

Kharkov Counter-Attack 1942: Command Decision

1943 Operation RoundUp: Another Playtest

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JU-87D/G Stuka vs T-34: Duel 129

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German High Seas Fleet 1914-18 (Fleet 2)

The 406th Fighter Group: Legends of Warfare

The U.S. 37-mm Gun in World War Two



Kharkov Counter-Attack 1942: *Command Decision*

by Russ Lockwood

Last we left Major von Lockwood, he had been transferred from Greece (see the 6/26/2022 AAR) to the Eastern Front just in time for Operation Typhoon (see the 3/29/2023 AAR). While leading the 86th Motorized Rifle Regiment, Soviet artillery gave him a wound badge to go along with his Iron Cross.

The overall map. I would enter from the middle right of photo.



He missed the winter of '41-42, but arrived just in time to be assigned to the staff of Kampfgruppe Schmidt-Ott (KGSO) under Colonel Schmidt-Ott. Why his short time with the 86th convinced higher command that he should be part of KGSO baffled him.

KGSO consisted of three companies of panzers (each with one platoon of IIJs and one platoon of IIHs) plus the command platoon with attached Pz II recon platoon. A company of halftrack-mounted panzer grenadiers was attached, as was a 150mm artillery battery. The HQ staff platoon brought up the rear. It wasn't all that much to attack the Soviets north of Kharkov.

Through the Woods and Over the Stream

The goal was to break through the Soviet defenses and storm into the rear areas of the Soviet defense. At the very least, the attack should disrupt an expected Soviet attack.

A considerable number of Soviet units were sure to be dug in, but panzers should prove a potent tip of the spear. HQ assured him that the Soviets were hastily-raised conscripts with little training and even less fortitude. A German infantry battalion would soon join him in the attack.

Turn 1. Soviets dug in everywhere, but I manage to take the hamlet (upper right corner of photo) and eliminate the stand next to it and the 45mm AT Gun (upper middle in tan sandbagged position).



The initial scouting found KGSO in a position to turn the flank of the Soviet defense. Soviets were presumed to be dug into woods and a side hamlet, with even more troops inside a village along a stream. A bridge and main road led to the Soviet rear, but tanks were spotted beyond the bridge along the road. Lots of infantry were dug in behind a second stream in two lines. That would be a tough nut to crack.

Turn 2 and the Soviets Patski (left) and Jakeski begin to work their magic against my panzers.

First things first. KGSO needed to take out the nearby hamlet to free up a path towards the edge of the woods. The panzergrenadiers with supporting tanks would clear the woods while a company of panzers demonstrated at the bridge.

Von Lockwood had a feeling that the woods were not really held by as many troops as indicated by the scouts. That village and bridge, yes, but the woods were likely lightly held.

The German battalion under Marc enters the battle. Beyond the stream is a double line of Soviets.

Von Lockwood called in the Luftwaffe, expecting strong Stuka support for this attack north of Kharkov. He was disappointed. The Luftwaffe was far busier in Kharkov than here. No matter, the attack would proceed.

On came his panzers. The panzer grenadiers captured an unoccupied hamlet while the panzers went after the important hamlet.

Spotting: A CD Primer

If you move in the open, you're spotted pretty much by anything in a line of sight. In the case of my panzers, all of them were immediately spotted. If you are dug in inside a hamlet or woods, a stand is not spotted until it moves, shoots, or enemy infantry comes within one inch, recon within two inches, or panzers touch.

I sent my recon into the unoccupied part of the hamlet, spotting Soviet infantry in the other half. A Soviet AT rifle platoon and 45mm AT Gun platoon fired and pinged the panzers, so these two stands were spotted. The deluge of MG fire from my supporting vehicles slaughtered all three Soviet stands. In the next morale phase, some Soviet platoons ran for their lives, but most of the rest stayed put.



I dutifully moved the panzers up to touch the enemy infantry. I expected them to be dummy stands. I was disappointed yet again. Pfufferbogan! They're real!

A destroyed Pz III H (upper right corner) discovers all the Soviets are real. The long-barrel III J will try to break the bridge defense.



A mortar targeted my infantry and blew one platoon to bits and sent

another reeling backwards. My resulting morale toss was so bad, the panzer grenadiers fled and became pinned.

