



OFFICIAL RULEBOOK

A strategic hex-tile board game of territory, attrition, and nuclear brinkmanship

2-3

PLAYERS

45+

MINUTES

12+

AGE

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HOW TO PLAY IN 5 MINUTES

Nukes is a 2–3 player strategy game played on a board of hexagonal regions. You command armies across varied terrain, build fortified bases, and threaten opponents with nuclear strikes — all while managing a precarious supply of hostages that is simultaneously your resource and your countdown timer.

★ READ THIS FIRST — THE TWO CORE IDEAS

- 1. Units are fluid.** Tokens have no fixed type. The number of tokens in a region determines what they are: 1 = Infantry, 2 = Artillery, 3 = Airborne, 4+ = Base. This changes constantly as tokens move, and it governs movement, combat, and terrain safety.
- 2. Hostages are your engine.** You hold your opponents' tokens. Each turn you must return 1–3 of them to their owner's forces on the board — this earns you moves, but also reinforces your enemy. Your hostage supply is finite. When it runs out, you lose.

THE CORE LOOP

- ◆ **Return 1–3 hostages** to regions where their owner already has units — earning one move per token returned.
- ◆ **Move your platoons.** Infantry chains through same-biome terrain. Artillery fires in straight lines over occupied regions. Airborne drops exactly two regions away and can slingshot through friendly Bases.
- ◆ **Attack** by moving into an enemy region — but only if you have strictly greater strength than the defender.
- ◆ **Capture enemy units** as hostages instead of destroying them, sacrificing your own units to do so.
- ◆ **Build Bases** (4+ units in one region) to convert units into isotopes and unlock nuclear strikes.
- ◆ **Win** by destroying or occupying an opponent's city — or outlasting everyone else.

“ Nukes was designed around a single question: what if every aggressive move also strengthened your opponent? The hostage mechanic creates this tension — you need to return tokens to move, but every return reinforces the enemy. The game rewards players who find the tipping point between building momentum and over-extending. ”

COMPONENTS

ITEM	QTY	NOTES
Hex Tiles	44	Each is a region. Biohazard printed on the reverse.
Tokens	75	25 per player in 3 distinct colours.
Bookmark Reference Cards	3	One per player — see the Quick Reference section of this rulebook.
Rulebook	1	This document.

TOKENS — WHAT THEY REPRESENT

There are no separate pieces for different unit types. Token count and location determine everything.

TOKEN STATE	REPRESENTS
On the board — 1 token	Infantry
On the board — 2 tokens	Artillery
On the board — 3 tokens	Airborne
On the board — 4 to 9 tokens	Base (does not move)
Off the board, beside it	Isotopes — your nuke fuel reserve
Held by another player	Hostages — your tokens, in enemy hands

HEX TILES BY BIOME

BIOME	COUNT	COLOUR
Fields	13	Light green
Forests	9	Dark green
Mountains	7	Grey
Water	7	Light blue
Deserts	5	Yellow
Cities	3	Light red

Before the First Turn

SETTING UP THE BOARD

BUILDING THE BOARD

The board uses 37 of the 44 tiles and can be built three ways:

- ♦ **Symmetrical:** A pre-agreed mirrored layout. Visit moddable.games/tool/nuke for templates.
- ♦ **Pre-defined:** All players agree on a specific arrangement before play begins.
- ♦ **Drafted:** Randomly choose a starting player who picks the central region. Players then alternate placing tiles adjacent to their city, the central region, or any already-placed tile.

2-PLAYER TILE COUNTS

BIOME	PER SIDE	TOTAL
Fields	5	10 + centre
Forests	4	8
Mountains	3	6
Water	3	6
Deserts	2	4
Cities	1	2

3-PLAYER TILE COUNTS

BIOME	PER SIDE	TOTAL
Fields	4	12 + centre
Forests	2	6
Mountains	2	6
Water	2	6
Deserts	1	3
Cities	1	3

★ *In 3-player games the central region must not be a City.*

STARTING POSITIONS

- ♦ Place your **City tile** at the edge of the board, equally spaced from all other cities and the central region.
- ♦ Place **4 of your tokens** in your city as starting units.
- ♦ Place **1 token** beside the board as your starting **isotope**.
- ♦ In a **2-player game:** take all 20 of your opponent's tokens as hostages.
- ♦ In a **3-player game:** take 10 tokens from each other player as hostages (20 total).

