



BELGIAN BRIEFING

BACKGROUND

Following the end of the First World War the Belgian Government had a military agreement with France, but at the same time was heavily involved in the various peace and disarmament initiatives. Following the Locarno conference of October 1925 the Belgian Government were signatories to two of the treaties agreed.

The first of these was signed with Great Britain, France and Germany, and was a mutual guarantee of the Franco-German and Belgo-German borders and the second was signed with France and Germany and was an arbitration treaty between Germany on one side and Belgium and France on the other.

Belgium was involved with the disarmament efforts of the League of Nations which dragged on from 1925 to 1934, the highlight of which was the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 (Pact of Paris) which was a complete renunciation by all signatories of aggressive war.

By 1935 the various naval treaties had started to break down and Germany had denounced the disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty, and had announced a massive rearmament programme. Also 1935 saw the start of the Italian conquest of Ethiopia, this was a matter the Belgian Government had an interest in as a Belgian Military Commission had reorganised the Ethiopian Army in the late 1920's and early 1930's.

In 1936 things went from bad to worse, Germany reoccupied the Rhineland, the Italian victory in Ethiopia brought about the virtual collapse of the League of Nations through its inability to provide an effective deterrent to such an overtly aggressive act, France announced rearmament, and the Fascist states openly supported and aided Franco in the Spanish Civil War which broke out that year.

The complete inactivity of the French in the face of Hitler's blatant flouting of international treaty (by reoccupying the Rhineland) led the new King and his government to re-examine foreign policy. It was plain that France lacked the necessary spirit to support Belgium in the event of a similar move against us. The only alternative was strict neutrality, so in October the Belgian Government acted decisively and denounced their military alliance with France. In this way the government regained their liberty of action and were not going to embroil the Belgian people in an unnecessary war with Germany through their connection with an ineffective Franco-Belgian alliance.

A year later, in October 1937, this policy was vindicated when the inviolability and integrity

of Belgian territory was guaranteed by Germany so long as Belgium abstained from military action against Germany.

Over the next two years the political temperature increased and sabre rattling became the norm, on 23 August 1939 and on behalf of Belgium, Holland and the Scandinavian states King Leopold appealed for peace. The appeal was in vain and on 1 September Germany invaded Poland.

On 3 September 1939 the Belgian Government announced that mobilisation of its armed forces would immediately be carried out, but that this was a defensive measure only, and proclaimed neutrality in the war that had just broken out.

In summary then there are several basic political tenets, a consequence of our international treaty position and neutral stance, and which any defensive plan must recognise:

1. Dutch neutrality **cannot** be violated; we must await a German attack on Holland before that country could be entered.
2. Should our neutrality be violated by German forces, we will **firmly ally** ourselves with the French and British against the Germans
3. It is a political objective that the cities of Liege, Namur and Antwerp **should not be abandoned**, nor should battle lines be drawn through them by choice.

ARMY

The army is being mobilised and Belgium has adopted an international stance of armed neutrality. On mobilisation the Belgian army will increase to 22 divisions, but its stance is defensive and the tanks, as offensive weapons, have not been formed into specialised armoured units.

The Cavalry Divisions have recently been motorised as have the 1st Chasseurs Ardennais Division and in general this shows the way the Belgian High Command has been thinking, i.e. a move away from the WWI type formation and towards a more modern motorised army, with in this case, a good number of armoured vehicles in each Division. There is therefore a concentration on light, cheap and easily produced armoured fighting vehicles to provide the mass required quickly.

Divisions

When fully mobilised the Belgian Army will comprise 22 Divisions;

- 18 Regular Infantry (numbered 1 to 12)
- 6 Reserve Infantry (numbered 13 to 18)
- Chasseurs Ardennais (numbered 1 & 2) and
- 2 Cavalry (numbered 1 & 2).

Defences & Fortifications

The main defence works on which the Army will place its reliance are its natural and man-made waterways, to these are added the man-made fortified zones around the cities of Liege and Namur.