About the only good news was that while I passed most of my other morale tests and most Soviets in the woods failed by a little and were "Pinned." The next turn shootout was in my favor, although I lost a Pz IIIH platoon to a close assault by the infantry. The Soviet infantry stubbornly now passed their morale checks.

Most of my panzers failed their morale tests with a string of 9s and 10s (bad d10 morale rolls indeed) and pinned. Indeed, this was the start of a string of abysmal die rolls that found turn after turn of my panzers parking and partying like it was 1939.

And here's where another *CD* pet peeve comes in: Roll to hit needs low, but roll for damage needs high. I hit within expected levels of randomness, but my damage rolls were so low, I think the Soviets thought this was a comedy show. Those commies sure laughed a lot at my die rolling.

I know the dice rolled high 9s and 10s because that's what I rolled for morale -- which needs low rolls by the way. Hence my Pinning myself.

In the first turn, I rolled lots of 1s for morale. Subsequent turns? Pfufferbogan!

What the dice giveth, they taketh away.

Pin No Pin

I forgot. I completely forgot that "Pin" in *Command Decision* parlance doesn't mean the unit is rooted to the spot. This nomenclature complaint of mine from a year or two ago reared its ugly head this game and I forgot that I could evade. Instead, even when I made the morale check, the units' orders were to Hold unless given a different one by the Staff (hey, that's Major von Lockwood) or the commander (Col. Schmidt-Ott).

Worse, I would fail morale multiple times on sequential turns. I usually had one-third to two-thirds of my panzers immobilized. You can still fire when Pinned at a negative die modifier.

It was frustrating to say the least, especially when I re-learned that I could evade while Pinned *AFTER* the game. Besides the realization that it was nomenclature I forgot about, I told Marc, Jake, and Pat that I would definitely remember it next game by blurting:

"Why did the chicken cross the road?

To get to the other side.

Why did the baby panzer cross the road?

Because it was PINNED to the chicken!"

Unexpected juvenile humor from pre-teen past is always good for a chuckle and we shared a good laugh at my own idiocy.

Oberst Marc's Attack

Marc finally came on the table turn 3 right into the teeth of the Soviet defense along that second stream. Nonetheless, he managed to storm across a bridge into a hamlet while trading shots with Pat's dug-in infantry.

Marc works his troops through the cover on the way to the bridge on Turn 4.

I watched him as he maneuvered his infantry. He used cover until he couldn't, then charged one stand over the bridge to draw fire and get within an inch of dug-in Soviets.

I also watched as he dropped smoke adjacent to the bridge to block line of sight from supporting Soviet infantry. I have to remember that. It would have saved my panzer grenadiers running up in the open a lot of grief.

Marc's platoon charges across the river as smoke drops to the right.

Soviet Tank Counter-Attack

Pat also sent two T-26 tank platoons my way, but long-barrel IIJs smoked one and forced the other back.

That's when Pat got serious and moved the T-34 platoon and KV-1 platoon my way.

And that's when I got extremely lucky with the 150mm arty -- I managed to call it in (low roll needed), hit the T-34 platoon (low roll needed), and destroy it (high roll needed). What a concept!

Better yet, Pat obligingly advanced the KV-1 just enough for the IIJ to get a flank shot and I duplicated the low roll, low roll, high roll feat to destroy that, too.

Nonetheless, a T-26 shot took out a IIH platoon and the Soviet infantry prompted a German morale check. Guess what I rolled? High again and Pinned myself. Pfufferbogan!

I slowly destroyed or chased away the Soviet infantry in the village by the stream. The last commie platoon standing, the NKVD, I nailed with artillery.



"It's Not NKVD!"

I asked if the death of the battalion NKVD stand triggered a wider morale collapse. Marc insisted that the stand was not NKVD, it was a political officer. It's only extra function was that it could give an extra order. Otherwise, it was a plain ol' rifle stand.

Fittingly, this NKVD stand was the last in the village.

"It's Not NKVD! It's the political officer."

"Six of one. I played *Drang Nach Osten*. Same designer as *Command Decision*. Ergo. NKVD," I quipped.

The T-34 goes up in flames from an artillery attack (bottom center of photo) while the KV-1 (top middle) suffers the effects of a flank shot from a long-barrel PzIII J (upper right corner).



The Close Assault Barrage

Now, Jake kept insisting that the remaining Soviet infantry units in the woods were a spent force. Not as such.