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The game ends **immediately** the moment any condition below is met. No further turns are taken.

- ◆ **Destroy an opponent's city** via a Nuke strike or a Meltdown on their city hex.
 - ◆ **Establish a Base on an opponent's city** — move 4 or more of your units onto their city tile.
 - ◆ **Outlast all opponents** — be the last player with hostages to return and units on the board.
-

ELIMINATION

A player is eliminated when **either** of the following occurs independently:

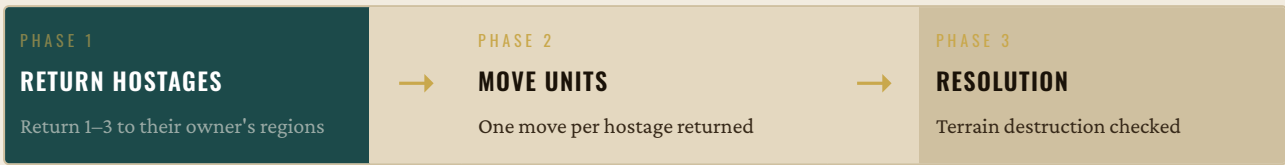
- ◆ *Hostage Attrition:* You have no hostages to return at the start of your turn. Your city is immediately destroyed and all your units removed from the game.
 - ◆ *Total Annihilation:* You have no units left on the board at any point. All your tokens everywhere — on the board and held as hostages by others — are immediately removed from the game.
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△ 3-PLAYER ELIMINATIONS

When a player is eliminated, any of their tokens held as hostages by surviving players are also removed from the game immediately. Surviving players lose that portion of their hostage supply. The two remaining players continue normally.

TURN STRUCTURE

Turns proceed clockwise. Each turn has three phases, always in this order.



PHASE 1 — RETURN HOSTAGES

✦ UNDERSTANDING THE HOSTAGE MECHANIC

You hold tokens belonging to your opponents. Like hostages in the real world, they are under your control until returned home. When you return them, each token goes to a region on the board where **that token's owner already has at least one unit** — physically joining that region and potentially upgrading its platoon type. Returning tokens earns you moves, but directly strengthens your enemy's forces. **This tension is the engine of the game.**

- ◆ You **must** return between 1 and 3 hostage tokens each turn — at least 1 is mandatory.
- ◆ Each token goes to a region where **that token's owner already has units present**. You cannot return a token to an empty region or to one of your own regions.
- ◆ The returned token **physically joins that region**, increasing the unit count. A 2-token Artillery may become 3-token Airborne. A 3-token Airborne may become a 4-token Base — with all consequences that follow.
- ◆ You may return **no more than 1 token per region** per turn.
- ◆ The number of tokens returned equals the number of **moves earned** this turn.
- ◆ *If you have no hostages to return*, your city is immediately destroyed and you are eliminated.

PHASE 2 — MOVE UNITS

- ◆ You earn **one move per hostage returned** — between 1 and 3 moves total.
- ◆ Moves are **optional**. You may use fewer than you earned. Only return as many hostages as moves you actually need — every returned token costs you.
- ◆ You may move a **maximum of 3 units in total** per turn. Valid combinations: 1 Airborne (3 units), 1 Artillery + 1 Infantry, or up to 3 Infantry.
- ◆ Each move is: moving a platoon into any empty region, into a region containing friendly units, or attacking an enemy-occupied region.
- ◆ The **same unit(s) cannot move more than once** per turn — except within an Airborne Slingshot.

PHASE 3 — END-OF-TURN RESOLUTION

After all moves and combat are resolved, any units resting in restricted terrain they cannot safely occupy are destroyed. Only a unit's **final resting position** matters — a token may transit through a restricted terrain region during a move and end safely elsewhere with no penalty.

◆ IMMEDIATE VS END-OF-TURN DESTRUCTION

Nuke blasts and Meltdowns destroy units **immediately** when triggered — not at end of turn. Everything else (a platoon stranded in terrain it cannot safely occupy) is resolved during Phase 3 only.

Your Forces

UNITS & PLATOONS

Platoon type is determined solely by the **current token count** in a region. This fluidity is fundamental — tokens become different unit types as they join or leave regions.

