

FOCUSED FIREPOWER

A WWII Wargame for Heroes

The Finnish Forces

The Winter War, Continuation War and Lapland War

The Finnish Forces

The Winter War - Nov 1938 to March 1940

The Winter War is undoubtedly the most famous Finnish conflict of World War II, a tiny Nordic country with a population of only four million standing up to, and taking on the might of the Russian warmachine. It was to be a very brutal conflict, not least because of the bitterly harsh winter weather, the snow cover being several feet deep in places and temperatures dropping to around -40°C. The Russians suffered the worst effects of the cold however, the complacency of the Russian command cadre meant that not all Russian troops were issued with adequate winter clothing. The cold, in combination with the heavily forested terrain of the Finno-Russian border, was used to good effect by the Finnish forces, using a guerrilla style warfare to counter the numerical superiority of the Red Army, turning its strength into its weakness. Had the Finns tried to engage the Russian on open ground they would undoubtedly have been totally overwhelmed and ultimately defeated. The favoured tactic of the Finns, the so called "motti", was a good way of turning the Russian's numbers against themselves, by isolating weaker units, destroying or incapacitate them and then withdrawing, only to be repeated somewhere else. The lack of decent antitank weapons meant that the use of this tactic against armour was somewhat suicidal, as the weapon available in large enough quantities was the Molotov Cocktail or homemade demo-charges. The Finns were also fighting for their very survival as a nation and were ready to fight to the death in its defence.

The basic Finnish Rifle Company of the Winter War consisted of a Company Command Section commanding four Rifle Platoons as well as Battle Messenger, Observation, and Gas Protection Sections. The Rifle Platoons in turn consisted of a Command Section commanding two Rifle Sections and two Light Machine Gun Sections. The Rifle sections were made up of a corporal and eight troopers armed with Russian and Finnish produced Mosin-Nagant rifles and a single trooper armed with a Finnish produced Suomi SMG. The LMG Sections were made up of a corporal and four troopers armed with Mosin-Nagant rifles and two troopers serving a Russian DP49 light machine gun, the LMG crew were also armed with a Mosin-Nagant rifle each. The Company Support units were uniformly armed with the Mosin-Nagant rifle.

The Continuation War - June 1941 to Sept 1944

During the interim peace between March 1940 and June 1941 Finland found an ally against Russia in Germany and co-operation between the two nations begin in the autumn of 1940. In late June 1941 Russia retaliates for the German air raids that have been launched from Finnish territories in support of the German ground invasion of Russia, by attacking military and civilian targets. The Finnish objectives this time around are to reclaim territories lost during the Winter War. This is achieved by early December 1941. For most of 1942 only low level fighting is carried out whereas most of 1943 is spent trying mediate a separate peace between Finland and Russia that grinds to a halt. Hostilities flare up again in 1944 with a succession of Finnish defensive lines on the Karelian Isthmus falling. In late June and early July of the same year the pivotal battle of Tali-Ihantala is fought. Victory here will save Finland from the fate of every other country in Eastern and Central Europe. The battle ultimately goes Finland way, mostly due to the fractures supply chains of the Red Army, but also in no small way due to the fact that the Finns were once again fighting for their very survival as a nation and people. The Finnish victory is also very important for the peace negotiations later in September. After the battle the Red Army takes up a much more defensive position, and between July and September the fighting is significantly reduced in scale.

The organisation of the Finnish forces underwent only minor changes during the interim peace, the only real changes being at higher organisational level, thus retaining the same Company organisation as during the Winter War.

The Lapland War - Sept 1944 to April 1945

When Finland sued for a separate peace with Russia in September 1944 it invariably led to a conflict with her former German allies. What followed was a campaign to force all German forces from Finnish territories, being the conditions of the peace treaty. The former allies still retained a mutual respect for each other and Finland starts withdrawing civilians from Lapland with German cooperation, both sides wishing to avoid conflict if possible. The Germans slowly withdraw from Lapland practicing a scorched earth strategy. Though fighting in the Lapland War ends in mid November 1944, pockets of small German units remain until the local end of World War II on 28 April 1945.

The Company organisation during the Lapland War remained unchanged from the two previous conflicts.

The Finnish Forces

Finnish Special Rules

Alpine Troops

The Finnish Army was well equipped to handle the severe weather conditions faced during the winter months of the war. Good personal equipment, such as cold weather clothing and boots, as well as well kept shelters meant that the Finnish soldiers didn't suffer the cold quite as bad as their Russian adversaries.

In gaming terms this means that the Finnish Army benefits from the Alpine Troops Special Rule as described in the Special Rules Section

Marksman

The Finnish Army had placed a high emphasis on marksmanship and all troopers were expected to maintain a high proficiency with their rifles under fire.

In gaming terms, a Finnish element firing rifles have the Marksman Special Rule and so may ignore the -1 suffered when firing Snap Fire with such weapons.