Like a Japanese banzai charge, individual platoons raced out of the woods for close assaults on my Pinned tanks. Two more panzer platoons went up in flames, two infantry stands died doing it. It was a 50% chance of a close assault hit. Jake's damage die rolls were far better than mine. He may not have hit as often, but his rolls made them count.

I finally charged what was left of the panzer grenadiers into the woods to attack what was left of the Soviets -- and got rid of that pesky mortar platoon.

The end of game photo after Turn 6. Only one company left of German tanks (bottom middle) although the panzer grenadiers finally break into the woods (upper right corner).

End of Game

It was 10:30pm. We played six turns in about 2.5 hours. A seventh would not make much of a difference.

The victory condition of taking the far hill was nowhere near being accomplished. Soviet victory.



Jake and Marc were adamant that I should have bypassed the woods and dove into the Soviet rear. Getting tangled with the infantry in the woods was the cause of many morale checks (that I blew). As they put it, turn 1 was getting rid of the hamlet, turn 2 would be a double move wide right and across the stream. Turn 3 would put me into a lightly wooded area and Turn 4 would have me approach Victory Hill and Turn 5 take it. Victory Hill by direct bridge and road was 5 feet from my entry edge. The path they suggested would add about a foot.

That's pretty optimistic and assumes I would drive without regard to possible ambushes.

Such a bold move, they insisted, would cut the Soviet supply lines to all those troops in the woods, village by the stream, and so on.

Er...What supply line? And what would stop the Soviets from marching off the German side of the board? They could do that in two turns if no Germans were around. The Soviets had an initial armor reserve almost about the same size as KGSO -- six platoons worth, including the aforementioned T-34, KV-1, and two T-26s.

The key to the Soviet victory was Jake's use of infantry, especially the close assault, combined with my knack for Pinning myself for morale (and not remembering you can move while "pinned"). With the exception of one T-26 shot, all the wrecked German tanks came from Jake's infantry. When you have a 50% chance of a hit on a pinned unit, you take it. He did and half the panzers went up in smoke. Heroes of the Soviet Union all around.

Good game, gents. Thanks, Marc, for hosting.

Age of Eagles: More Digital Options

By Bill Gray

I received the following press release from Bill regarding his Napoleonic rule set Age of Eagles. -- RL

Age of Eagles (AOE) is now available in electronic format via Amazon Kindle and Google Play eBooks.

Amazon Kindle eBooks are NOT DRM FREE and will NOT allow conversion to PDF for download and printing. You MUST have an Amazon account to purchase. If you need to download or print something, do NOT take this option!!! Nevertheless, the Kindle format accounts for 82% of eBooks sold in North America and 68% worldwide, so for a lot of folks (to include me), this is not a problem.

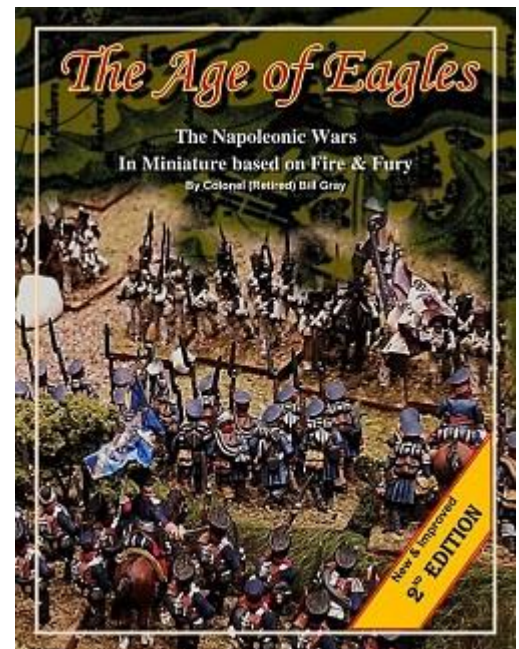
Google Play is DRM FREE and allows you to convert your eBook to PDF for download and or printing direct from your online Google Play Library. There is no extra software required. You must have a Google account (Gmail, etc, etc, etc, something) and there are easy instructions on the *AOE* website to buy either.

Why this step? I've been pushing lead for 46 years and selling *AOE* since 2005. I'm pooped and would like to really retire and play games/paint toy soldiers. I was just gonna shut down *AOE* the end of this year, but I got a lot of requests not to, and letting someone else do all business work seemed the best solution.

