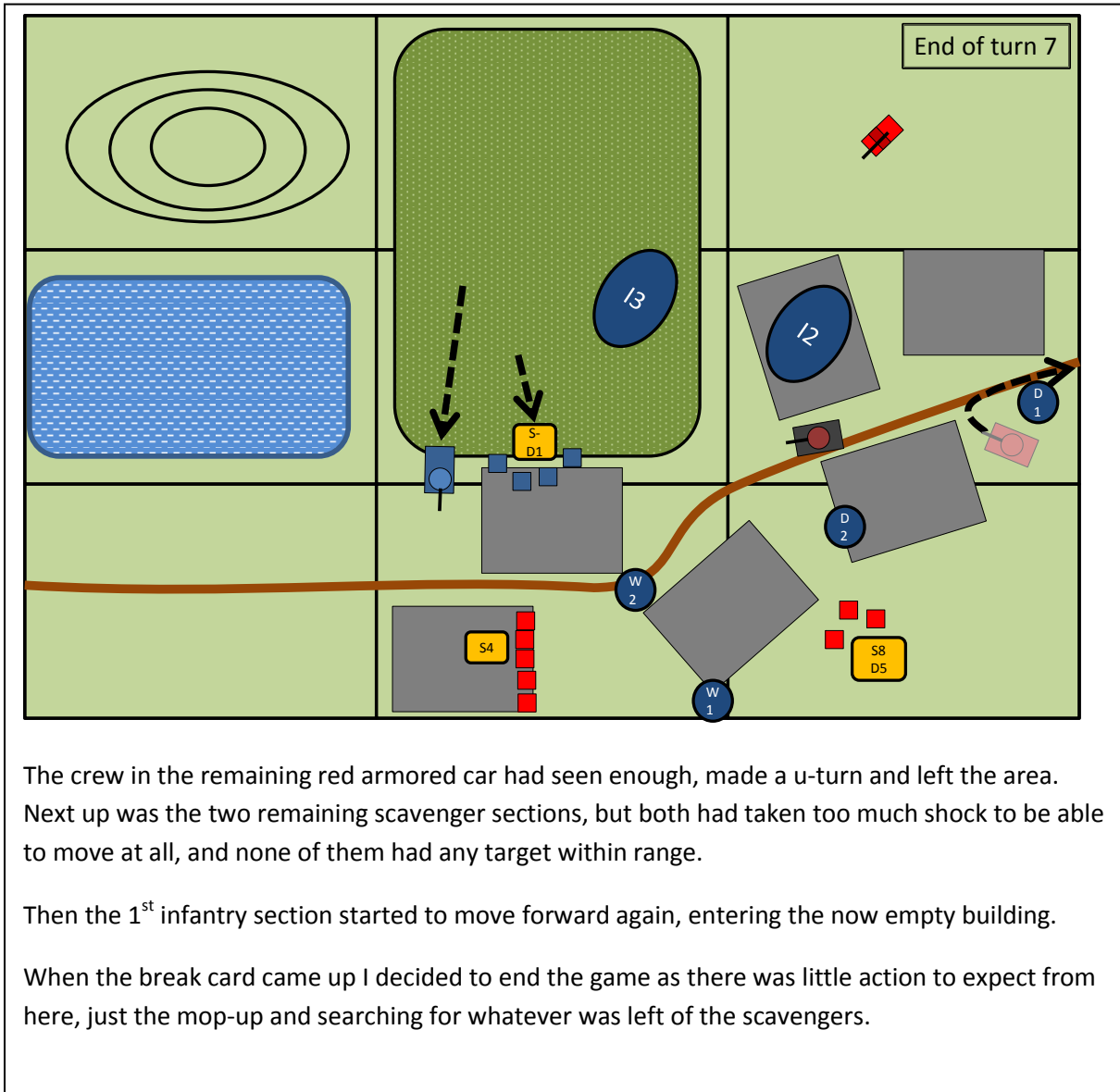
Turn six



The driver in the red jeep find that the arrival of a blue blank in the building just an inch away is too close and uses his both actions to speed out into the open.

The blue walkers split up and advanced. The first took a detour, trying to catch one of the red armored cars in the flank. The second walker advanced slowly and fired one bolt on the closest armored car. It was a great shot. The vehicles main weapon was knocked out and the whole vehicle was immobilized. On top of that the scavenger crew suffered 2 shocks that made them abandon the wreck and run for cover.

Turn seven



The crew in the remaining red armored car had seen enough, made a u-turn and left the area. Next up was the two remaining scavenger sections, but both had taken too much shock to be able to move at all, and none of them had any target within range.

Then the 1st infantry section started to move forward again, entering the now empty building.

When the break card came up I decided to end the game as there was little action to expect from here, just the mop-up and searching for whatever was left of the scavengers.

Summary

Lieutenant Wakin pulled it off. The task force destroyed one armored car, one hmg and killed at least 15 scavengers. The two surviving vehicles were last seen speeding down the road in full panic. During the following mop up they probably took several prisoners as well, maybe as many as 15. All this traded for only one dead on her side. So what have we learned from this action?

First of all, the TFL scenario builder "Platoon Forward" works fairly well for sci-fi. Of course you have to use some imagination when generating the game, but it's not much of a problem.

The difference in tech level is of major importance. It affects the number of hits scored as well as the probability of turning a hit into a kill.

Then there is the quality of the troops. The difference in available actions was an advantage for these regulars when engaging the rabble scavengers. Add to that the impact of the big men (or in this case woman). Although her card didn't show up more than three times out of seven, it's still clear that the scavengers lagged even further behind without one.

If we then look at some details. The drones proved valuable for scouting ahead but I have to confess that I felt a bit unsure on how to deal with them. I felt that they were too effective while the scavengers lacked any chance to detect them and to destroy them. Once all the red templates had been removed the drones were useless. I have to look closer into this one.

When the game started, I had no feeling of how the use of the actions affected the units firing capability. Now I know some. The walkers and low quality troops should not try to move and fire in the same turn.

I also lacked any idea on the effective range of various weapon, particularly the AT- capability of the standard infantry. Now I know that a tech lv 1 unit can't scratch an armed vehicle beyond 4".

I had problems to figure out how to fire boom-weapons from vehicles (the walkers). I'm still not sure I got it right.

I also had problems of determining how to deal with line of sight against targets inside buildings or in areas like the orchards. I just could not find any information in the text, just a picture (p.50).

Firing over the head of troops, is it allowed? I decided that a vehicle with a turret could engage a target; although that their own infantry was on the ground in front of the vehicle.

There are a load of details that should be listed on the quick reference chart but isn't, so I spent a lot of time browsing through the rules trying to find them (and most likely missing some important ones as well). I guess that once you get to know the rules and your units, the game will flow pretty well but I guess that it will take a few games.

Finally there is the issue of the "break card". All the TFL rules I have been in contact with are card driven. The idea behind this is to make the game more unpredicted than the more traditional "I-go-you-go" systems. Most of the TFL-rules do's include a break card who's function is to end the turn at a randomized time; symbolizing that some of the commanders have hesitated or waited for orders that didn't arrive. Every now and then there are people that argue that the break card comes out too often and that it disrupts the flow of the game. This game proves their point as the single big man card in the deck only appeared three times in seven turns. Some gamers solve the problem by having two break cards in the deck, ignoring the first and acting on the second. By now I can see their point and I will surely consider that option in the future.