◆ THE FLUID PLATOON PRINCIPLE

If 1 infantry token moves into a region containing 2 artillery tokens, those 3 tokens are now Airborne — with all of Airborne's permissions and restrictions. At end of turn, a region with 3 tokens in water is Airborne (safe). Two tokens in water is Artillery (destroyed). Always ask: **how many tokens are here, and what does that make them?**



INFANTRY

1 TOKEN

Chains freely through same-biome terrain. Blocked by all units — including your own. Cannot safely rest in water or desert.



ARTILLERY

2 TOKENS

Jumps in straight lines over occupied regions. Multiple hops and pivots possible. Cannot safely rest in water. Cannot attack from a forest.



AIRBORNE

3 TOKENS

Must move exactly two regions. Cannot land adjacent. Slingshots through friendly Bases for extended range. Cannot safely rest alone in mountains.



NUKE

1 TOKEN + ISOTOPE

Launched from a Base. Destroys target (Biohazard) and all units in target + 6 surrounding regions immediately. Must jump over at least one region.



BASE

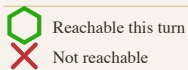
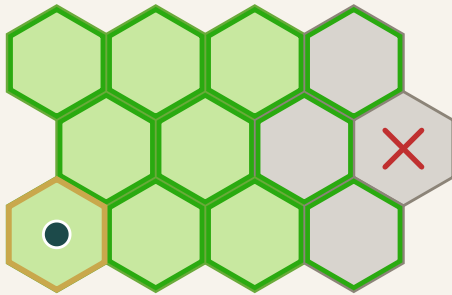
4–9 TOKENS · DOES NOT MOVE

Forms immediately when a 4th token joins a region. Provides support bonuses to passing platoons and enables isotope production.

Maximum 9 units. Each time *you* add units to your own Base, convert 1 unit to an isotope (once per event). Provides +1 combat strength to platoons passing through or over it en route to an attack.

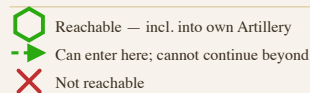
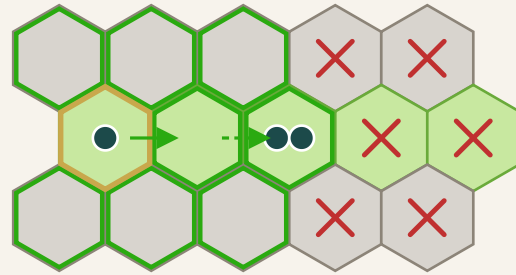
INFANTRY — MOVEMENT & RULES

SAME-BIOME FLOOD FILL



Infantry reaches every connected field hex in one move — no distance limit. Adjacent mountains are also reachable as a final step into a different biome. The mountain with a red mark has no adjacent field and cannot be reached.

CAN ENTER, CANNOT PASS THROUGH

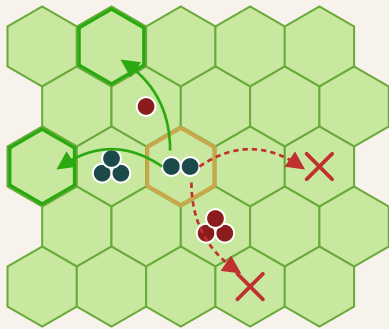


Infantry can move into a friendly Artillery region (tokens merge). It cannot move through it. Mountains seal the corridor — the fields beyond the Artillery are unreachable. Six adjacent mountains are reachable as a final step.

- Same-biome chaining:** Infantry may travel through any number of connected regions sharing their starting biome in a single move — no distance limit. At the end they may optionally step into one adjacent region of a different biome.
- Blocked by ALL units, including friendly ones:** Infantry cannot pass through any region containing any other units — enemy or friendly. Your own Artillery blocks your own Infantry just as firmly as an enemy would. Only your own Airborne and Bases may be passed through freely.
- Restricted terrain:** A region ending the turn with 1 token (Infantry) in water or desert is destroyed at Phase 3 resolution. Infantry cannot transit through water or desert unless your own Airborne or a Base is already stationed in that specific region.
- Combat bonus:** Each friendly Base infantry passes *through* en route to an attack adds +1 to combat strength. The starting Base does not count.