In addition, remember the Old Guard at Waterloo? We may not surrender, but we sure are dying. I think our time has come and gone and the replacements taking our place don't do business the way we did. This transition will hopefully provide a more inviting and familiar environment as the Young Guard step up and fill in the ranks.

Still Available in Paper Format

Don't worry, you can still get your printed hard copies thru On Military Matters in the US/rest of world, or, thru Caliver for the UK/EU.



1943 Operation Roundup: Another Playtest

by Russ Lockwood

Dropped by Dan's for another playtest of *Against The Odds* magazine's hypothetical 1943 Allied invasion of France, designed by Ty Bomba. For the record, I'm ATO's Staff Developer for the *Operation Roundup* project. I took the Germans and gave Dan the Allies.

Set up for the Germans is simple: four counters: one in each of the three ports (Boulogne, Calais, and Dunkirk) and one in the interior. The Allies get four beachhead counters to place on any clear coastal hex plus a stack of units per beachhead hex. Away you go.

Dan lands with the Allies.

Hitler's Reaction

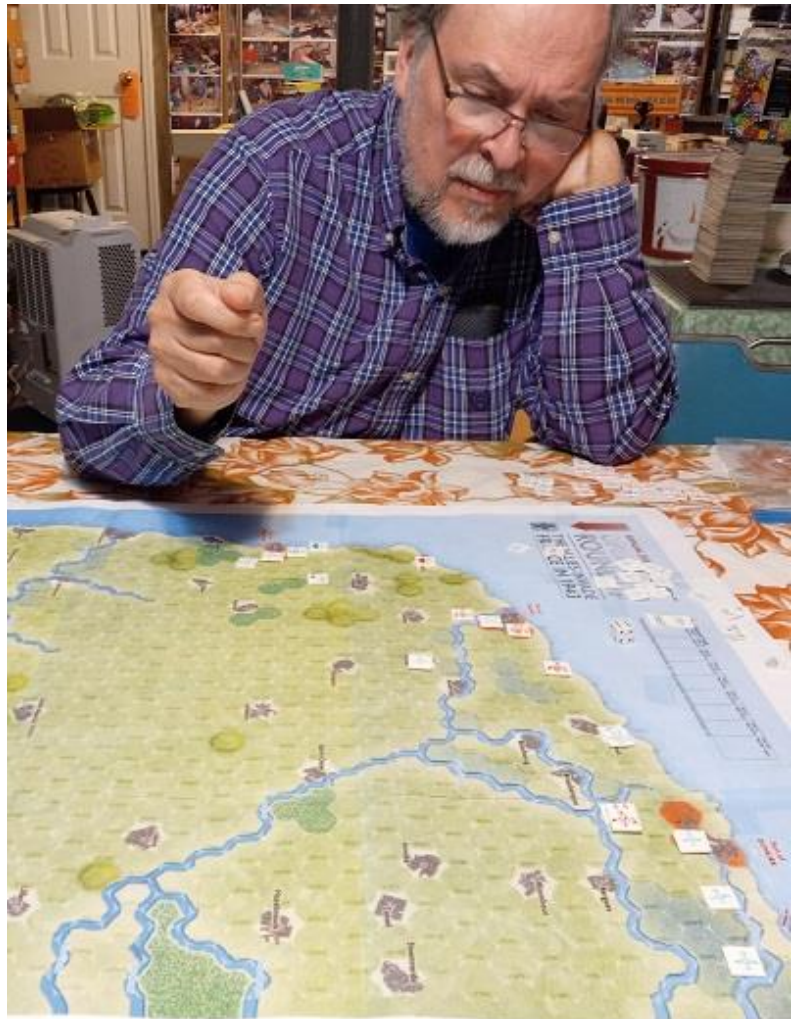
How Hitler reacts to an invasion depends upon a random draw -- everything from using relatively local forces to bringing in lots of forces over from the Eastern Front. I picked the "2" chit, which uses forces local to Belgium, France, and Italy and with an increased Luftwaffe commitment.

In game terms, random ground reinforcements appear based on die rolls and blind picks from several containers while the German Luftwaffe gets parity with the Allies why rolling for Air Superiority.

The Allies can pick their own forces to arrive via beachheads and (once liberated) the three ports.

The Allied divisions are mostly uniform while the German divisions are a real mix of low to high combat factors. The Allies can mount attacks at relatively high odds just about anywhere, especially on the smaller defense factor units of 2 through 5. The Germans usually cannot match such lofty CRT columns because the Allies defense is usually 7 or 8.