Liege has been the priority city for defence since 1932, as the main route for invasion of

Belgium. It is protected by 12 pre-WWI forts, of these 8 have been repaired (5 large and 3 small - Fl,malle, Bonnelles, Fl,ron, Chaudfontaine, Embourg, Pontisse, Barchon and Evegn,e). Two of these forts are on the left bank of the Meuse. Of the other 4 unrepaired forts, one is not in service, and 3 have been converted for ammunition storage. The defences of Liege are not, however, considered to be modern enough to bear the brunt of a main German attack alone. The fortified position of Liege (PFL) is to be incorporated into a linear defensive line. The old forts are part of the second line of defence (PFLII). A new first line of defence (PFLI) has been underway since 1931. This group of forts projects the defences further east and out from the Meuse. This is Belgium's main defensive position against a German assault and begins behind the Maastricht Appendix of the Netherlands and extends south to the Ardennes. This includes an outer group of four modern fortresses, these being at Eben-Emael, to cover the river crossings at Maastricht, and between the River Vendre and Maastricht, at Neufchateau, Battice and Pepinster/Tancr,mont.

The fortified position of Namur (PFN) has only refurbished pre-WWI forts for its defence and these are at the following places:- Marchevette, Suarl,e, St-H,ribert, Malonne, Maizeret, Andoy and Dave. These are linked to the positions at Liege. Hence Namur is the anchor at one end of the defences, with Antwerp to secure the other end. Defensive positions have been extended back from Liege to Antwerp, although local popular opinion originally delayed the full scale restoration of the old Antwerp forts, they have now been re-activated, and complete the defensive line which runs from the mouth of the Schelde at Antwerp, to Liege and on to Namur.

The KW Line: This runs between Namur and Antwerp and consists mainly of bunkers, anti-tank obstacles and the Dyle River. It is tied to the fortified position of Antwerp (PFA) and linked to Namur with lines of anti-tank obstacles running south from the vicinity of Wavre.

Along the Schelde River, around Ghent is a fortified bridgehead. This Bridgehead position of Ghent (TPG) is part of the R,duit National.

The Ardennes region lacks significant fortification, because of the ruggedness and closeness of the terrain. Such terrain, covered by relatively light forces, can be relied upon to significantly delay any enemy forces moving through this area.

In all these forts and fortresses the garrisons are independent of the Army formations previously noted and are sufficient for the manning of the works and the operation of certain subsidiary services, e.g. Liege fortress tank company. "Interval" troops, if required, will have to be provided by the Field Army.

Frontier Forces

There are a number of frontier cyclist units and these are to be supplemented by Divisional Recce units to form a frontier screen where Divisional positions are not exactly along the border (ie in the Ardennes). Frontier units will not be represented separately as operational units in the game but border incursions will nevertheless be immediately reported as these screening units automatically go into action, and report to their parent divisional-sized unit.

AIR FORCE

In keeping with the idea of a non-aggressive armed force the Aeronautique Militaire has been grouped together with the Observer Service and the Anti-Aircraft Artillery to form the

Territorial Air Defence (Defense Aeronautique du Territoire or DAT)

The Air Force has three Wings

Unit	Base
1st Air Recce Wing	Gossoncourt
2 nd Fighter Wing	Nivelles
3 rd Bomber / Recce Wing	Evsre

NAVY

The Navy had been disbanded during the inter-war years but was re-established on 15 September 1939. It has just over 600 men (all ranks) and these are formed into 4 squadrons.

1st Squadron - Ostende
2nd Squadron - Zeebrugge
3rd Squadron - Antwerp
Replacement & Training Squadron

The vessels are all small coastal craft, generally with 1x47mm + 2xmg, with some wooden fishing vessels used as minesweepers and some requisitioned civilian vessels.

There are also two coastal batteries, each of only one gun, one at Antwerp and the other at Zeebrugge.

SUMMARY OF MILITARY ASSETS IN THE GAME

The military assets that will be available to the Belgian GQG during the game are as follows -

18 Infantry Divisions (1 to 18)
2 Chasseurs Ardennais Divisions (1 & 2)
2 Cavalry Divisions (1 & 2)
2 Modern Fortified Zones (Liege & Namur)
1 Reconnaissance Wing (Air Force 1st.Regiment)
1 Fighter Wing (Air Force 2nd.Regiment)
1 Bomber Wing (Air Force 3rd.Regime)