

"BOARDGAME SYMBOLOGY"

by Richard Mataka

Ever wonder what all those symbols on your unit counters mean and where all that information came from? Well, to answer the latter part of this question, all of the symbols that are used today in Boardgaming are basically taken from the United States Army Field Manual 21-30. Contained in this manual is more information concerning map or unit symbols than you will ever want to know. Most of the Boardgame Companies first take all of their information from this manual and then they may modify it to suit their own purposes to create their own units.

Below I will try to give you an idea of the different ways that units can be created by using this manual and a little imagination.

ORGANIZATIONAL SIZES

These are the Basic Organizational Sizes that are employed in Boardgaming today, however, on occasion a game company may tend to use their own special symbols.

Squad	.
Section	..
Platoon (Section)	...
Company, Battery, Troop (Flight)	I
Battalion (Squadron)	II
Regiment (Group)	III
Brigade	X
Division (Wing)	XX
Corps (Air Division)	XXX

Army (Numbered Airforce) XXXX

Army Group (Major Air Command) XXXXX

N.B. Organizations that are in parenthesis are the US Air Force equivalent Organizations.

WEAPON SYMBOLS

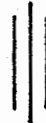
On many maps that are used today there are special symbols used to designate the movement or placement of different types of Weapon Systems that can be employed in modern warfare. In this section I will try to show you how these special symbols are used to designate specific Weapon Systems.

The following two symbols are the Basic Weapon Symbols from which all other Weapons Symbols gain their origin.

Basic Infantry
Weapon



Basic Artillery
Weapon

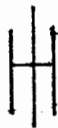


Now we can build upon these two Basic Weapon Symbols with few modifications to designate any weapon system that we desire.

ADDITIONS TO BASIC SYMBOLS

One Horizontal Bar denotes a Medium Weapon System and two Horizontal Bars denotes a Heavy Weapons System.

Medium Artillery
Gun

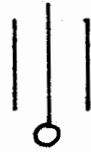


Heavy Artillery
Gun

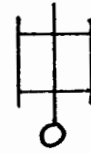


A Circle at the bottom of the shaft denotes a High-Trajectory Weapons System.

Light Howitzer



Heavy Howitzer



An inverted "V" at the bottom of the shaft denotes a Flat Trajectory Weapons System.

Medium Anti-Tank Gun

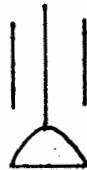


Heavy Anti-Tank Gun

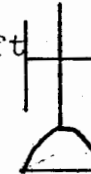


A closed semi-circle at the bottom of the shaft designates that the Weapon System is used primarily in an Air defense Role.

Light Anti-Aircraft Gun



Medium Anti-Aircraft Gun

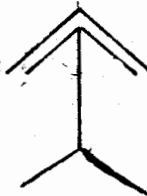


A double inverted "V" at the head of the shaft designates that the Weapon System is a Rocket Projector or Launcher.

Light Artillery Rocket Launcher



Light Anti-Tank Rocket Launcher

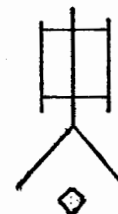


If the Weapon System is a Tracked Self-propelled vehicle it is designated by placing a diamond below the Weapon Symbol.

Tracked Self-Propelled Heavy Howitzer



Tracked Self-Propelled Heavy Anti-Tank Gun

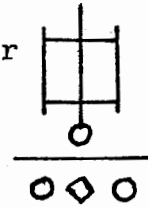


If the Weapon System is mounted on a wheeled, self-propelled chassis, a horizontal bar with two circles and a diamond is placed below the Weapon Symbol.

Self-Propelled
Medium Rocket
Launcher



Self-Propelled
Heavy Howitzer



If the Weapon System is a Missile of some sort it is designated with the following Symbol.

Light Missile



Medium Missile



If the Weapon System is a Flame Throwing System it is designated with the following Symbol.