The Battle for Dunkirk. Notice the big US divisions (6-8 and 7-5) versus the German static divisions (2-3s). The British 5-7 division has a 2-factor brigade attached. German planes annoy, but don't seriously hamper the Allies.



As the German units are random draws and the combat factors are all over the place, the game creates a dynamic about how far/hard to push in the early turns in trying to toss the Allies back into the sea, or at least recapture

a port to thwart Allied victory conditions. The Allied portion of the race also concerns how hard and fast to push away from the coast and drive towards an edge of the map without overextending.

Start of Turn 3. A sketchy German line tries to seal off the Allied invasion, which has just conquered the three ports.

The Initial Turns

The Allies landed in a broad arc from Dunkirk to Boulogne and immediately attacked the German garrisons in the ports. The garrisons hold out for two turns. In the meantime, the German reinforcements begin to appear at the edges of the map.

This is actually a key mechanic. Allied reinforcements appear at the beachheads (and ports) and may be moved immediately. German reinforcements appear after the German move/combat phase and may only be used the next turn. This hesitation is what creates the main race to contain the landings or exploit the openings.

As for Air Superiority, I managed to outroll Dan throughout most of the game -- four of the nine turns were German Air Superiority, three turns were Allied Air Superiority, and two turns were amazingly tied and neither side had Superiority.

The weather was clear the entire game.

Turn 4 German attack on Boulogne. The US unit lost a step, but another is close by. This best chance for a German recapture of a port failed.

The Middle Game

I managed to get some big-factor armor and mechanized units in early and launched into a rolling attack on the Allies. Although I bent the line back towards the coast and managed an attack on the port of Boulogne, I didn't do enough damage to offset the influx of new Allied units as well as their replacement capability.

Dan was particularly effective at using small British brigades to augment attacks and defense as well as take losses. These little buggers may be replaced one to three turns (die roll) after their demise. I must have eliminated three or four divisions' worth of these brigades compared to only eliminating one British division, but those little brigades swarmed ashore anew.

The Germans also have some of these: Heavy Armor (Tiger Tanks). However, if eliminated, the Tigers are gone forever. Indeed, no German replacement points are available. The conga line of reinforcements will have to do, but these do run out.



The Late Game

When the German reinforcements ended, so too did my offensive. It became harder and harder to free up units for the attack and still cover a line. I switched over to the defense, unable to retake any ports or even isolate one.

One of my biggest units, an 11 attack, 9 defense factor tank division, was hammered for a step loss by an Allied attack that resulted in an exchange. Each side lost a step. But where I had to flip the counter to become a 6 attack 5 defense unit, the Allies lost a 2-factor brigade...which ultimately rolled well and appeared after a one-turn refurbishment.

End Turn 4. The Allied line bent, but did not break.

That left trying to keep the Allies from punching a hole through my line and creating a supplied corridor of hexes from beachheads/ports to the South or East edge of the map.

End Turn 5. The Allies advance.

A German Mistake

I then made a mistake on Turn 8. Due to an increasing shortage of units, I left my center in contact with the Allied units.

In *Operation Roundup*, a player can either move first and then perform combat, or, perform combat first and then move. The latter offers the chance of punching a hole in the line and then shoving units through the breach.

End Turn 6. See-saw battle.

That's exactly what happened on Turn 9. The hole allowed the Allies to surround and pin a line of divisions near Boulogne, dive a couple unit deep into the empty center of the map, and seal off the breakthrough from German counter-attacks.

Granted, it left the Allied line stretched thin, but the Germans were now relatively immobile. Of course, Turn 9 was also when the Allies won back Air Superiority with a magnificent Yahtzee roll. P-47s popped up all over France.



One 1-in-6 Chance

I had one Turn 9 chance -- pull the same Combat and Move. One of my out of supply panzer units went up against a half-strength US division right on the edge of the hole. If I could roll an Exchange and both sides lose a step, the US unit would be eliminated and a supply path opened up. During the move portion of the turn, I could waltz into the Port of Calais as the US had nothing in between.

The die bounced on the table, but alas, I rolled a no effect.

End Turn 7. The Germans pull back. The second line is mighty thin.



During my move, I tried to extend a line of units to seal off the hole, but to no avail. Too many units were locked up by Allied units while Air Superiority reduced movement.

