

TLNB is NOT A Tactical Game

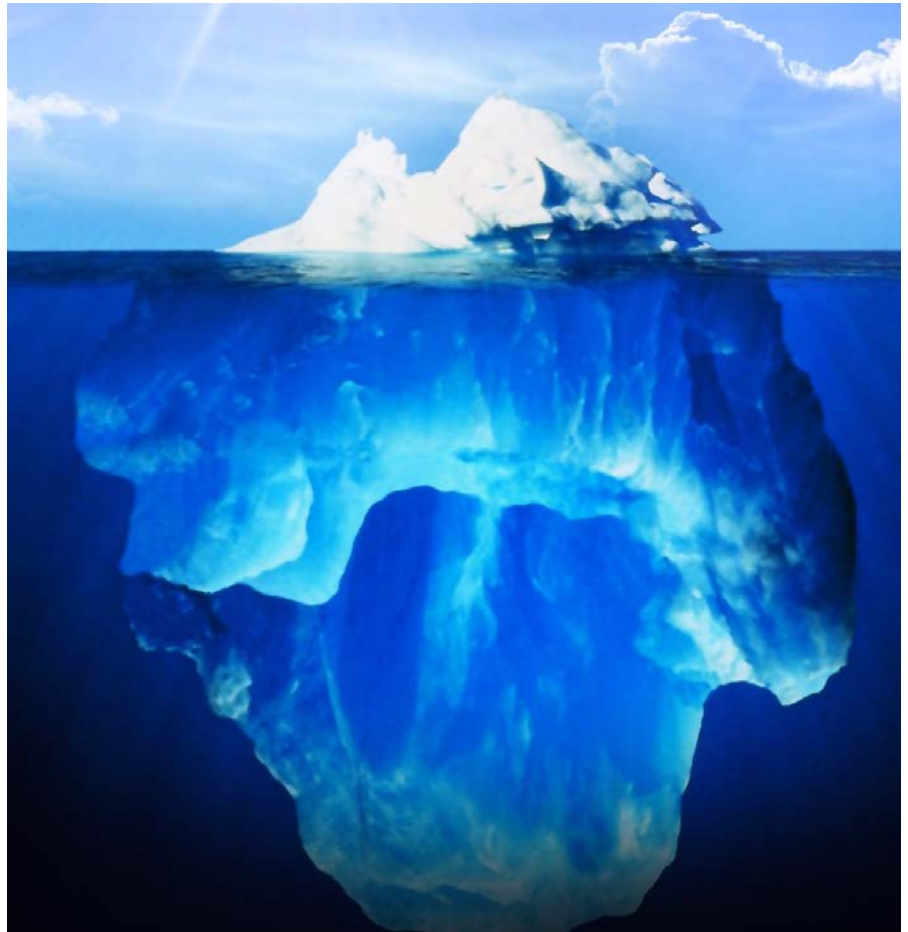
Kevin Zucker

When you think of a typical Napoleonic Tactical Game, you probably think of *La Bataille*—something with formations, column and line, all that heat, smoke, fire & shock. With its Approach to Battle scenarios, however, TLNB is straddling the divide between tactical and operational levels.

Brigade level "grand tactics" are not just regimental tactics moved up one notch. You cannot just scale-up regimental tactics and get brigade tactics. It's a whole different animal...

Perhaps for this reason there are not that many brigade level games. *The Gamers* had their "Napoleonic Battle Series" of four titles. There are division-level, corps, regiment and battalion-level games, but brigade level is not well understood. The brigade general is occupied with coordinating two or three regiments, and these can be in the broad arrow formation, the checkerboard formation, and even division square, but these formations are not at all just scaled-up regimental formations. Such brigade-level maneuvers required plenty of rehearsal and permanent regimental assignments to ensure the seamless flow of men and equipment, all moving around "inside the hex," where they are not visible to the player. Regimental tactics *are* there, in the deep structure of the design. Like the iceberg, only a small part is visible to the player.

I have always left the field of tactics to others, keeping my focus at the operational and grand tactical level, where individual regiments and their doings are invisible. Who knows how "Napoleonic tactics" really looks after being filtered through the lens of the hex-grid? Tactics was not a static thing but a moving target, ever evolving from battle to battle. What worked well in 1806 did not work at all the next year. From Keegan to



Rory Muir and Riehn, all the king's authors and all the king's men blindly claim the tail, the tusk, or the trunk defines the true nature of that mythical beast.

The Thin Red Line—as discussed in WDM Nr. 3—is an entrenched myth that is part of the larger myth of "Napoleonic Tactics." This myth has been reinforced in our minds through decades of gaming rules and movies that promulgate it. It is said that TLNB tactics are opposite to these "real" Napoleonic Tactics... Good! Battles almost always focused on strongpoints such as villages and bridges, and the whole picture we have of long lines of troops firing away is a hold-over from the 18th-century regulation books. The last vestiges of the linear way of making war were blown away at Jena—with one important exception...

For more on this topic, see [*"The Closed Watchcase," in Vol III Nr. 5 of Wargame Design Magazine.*](#)