Light Flame
Thrower



Medium Flame
Thrower

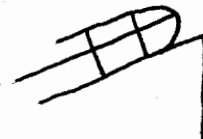


If the Weapons System is a Surface to Surface Missile (SSM) Launching sight it is designated with the following Symbol.

Light SSM Launching
Sight



Heavy SSM Launching
Sight

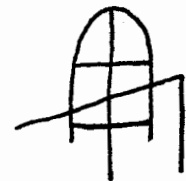


If the Weapons System is a Surface to Air (SAM) Launching Sight it is designated with the following Symbol.

Medium SAM Launching
Sight



Heavy SAM Launching
Sight


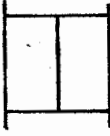

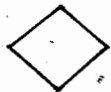
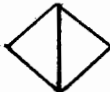









If you are a Boardgamer you must have seen some of these symbols at one time or another either on the maps that you use or on the unit counters. If you are a Miniatures Wargamer these symbols can be used during a Campaign Map game to show the location and movement of the different Weapons system that you are using.

Therefore, whether you are a Boardgamer or a Miniature Wargamer these symbols are a type of shorthand to tell you what Weapon System is being employed.

SUPPLEMENTARY SYMBOLS

In addition to the Weapons Symbols, there are also Supplementary Symbols that are used to designate specific types of Armoured Vehicles. The following is a short list of some of these symbols.

<u>Armoured Vehicles</u>	Light	Medium	Heavy
Tank			
Fully Tracked Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC)			
Armoured Reconnaissance Vehicle			
Fully Tracked Armoured Rocket Launcher			

Note that to designate the differences between the three different types of symbols a single line represents Medium and a double line represents a Heavy Vehicle. Also, these

abstract symbols would probably not be used, rather the silhouette of the vehicle would be put onto the unit counter.

Branch & Functional Symbols

Branch Symbols are used to represent the various branches that are contained within an Army. These symbols can be used independently or in some combination with other symbols.

Functional Symbols are symbols that designate a specific role that is carried out by the unit or the environment that the unit specializes in. Functional Symbols are rarely used independently but are used in conjunction with other Branch Symbols.

Branch Symbols

Air Defense



Armour



Chemical



Cavalry/Recon



Engineer



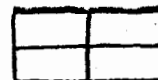
Field Artillery



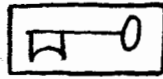
Infantry



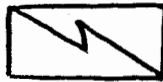
Medical



Quartermaster



Signal

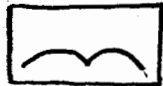


Transportation

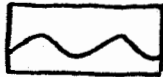


Functional Symbols

Airborne



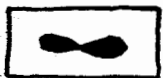
Amphibious



Anti-Tank



Army Aviation



Electronic Warfare



Mountain



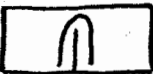
Parachute (not assigned to
airborne unit)



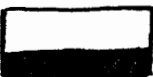
Replacement



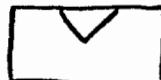
Rocket/Missile



Supply



Airmobile (organic to
Airmobile Organization)



Branch & Functional Symbols Combined

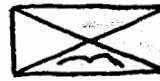
Air Cavalry



Airborne Armour



Airborne Infantry



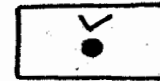
Airborne Medical



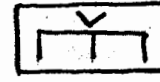
Airborne Reconnaissance



Airmobile Artillery



Airmobile Engineer



Airmobile Infantry



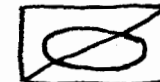
Amphibious Armour



Armoured Anti-Tank Artillery



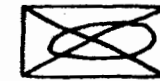
Armoured Cavalry Recon



Horse Artillery



Mechanized (Armour) Infantry



Mountain Infantry



Supply and Transport

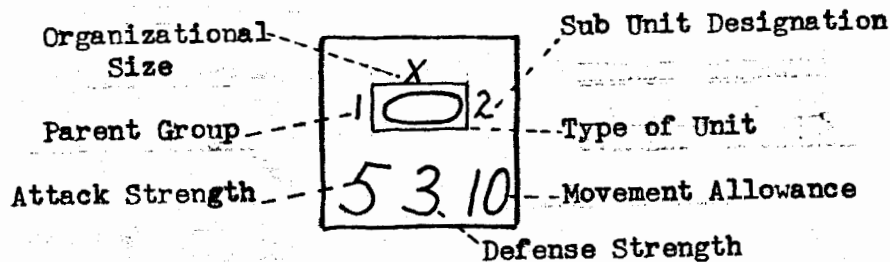


Don't forget that many Game Companies have developed their own Symbology to designate specific units.