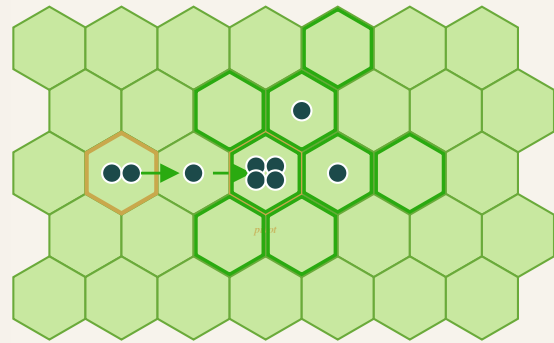
ARTILLERY — MOVEMENT & RULES

JUMP MECHANICS



Four jump attempts from the same position. Enemy Infantry and own Airborne are valid stepping stones. An empty intermediate prevents any jump. Enemy Airborne blocks the jump despite the hex being occupied.

PIVOT AT A FRIENDLY BASE

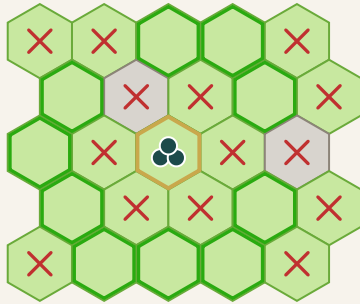




Artillery arrives at the friendly Base (gold border). From the Base it can reach 8 destinations: the Base itself, 5 adjacent hexes (excluding where it came from), and 2 hexes beyond the friendly infantry via continued jumps.

- ◆ **Straight-line jumps:** Artillery moves by jumping to the directly opposing region across a hex axis. Intermediate regions must contain units at the moment of the jump — units placed there earlier in the same turn count.
- ◆ **Multiple jumps:** Artillery can chain multiple jumps in one move, using each occupied region as a stepping stone.
- ◆ **Direction changes (pivots):** When artillery jumps over your own Airborne or a Base, it may change to any new hex direction and continue from there. From the pivot point, artillery may: land on the pivot Base or Airborne itself; land on any adjacent empty hex; land on any adjacent friendly region (tokens merge via fluid rules); or jump over any occupied adjacent hex to land beyond it. Multiple pivots are permitted in one move.
- ◆ **Enemy blockers:** Artillery cannot jump over enemy Airborne or enemy Bases. It can jump over enemy Infantry and enemy Artillery.
- ◆ **Forest:** Artillery starting in a forest cannot attack that turn. It may still move to any unoccupied region or join a friendly platoon.
- ◆ **Water:** A region ending with 2 tokens alone in water is destroyed at Phase 3. Cannot pass through water without your Airborne or Base already in that region.
- ◆ **Combat bonus:** Each friendly Base passed over en route adds +1. The starting Base does not count.

AIRBORNE — MOVEMENT & RULES

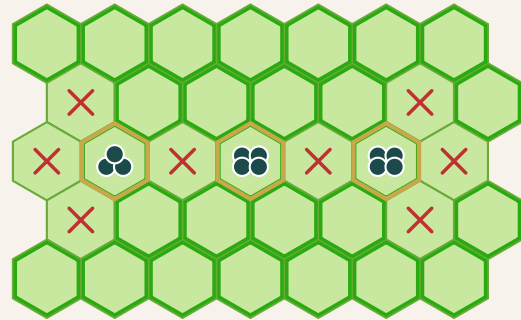
EXACTLY 2 STEPS, NOT ADJACENT





-  Valid landing — exactly 2 steps away (any direction)
-  Cannot land — adjacent, out of range, or mountain

Airborne lands exactly 2 steps away in any direction — the path need not be straight. Adjacent hexes cannot be landed on. Mountains without a friendly Base cannot be passed through or landed in.

SLINGSHOT CHAIN



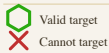
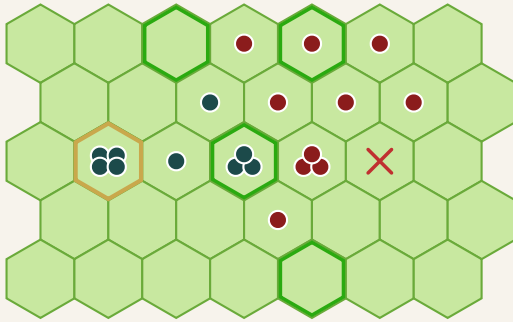
-  Valid destination — including both Bases
-  Friendly Base — slingshot launch point (once per chain)

All valid destinations shown across the full slingshot chain — from start directly, or via either Base as a launch point. Each Base may only serve as a launch point once per chain.