We called it after Turn 9. The game lasts 10 turns and the Allies had a short way to go to create a supplied corridor off the South edge and a decent shot at a hole on the East edge, too..

Big Allied victory!

End Turn 8. The Germans post most every unit into a mighty thin. Line.



Good Game

We started at about 8pm and ended around midnight, so four hours for nine turns. This including looking up rules, discussing aspects of the mechanics, and figuring out tactics needed for success. Not bad for a playtest.

The playtest shows the race in the build-up of forces merges into an attrition-style battle of general decline in German combat firepower while Allied firepower holds steady and ultimately punches a hole somewhere.

While another playtest showcasing the general race, German attack, and Allied attack sequence during the game, it also pointed up some of the rules that needed a more explanation and inspired some optional rules to put even more movement into the game.

End Turn 9. German efforts to close hole prove a little short. The game ended in this position.



NFL Game Day: Are You Ready For Some Football?

by Russ Lockwood

On a rare foray to a garage sale, I saw this game called *NFL Game Day*. It was \$1. It had a football field board, a tiny football and first down marker, a d6, and lots of cards. What the heck -- it looked intact, so I bought it. Dan and I broke it out the other day to give it a whirl.

Dan considers which play to pick on first and ten from the 15 yard line. Note that he has a Dallas Cowboys mug to rally his favorite team.

A Bit of Tabletop Football Game History

A couple decades or so ago, Dan and I played a game called *NFL Showdown* that used a bar code reader to get play results. The offense picked a play card and scanned it. The defense picked a card and scanned. The gizmo did its thing and popped out a result. Alas, the gizmo never worked right. On rare occasions it would work as advertised. Usually, it needed multiple scans per card and even then it sometimes wouldn't take at all. Good idea, but crap technology.

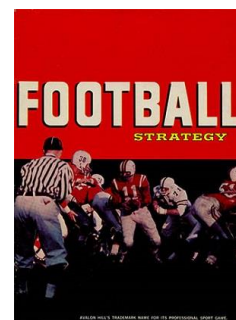
A couple decades ago, I had a NFL game called *NFL Strategy* with long, solid offense play cards and long, defensive play cards with transparent alignments and a number of window cut-outs. You picked an offense play, the defense picked a defense, and the defense card was slapped over the offense card such that the Xs and Os

overlapped. The pair had multiple cut out windows that showed multiple results of the play. To figure out which window results to use, the game had a bobber on a rod with springs top and bottom. Pull the bobber back against one spring and let go. The bobber would ping ping back and forth and eventually stop. Check the mark on the bobber, which pointed to a section of the card -- read the window for results. Rather neat.

A few decades back, Avalon Hill had a boxed game called *Football Strategy*. A matrix of offensive and defensive plays along with some die rolls. I entered the single-elimination tournament at Origins I or II and who did I get as an opponent? The game's designer -- Uhl. Are you frickin' kidding me? What's the designer doing entering the tournament?

Football Strategy. Image from web.

I was able to drive down the field well enough, but seven times sputtered between the 10 yard line and the goal line. Hmmm. Must be something in the play calling. Anyway, I rolled a die to kick a field goal: 5 in 6 chances of making it at that range. I missed six of the seven times. You read right. I missed six die rolls out of seven. Uhl scored two touchdowns, two extra points, and a field goal. Final score 17-3. Good game. I had bad luck that time, but good game overall.



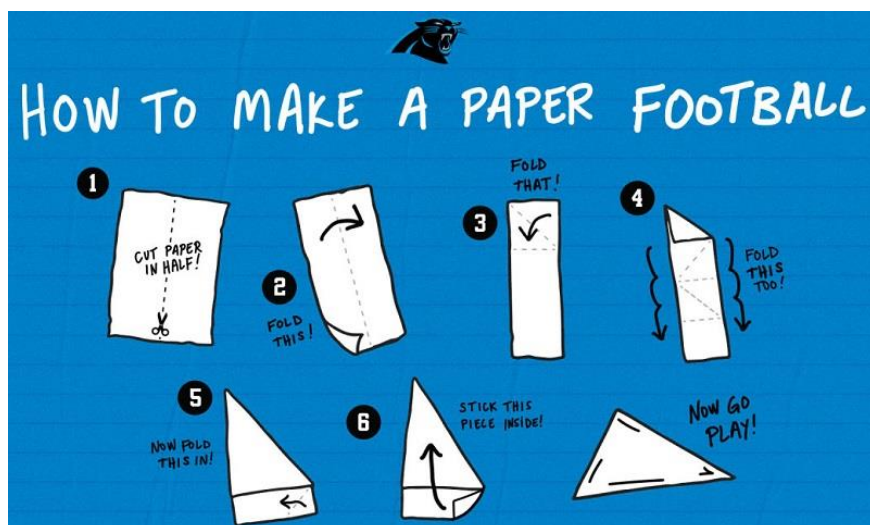
Before that, I had a Tudor electric football game you plugged in and the tin gridiron vibrated. Little miniature players mounted on plastic bases with "brushes" moved when the vibrations occurred. Alas, wiggling the brushes as much as possible seemed to make no real difference in how the players moved. Some were straight. Some angled left or right. Some just wandered in circles. Entertaining for a while.