Driven by Hate (Excluding The Lapland War)

The troops within the Finnish Army were fiercely independent countymen with a love for their recently independent young nation and as a result were highly motivated. Add to this stories of Soviet atrocities within Finnish propaganda and the thought that they were fighting a war of survival against the Russian Army, the Winter War and Continuation War became brutal and bloodthirsty conflicts as each side strove to eliminate the other.

In gaming terms all Finnish troops are considered to be Fanatics.

Improved Weaponry

The Finnish Army was adept at taking weapons employed by other powers and adapting them for effective use in the extreme weather conditions of their native land. The Russian made Maxim medium machine gun was a good example of such ingenuity - The barrel was improved, making it more resistant to the cold, a snow-based cooling system allowed the weapon to fire without the normal jamming and the sighting and carriage equipment was altered to allow the weapon to place down beat-zones, all the while ensuring the gun and carriage maintained its high mobility and ammunition calibre making it very easy to use and maintain in the field.

In gaming terms, the Finnish adaptation of the Maxim does not suffer from the Inaccurate Special Rule and unlike its Russian counterpart, is also capable of laying down beat zones.

Finnish Infantry Company

Infantry Company HQ

Company HQ:

Infantry Company HQ	Pts:	UMV:
Officer (CO)	Mosin-Nagant Rifle and Hand Grenades	
Corporal (NCO)	Mosin-Nagant Rifle and Hand Grenades	
4 Messengers	Mosin-Nagant Rifle and Hand Grenades	
Options:		
All troopers (incl. Officer & NCO) may buy Molotov Cocktails/demo charges for +1pt/trooper		
All troopers (incl. Officer & NCO) may be given skis for free when fighting in snowy terrain		

Attached Sniper Section	Pts:	UMV:
5 Snipers	Mosin-Nagant Sniper Rifle and Hand Grenades	
Options:		
All troopers may buy Molotov Cocktails/demo charges for +1pt/trooper		
All troopers may be given skis for free when fighting in snowy terrain		

*Snipers may be attached to sections within the Company as desired.

Attached Signals Section	Pts:	UMV:
5 Signals Troopers	Fird radio, Mosin-Nagant Rifle and Hand Grenades	
Options:		
All troopers may buy Molotov Cocktails/demo charges for +1pt/trooper		
All troopers may be given skis for free when fighting in snowy terrain		

*Signallers may be attached to sections within the Company as desired.

Attached Signals Section	Pts:	UMV:
4 Medics	Medi-Kit, Pistol and Hand Grenades	
Options:		
All troopers may buy Molotov Cocktails/demo charges for +1pt/trooper		
All troopers may be given skis for free when fighting in snowy terrain		

*Medics may be attached to sections within the Company as desired.

Observer Section	Pts:	UMV:
Corporal (NCO)	Mosin-Nagant Rifle and Hand Grenades	
3 Troopers	Mosin-Nagant Rifle and Hand Grenades	
Options:		
All troopers may buy Molotov Cocktails/demo charges for +1pt/trooper		
All troopers may be given skis for free when fighting in snowy terrain		

Gas Protection Section	Pts:	UMV:
Corporal (NCO)	Mosin-Nagant Rifle and Hand Grenades	
3 Troopers	Mosin-Nagant Rifle and Hand Grenades	
Options:		
All troopers may buy Molotov Cocktails/demo charges for +1pt/trooper		
All troopers may be given skis for free when fighting in snowy terrain		

Finnish Infantry Company

Rifle Platoon - 4 per Company

Rifle Platoon Command Section:

Command Section	Pts:	UMV:
Lieutenant (CO)	Suomi SMG and Hand Grenades	
Sergeant (NCO)	Mosin-Nagant Rifle and Hand Grenades	
2 Troopers	Mosin-Nagant Rifles and Hand Grenades	
Options:		
All troopers (incl. Officer & NCO) may buy Molotov Cocktails/demo charges for +1pt/trooper		
All troopers (incl. Officer & NCO) may be given skis for free when fighting in snowy terrain		

Rifle Sections:

Rifle Section - 2 per Platoon	Pts:	UMV:
Corporal (NCO)	Mosin-Nagant Rifle and Hand Grenades	
Trooper	Suomi SMG and Hand Grenades	
8 Troopers	Mosin-Nagant Rifles and Hand Grenades	
Options:		
All troopers (incl. Officer & NCO) may buy Molotov Cocktails/demo charges for +1pt/trooper		
All troopers (incl. Officer & NCO) may be given skis for free when fighting in snowy terrain		

LMG Sections:

LMG Section - 2 per Platoon	Pts:	UMV:
Corporal (NCO)	Mosin-Nagant Rifle and Hand Grenades	
Gunner & Loader	Suomi SMG and Hand Grenades, Manning DP 49 LMG	
2 Troopers	Mosin-Nagant Rifles and Hand Grenades	
Options:		
All troopers (incl. Officer & NCO) may buy Molotov Cocktails/demo charges for +1pt/trooper		
All troopers (incl. Officer & NCO) may be given skis for free when fighting in snowy terrain		