- Exactly two regions:** Airborne moves in two steps, each to an adjacent region. The two steps can go in any direction — there is no requirement to move in a straight line. The only restriction is that the final landing region cannot be directly adjacent to the starting region. Any region that is two steps away via any path, and not adjacent to the start, is a valid landing spot.
- Mountains:** Airborne cannot pass through a mountain region unless one of your own Bases is already present there. Even with Base support, airborne cannot safely end as 1 token alone in a mountain.
- Enemy blockers:** Airborne cannot pass over regions containing enemy Infantry or enemy Artillery. It can pass over enemy Airborne and enemy Bases freely.
- Slingshot:** If Airborne lands on a region containing your own Airborne or a Base, it may immediately launch again. Declare the entire chain at once. Each intermediate Airborne or Base may only serve as a launch point once per chain. Every leg must obey the “exactly 2, not adjacent” rule. The entire chain counts as only 3 units toward the turn's maximum.
- Combat bonus:** Each friendly Base slingshot over en route adds +1 to combat strength.

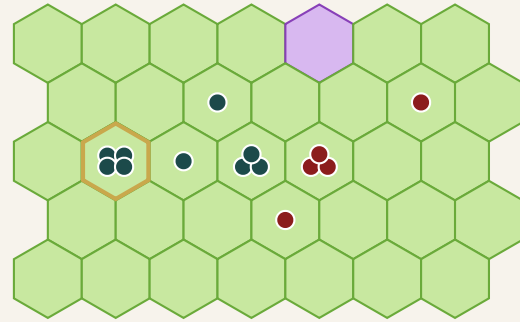
NUKES — MOVEMENT & RULES

VALID TARGETS



Nuke hops over the infantry, pivots at the Airborne, then hops again to reach targets. Enemy Airborne blocks one direction. The enemy cluster top-right is the strongest choice — destroying 5 units in one strike.

AFTER THE STRIKE



The target hex becomes Biohazard. All units in the target and its 6 surrounding hexes are destroyed — the surrounding hexes themselves remain unchanged. Five enemy units eliminated with no friendly casualties.

- ◆ **Requires a Base:** A nuke can only be launched from a region containing one of your Bases. The Base remains after launch.
- ◆ **Must jump at least once:** A nuke must cross over at least one occupied intermediate region. It cannot fire into an adjacent hex.
- ◆ **Isotopes:** Before firing, place at least 1 isotope from your supply into the target region. You may place multiple — each adds +1 to nuke strength beyond the base of 2.
- ◆ **Strength:** Starts at 2 (nuke token + 1 isotope minimum). Add +1 per additional isotope placed in the target. Add +1 per friendly Base passed over en route.
- ◆ **Movement:** Same jump rules as artillery. Direction changes at your own Airborne or Bases. Can jump over enemy Infantry only — cannot jump over enemy Artillery, Airborne, or Bases. Biohazards are treated as empty and cannot be jumped.
- ◆ **Legal targets:** Any region except an empty water region — including empty regions, biohazards, and your own units.
- ◆ **Enemy targets:** Your nuke strength must strictly exceed the defender's strength to target an enemy-occupied region.
- ◆ **Blast effect (immediate):** Target region → Biohazard permanently. All units on the target region and all units in the 6 surrounding regions are destroyed immediately — including your own. The surrounding regions do not change biome.
- ◆ **No hostage capture.** A nuke only destroys.

BASES — FULL RULES

- ♦ A Base forms **immediately** when a 4th token joins a region — mid-turn during Phase 2.
- ♦ **Maximum 9 units.** Voluntarily moving your own platoon into a full Base is illegal. If an opponent returns a hostage to your full Base, the Meltdown rule applies.
- ♦ **Isotope conversion:** Each time *you* add units to your own Base, you may immediately convert 1 unit into an isotope. Triggers once per event — two separate moves adding to bases in one turn means two conversion opportunities. Does not trigger when an opponent returns a token to your Base.
- ♦ Bases provide **+1 combat strength** to your platoons passing through or over them en route to combat. Units starting their move *from within* a Base do not receive this bonus.
- ♦ A Base cannot move, but **any number of units may leave** — including all of them, leaving the region empty.

