Chapter One: Menu System & Game Interface

In this chapter, you will learn a little about **BCT: Brigade Combat Team** and what makes it the most realistic tactical simulation today. You will also learn how to start a game and get a quick introduction to what the objects on the screen represent.

What Is BCT?

BCT: Brigade Combat Team is a simulation of combined arms warfare. The game pits two opposing units of up to brigade/regimental size against each other in simulated combat. The icons, which the user manipulates, represent sections or team of vehicles which, when grouped together, form the companies and battalions of the unit.

Just as in modern land warfare, the user fights with and against units consisting of a wide variety of vehicles. These include armor, infantry, artillery, engineers, air defense, and aircraft. These units must be synchronized and massed at the key point on the battlefield to win.

The cybernetic battlefield is a digitized elevation map of actual terrain. Some of the battlefields on which battles you will fight include the Mojave Desert (site of the US Army National Training Center), Kuwait, and North Korea.

BCT is a *Command Real Time* simulation. Put simply, you have the power to start, stop, or compress time during the simulation. You are free to give orders to your subordinate units at any time, even when the clock is stopped. If the enemy is uncooperative, you can stop the clock and change your orders to your units.

This is radically different from so-called "Real Time" simulations. Once the action starts, all you can do is react. Success in these games depends on how fast you are with a mouse and how well you know the keyboard commands. That's where these games miss the mark in realism. How often in reality would one person be responsible for positioning and aiming every one of over one hundred vehicles.

Let's face it, you have your hands full. You are playing the role of Brigade Commander, Task Force Commander, Company Commander, and Platoon Leader. In reality, the Brigade commander and his staff just say, "seize that objective". The Task Force commander and his staff then tell their companies "move on this route to take that objective". The Company Commander decides how they will move to the objective. Finally, the Platoon Leader and Platoon Sergeant direct their platoon, "engage this target".

That's why it is infinitely more realistic to be able to stop the clock, issue orders to your vehicles, and then restart the time. And it's much easier to watch the situation develop than with those "turn-based" games. Once you start the clock, it will run at real time (or accelerated time, if selected) until you stop it again.

And, speaking of realism, are you sick of the "unknown terrain" in those other "real time" games. You know what I'm talking about. The whole screen stays black and you don't know what the ground looks like until you drive over it! **GET REAL!** There is a map for every square inch of this planet. No commander goes into battle not knowing the ground he's going to be fighting on. That's why, in **BCT,** you can see the entire map from the beginning of the game. Of course, you won't see the enemy until you're close enough, but that's what real war is like, too.

Anything you can do on the modern battlefield, you can do in **BCT.** Plan artillery missions, breach obstacles, lay minefields, obscure friendly forces with smoke. But beware, the enemy will fight you realistically as well. Watch out for chemical strikes, fixed wing aircraft, and air inserted infantry in your rear area.

And all of this realism doesn't come at the expense of playability. The interface makes it simple to issue orders to a single vehicle, one subordinate unit, or every unit that you control. Each mission begins with an OPORD that outlines your mission, assets available, and the enemy you will face. Unlike similar computer strategy games, you can position your units, obstacles, and pre-dug positions wherever you would like at the beginning of the game. DirectX (tm) Sound (in the 32-bit version) brings the fighting to life, and a "GO" key takes you straight to the latest action.

That's a brief description of **BCT: Brigade Combat Team.** Now let's jump right in and learn how to start a game.

Getting Started

When the game starts, you will see the title screen. You will be presented with a menu, which displays three options:

- **Begin a New Mission.** If you want to start a new scenario from the beginning, click this button.
- **Load A Saved Mission.** Want to come back to a game you started earlier? Use this option.
- **Multiplayer.** Tired of getting your butt kicked by the computer? **BCT** can be played against human opponents over the Internet, a LAN connection, a serial port connection, or by modem. For more on this, see **Chapter Four: Multiplayer Games.**
- **Exit**

Beginning a New Mission

When you select the "Begin a New Mission" button from the opening dialog, you will be presented with a Start Mission Dialog. In the top center of the dialog is a list of filenames. When you single click on any of these names, the full mission name and a brief description of the mission will appear in the "Mission Information" box below.

When you have decided which mission you want, you can choose it by double clicking on it in the list or highlighting it and clicking the "OK" button or hitting return.

If you click on the "Cancel" button, you will be returned to the main menu.

Next you will be asked for the skill level of opposing sides with the Skill Level Dialog (see below). The default setting, veteran, is the original skill level for those who are used to playing previous versions of BCT: Brigade Combat Team.

When you have set the skill level, you will see the Operations Order (more on this later). Read this carefully and then close it by selecting **Order** from the **View** menu or the close button at the bottom of the window.

Now that you have read the mission and understand the objectives, you must set up your forces to fight the battle. The Operations Order tells you where you can place your forces during this set up phase (there is nothing preventing you from placing your forces outside of this area except for a direct order from your commanding officer!). Click and drag to move the objects around on the map. You can also plan paths or plan missions for your units during this phase. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. We'll learn all about this in the next two chapters.

When you are ready to begin fighting, choose either **Start** from the **Time** menu or the 🕐 button from the toolbar.

The Skill Level Dialog

When you choose "Begin a New Mission" from the opening dialog, you will presented with this dialog.

On the left and right are three skill level radio buttons to be set from both the enemy and friendly forces in the game.

Green	Inexperienced, poorly trained soldiers.
Veteran	Trained soldiers. This is the default setting.
Elite	Highly trained and experienced (battle-hardened) soldiers.

For those who started-out playing an older version of BCT: Brigade Combat Team, Veteran skill levels correspond to the settings that were used in earlier versions.

Force skill level effects everything from rate of fire and pH (percentage hit) to reaction time and mission processing time. The net effect is that Green troops are easier to beat than Elite soldiers.