Unit Counters

On the Unit Counters that are employed in Boardgaming there is a lot of useful information printed on the Counters themselves. There are five basic sections contained on a Boardgame Unit Counter and they are: Size Symbol, Unit Designation, Higher Echelons of Command, Branch/Functional Symbol of Unit and other information pertaining to the unit such as Attack Strength's Movement Allowances or some other designation.

Below is a sample of a Basic Boardgame Counter:



The information that is normally put on a Unit Counter is the "Other Descriptive Information" section pertains to the units ability with regard to the game. In this section, any combination of the following four terms can normally be found on a Boardgame Counter.

Attack Strength - The Basic offensive power of a given unit expressed in Combat strength points.


Defense Strength - The Basic defensive power of a given unit expressed in Combat strength points.

Movement Allowance - The basic movement ability of a unit, expressed as a number which represents the distance that unit may move.


Range - The Radius of action of a unit expressed as a number which represents how far that unit may fire or fly (Air unit, Artillery unit or other Missile firing unit)

Below are some examples of unit counters currently employed in boardgaming today.


MechWar '77

Type Unit		Unit ID#
Attack Strength		Range
Defense Strength		Movement Allowance
		Weapon Class

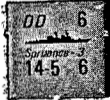
MechWar '77

TYPE UNIT	Unit Symbol	UNIT ID #
Attack Strength		Range
Defense Strength		Movement Allowance
		Weapon Class

Drang Nach Osten

Unit Type		Unit Size
Attack Strength		Movement Allowance
		Defense Strength

SSN

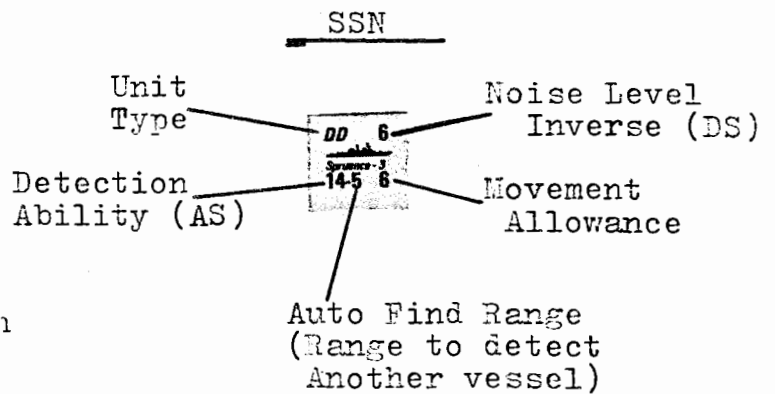
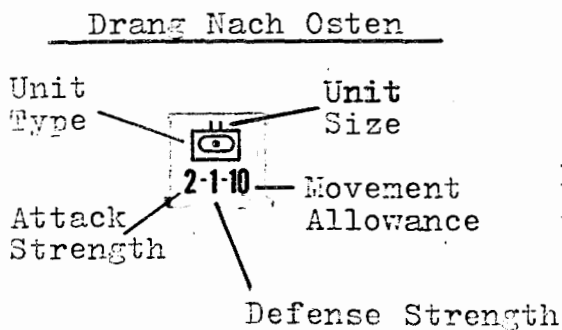
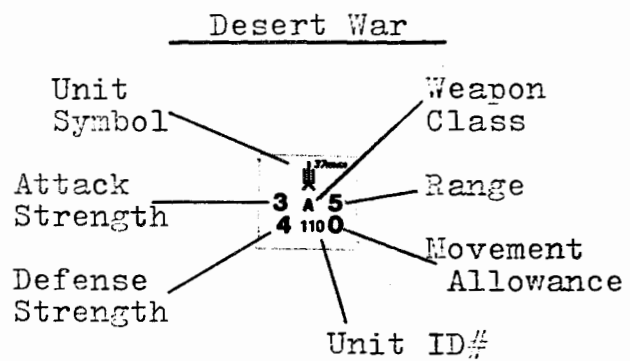
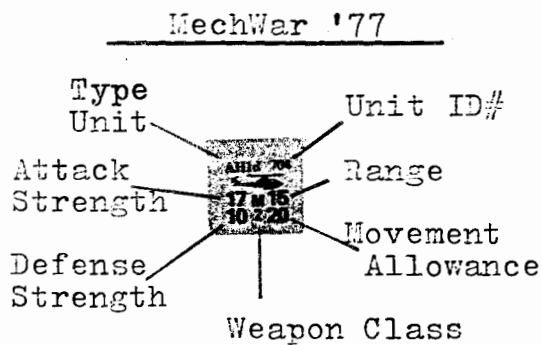
Unit Type		Noise Level Inverse (DS)
Detection Ability (AS)		Movement Allowance
		Auto Find Range (Range to detect Another vessel)