CITIES — FULL RULES

- ♦ Cities act as Bases **for movement purposes only** regardless of unit count — Infantry can pass through freely, Artillery and Nukes can change direction when passing over, and Airborne can slingshot from them.
- ♦ With **fewer than 4 units:** no combat adjacency bonus.
- ♦ With **4 or more units:** a real Base is present, providing all normal Base combat bonuses.
- ♦ The pass-through combat bonus (+1 for platoons moving through or over) does not apply to units beginning their move from within that city.

MELTDOWN

A Meltdown occurs when a hostage token is returned to a region already at its maximum capacity of 9 units. This is a legal and intentional offensive tactic.

❖ MELTDOWN EFFECT — IMMEDIATE

Target hex: Converted to Biohazard immediately. All units on the target hex are destroyed immediately.

Surrounding hexes: Completely unaffected — units in the 6 surrounding regions are not destroyed and those hexes do not change biome.

This is the key distinction from a Nuke, which destroys units in all surrounding hexes too.

- ♦ Triggered during **Phase 1** (Return Hostages), not during Phase 2.
- ♦ The destruction is **immediate** — not delayed to Phase 3.
- ♦ The return that triggers a Meltdown still counts as one of your 1–3 returns — you still **earn a move** from it.
- ♦ All units on the target hex are destroyed immediately.

COMBAT

A platoon may only move into an enemy-occupied region if it can win. You must have **strictly greater strength** than the defender — a tie is not sufficient to attack.

CALCULATING STRENGTH

ATTACKER'S STRENGTH

- ◆ Number of tokens in the attacking platoon
- + 1 per adjacent region (to the *target hex*) containing any of your units
- + 1 per friendly Base passed through or over en route
- + 1 per isotope placed in the target (Nukes only)

The origin region counts toward the surrounding bonus if it is adjacent to the target and still has units in it after the platoon departed.

DEFENDER'S STRENGTH

- ◆ Number of tokens in the defending region
- + 1 per adjacent region containing the defender's *Bases* specifically

Plain units in adjacent regions do not give the defender a bonus — only Bases do. This asymmetry is intentional — it rewards building Bases near contested territory.

- ◆ The surrounding bonus for the attacker is calculated relative to the **target region's 6 adjacent hexes**.
- ◆ If the attacker wins, all defending units in the target region are **destroyed and removed from the game** by default. The attacker occupies the region.

CAPTURING HOSTAGES

Instead of destroying enemy units, you may capture them as hostages — adding to your supply and extending your opponent's time in the game (while extending your own).

- ◆ For each point of **excess strength** (beyond what was needed to win), you may capture one of the defender's units instead of destroying it.
- ◆ To capture one enemy unit, you must **sacrifice one of your own units** — from the attacking platoon or from an adjacent region that contributed support strength.
- ◆ The **attacker chooses** which specific enemy units to capture versus destroy.
- ◆ You may capture from 0 up to your total excess strength — entirely your choice.

◆ EXAMPLE

Attacker strength 5 vs defender strength 2 — 3 points of excess. The attacker may capture up to 3 of the defender's units, sacrificing one of their own per capture. They choose to capture 2 (sacrificing 2 of their own) and destroy 1 — judging those hostages worth the losses.

BIOMES

Each region belongs to one of seven biome types. Terrain restrictions apply based on the **platoon type the tokens become** — not how they arrived. A region with 3 tokens in water is Airborne, which has no water restriction — always evaluate the token count.

<p>FIELDS</p> <p>No restrictions for any platoon type. Completely open — safe to move through and end turns in freely.</p>	<p>FORESTS</p> <p>Artillery starting its move here cannot attack this turn. It may still move to any unoccupied region or join a friendly platoon.</p>	<p>MOUNTAINS</p> <p>Airborne cannot pass through unless a friendly Base is present. A region ending the turn with 1 token (Infantry) here is destroyed at end-of-turn resolution.</p>
<p>DESERT</p> <p>A region ending the turn with 1 token (Infantry) here is destroyed at Phase 3 resolution. Cannot transit through without your Airborne or Base already stationed in that region.</p>	<p>WATER</p> <p>A region ending the turn with 1 token (Infantry) or 2 tokens (Artillery) here is destroyed at Phase 3 resolution. Cannot transit through without support. Nukes cannot target empty water.</p>	<p>BIOHAZARD</p> <p>Created by a Nuke or Meltdown. No unit may end its turn here. Only Airborne may pass through or over. Treated as empty for artillery and nuke jumps.</p>
<p>CITIES</p> <p>Starting positions. Act as Bases for movement regardless of unit count. With 4+ units, a real Base is present providing normal combat bonuses.</p>		

TERRAIN RESTRICTION SUMMARY

PLATOON (TOKEN COUNT)	WATER	DESERT	FOREST	MOUNTAIN
Infantry (1)	Destroyed alone; needs support to pass	Destroyed alone; needs support to pass	No restriction	No restriction
Artillery (2)	Destroyed alone; needs support to pass	No restriction	Cannot attack from here; may still move	No restriction
Airborne (3)	No restriction	No restriction	No restriction	Cannot pass without Base; destroyed as 1 token alone
Nuke	Cannot target empty water	No restriction	No restriction	No restriction

◆ **"NEEDS SUPPORT TO PASS" — WHAT THIS MEANS**

A platoon can transit through a restricted terrain region only if **your own Airborne or a Base is already stationed there**. The restriction still applies — but their presence guarantees the total token count will be high enough at end of turn to avoid destruction. The biome remains restricted; the support unit simply ensures a safe count.

RULES AT A GLANCE

INFANTRY	ARTILLERY	AIRBORNE	NUKE	BASES
				
1 token	2 tokens	3 tokens	1 token + isotope	4-9 tokens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot pass own Infantry Cannot pass own Artillery Can pass own Airborne Can pass own Bases Cannot pass enemy units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can jump own/enemy infantry Can jump own/enemy artillery Can pass own Airborne Can pass own Bases ✗ Enemy Airborne/Base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can pass own infantry Can pass own artillery Can pass own/enemy Airborne Can pass own/enemy Bases ✗ Enemy infantry/artillery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can jump own/enemy infantry Can jump own artillery Can redirect via own Airborne Can redirect via own Bases ✗ Enemy artillery/airborne/base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not move Max 9 units +1 strength to passing platoons Convert 1 unit → isotope when you add units
Biomes	Biomes	Biomes	Biomes	Meltdown
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Water alone ✗ Desert alone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Water alone ? Cannot attack from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Mountain alone ✗ Cannot pass w/o Base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Cannot target empty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Returning token to full Base → Biohazard

BIOME KEY

- FIELDS — NO RESTRICTIONS**
- FOREST — ARTILLERY CAN'T ATTACK**
- MOUNTAIN — AIRBORNE NEEDS BASE**
- DESERT — INFANTRY DIES ALONE**
- WATER — INFANTRY & ARTILLERY DIE ALONE**
- BIOHAZARD — NOTHING MAY REST HERE**
- CITY — BASE FOR MOVEMENT ONLY**

<h3>TURN STRUCTURE</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1: Return 1-3 to owner's regions (max 1 per region) Phase 2: 1 move per hostage returned (optional) Max 3 units moved total per turn Same unit can't move twice (except slingshot) Phase 3: terrain destruction at end of full turn No hostages OR no units = eliminated 	<h3>COMBAT STRENGTH</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attacker needs strictly MORE than defender Attacker: +1 per unit adjacent to target hex Attacker: +1 per Base passed through en route Defender: +1 per adjacent Base only (not plain units) Capture: sacrifice 1 own unit per 1 captured Attacker chooses which enemy units to take 	<h3>VICTORY & NUKES</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Destroy an opponent's city Base on opponent's city (4+ units) Last player with hostages + units Nuke: target + 6 surrounding units destroyed immediately Meltdown: 9-unit overflow — target → Biohazard, surrounding units destroyed Win is immediate — no further turns
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RULES CLARIFICATIONS

All clarifications below have been confirmed by the game's designer. Items marked **NEW** are rules not explicitly stated in previous versions of the rulebook.

How exactly does the hostage return mechanic work?

When you return a hostage, you take one of your opponent's tokens and place it into a region on the board where **that opponent already has at least one unit present**. The token physically joins that region, increasing the unit count — potentially upgrading the platoon type (e.g. turning Artillery into Airborne, or forming a Base). You are not returning tokens to your own regions. You are reinforcing your enemy's forces on the board in exchange for earning a move. This tension — moves cost you enemy strength — is the engine of the game.

Does returning a hostage token trigger Base formation and isotope conversion? **NEW**

If a returned token brings a region to 4+ units, a Base forms immediately. However, **isotope conversion does not trigger** — it only triggers when a player adds units to their own Base through their own movement on their own turn. The opponent whose Base was bolstered cannot convert an isotope at that moment.