(AS) - Attack Strength
(DS) - Defense Strength

Movement Allowance - The basic movement ability of a unit, expressed as a number which represents the distance that unit may move.

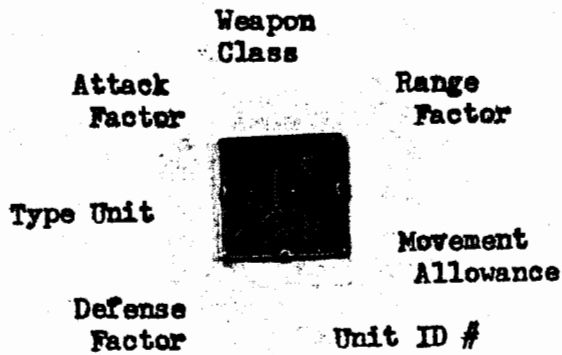
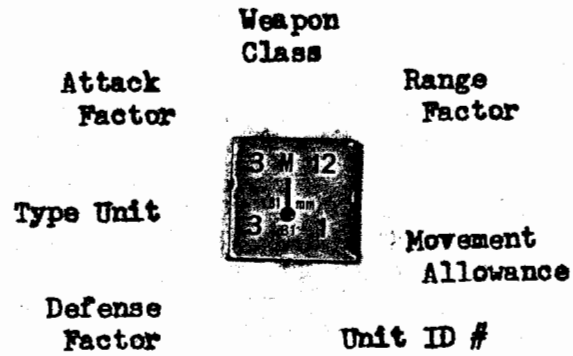
Range - The Radius of action of a unit expressed as a number which represents how far that unit may fire or fly (Air unit, Artillery unit or other Missile firing unit)

Below are some examples of unit counters currently employed in boardgaming today.



(AS) - Attack Strength
 (DS) - Defense Strength

PANZER BLITZ GAME

PANZER *Blitz* GAME

Although, each Game Company may create their own terminology and symbology, the basic function of a units ability must always be present. These functions are the units Combat Factor and the Movement Allowance. Whether the game you are playing uses the Branch and Functional Symbols, NATO Symbols or Silhouettes the information is there in some way, shape or form.

Now that you have read this section, I hope I have brought you a little better understanding of the symbols that are used in Boardgaming. So, the next time that you are playing your favorite game dont't say "I'm moving my 5-8 unit" call the unit by its name and I think that it will add a little more realism to the game.

The Unit Counters used in the examples are copied with the kind permission of Simulations Publications Inc., Avalon Hill and Game Designers Workshop. A special thanks to Simulations Publications Inc for allowing me to use some of the information contained in their article "Military Unit Symbols" origionally printed in Strategy & Tactics #40.