What is a Meltdown and is it intentional? **NEW**

A Meltdown occurs when a hostage token is returned to a region already at 9 units. The target region is immediately converted to Biohazard and all units on it are destroyed. The 6 surrounding regions are completely unaffected — this is the key distinction from a Nuke. A Meltdown is a **legal and intentional offensive tactic**: you may deliberately return a token to a full enemy Base to trigger this effect, earning a move in the process.

Do infantry block friendly units as well as enemy units?

Yes. Infantry cannot pass through any region containing any other units — including your own Infantry and Artillery. Only your own Airborne and Bases can be passed through freely. This means the positioning of your own platoons creates movement corridors and dead ends for your own Infantry.

Can Airborne pass through mountains?

Only with Base support. Airborne can pass through a mountain region if and only if one of your own Bases is already present in that mountain. Without a Base there, the mountain is completely impassable for Airborne.

How many direction changes can artillery or a nuke make in one move?

As many as it passes over friendly Airborne or Bases. Each friendly Airborne or Base it passes over may pivot it to any new hex direction. There is no limit per move.

Can a nuke fire into an adjacent hex?

No. A nuke must jump over at least one occupied intermediate region. It cannot be fired into a hex directly adjacent to its launching Base.

How does the Airborne Slingshot work — and can Airborne return to its starting region?

Declare the entire slingshot chain at once. Each intermediate Airborne unit or Base may only serve as a launch point *once* per chain — this prevents a Base being used repeatedly, but does not prevent the airborne from landing back at its starting region if it arrives there via a legal final 2-region leg. Every leg must obey the "exactly 2, not adjacent" rule. The entire chain counts as only 3 units toward the turn's maximum.

When does terrain destruction trigger, and why does it matter?

At the very end of the turn — Phase 3 — once all moves and combat are resolved.

Only the final resting position matters. A token may transit through restricted terrain regions mid-move and end safely elsewhere — it will not be destroyed. The key question is always: what is the token count in this region at end of turn, and is that platoon type permitted here? Nuke blasts and Meltdowns are the exception: those are immediate.

How do terrain restrictions interact with fluid platoons?

Always evaluate the token count at end of turn, not unit origin. If an Infantry token joins a water region containing friendly Artillery tokens, those 3 tokens are now Airborne — which has no water restriction. The restriction disappears because the platoon type changed. A region with 2 tokens in water is Artillery (destroyed). A region with 3 tokens in water is Airborne (safe).

Does the attacker's origin region count toward the surrounding bonus?

Yes, if the origin region is adjacent to the target and still has units in it after the attacking platoon departed. The surrounding bonus is calculated based on the 6 hexes adjacent to the *target region*.

Why do defenders only benefit from adjacent Bases — not plain units?

This asymmetry is **intentional design**. Attackers gain +1 per any adjacent unit; defenders gain +1 per adjacent Base only. This makes Bases uniquely valuable for defence and rewards building Bases near contested territory rather than massing plain units. It also means offence is generally easier than defence — encouraging dynamic, aggressive play.

Do cities provide combat strength bonuses? NEW

Cities with **fewer than 4 units** provide no combat adjacency bonus — movement only. Cities with **4 or more units** contain a real Base, which provides the normal +1 combat adjacency bonus. Cities also provide a pass-through combat bonus (+1) to platoons moving through or over them en route to an attack — but not to units starting their move from within that city.

Can multiple isotopes be placed in a nuke target? NEW

Yes. You may place as many isotopes as you choose into the target region before firing. Each one adds +1 to the nuke's strength beyond the base of 2. All placed isotopes are consumed regardless of outcome.

What can artillery land on after pivoting at a Base? NEW

After arriving at the pivot Base, artillery may land on: the **Base itself** (tokens merge); any of the **5 adjacent hexes it did not arrive from** (whether empty or containing friendly units — tokens merge via fluid rules); or **further beyond** any of those adjacent hexes that contain units, by jumping over them exactly as normal. How far artillery can reach in any direction depends entirely on what units are present around the Base — the pivot simply opens up all directions, and the standard jump rules apply from there.

Are there two separate ways to be eliminated?

Yes — two independent triggers. Hostage Attrition (no hostages to return at start of your turn) or Total Annihilation (no units on the board at any point). Either condition alone is sufficient. When eliminated, all your tokens everywhere are removed from the game immediately — including those held as hostages by others.