A Tudor electric football game. Image from web.



And then you have the paper triangle flicked across a table. If it hangs over the opposite edge, it's a score. Then you get to make the field goal posts with your fingers for the scoring team to try and "kick" it for the extra point. A school cafeteria staple at lunchtime.

I was amazed to find that the Carolina Panthers had directions to make a paper football! Image from web.

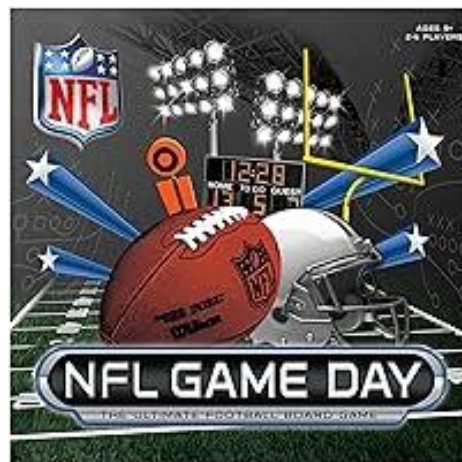


Note that I specifically exclude video games and *Blood Bowl* from this list. I'm also sure there are other football board games I just don't know about and never played.

NFL Game Day

So we come to the latest NFL game. The mounted board is metal of some sort, because the little football and first down marker have a magnet to keep in place. Indeed, the game lets you customize the end zone with a magnetic team name. That's kinda cool. Dan took his Dallas Cowboys and I took the Cleveland Browns.

Hey! Let us not be judgmental about team selection. All teams have up and down streaks -- some more winning than losing. Sometimes, and I'm thinking of Cleveland's 0-16 season not too many years ago, I had to wear a paper bag over my head watching them in my living room. Sure, they've never been to a Super Bowl, but maybe they'll get there before I pass to the great beyond where Cleveland wins every game... Yes, I am breathing normally.



NFL Game Day Mechanics

Coin flip to see who gets the ball first. Pull a card from the Special Teams deck, which lets you know where the receiving team starts the game. From our game, that's usually the 20-yard-line, but can be the 50. Once, the Browns recovered a Cowboy fumble in the end zone for a TD. So, there's a wide variety. This card also has the Punt distance, too.

Offense gets five Offense cards (types: run, pass, screen, draw, and play action). Defense gets five defense cards (types: run defense, pass defense, all-out blitz, zone blitz, Interception, Fumble, or Penalty). Place one face down and flip 'em over simultaneously. Cross index the offensive card against the defense card to get the result.

The last three types are indeed Defense cards -- not very many in the entire Defense deck. They have the potential for a turnover as well as backfiring for a long gain for the offense.

All results are in 5-yard increments, which is helpful when moving the tiny football on the board.

If you don't make a first down, you play cards from your hand. When the offense makes a first down or the ball changes possession, both players refurbish their hands to five cards of the respective type.

Rock, Paper, Scissors, Lizard, Spock

Essentially, you're guessing what the other player may put down. Run defense cards stop run plays, pass defense cards stop pass plays. The other card interactions offer a wide range of results, from yardage loss to automatic touchdowns.

Magnetic team names and logos to put in the end zones. Image from web.



Field position is immaterial. If you've got first and goal from the five yard line, a successful 10-yard pass and 50-yard pass card both score touchdowns.

At least that's what we think. The rules do not specifically explain what happens when you pick a 50-yard pass play when only at the five yard line and 15 yards is the theoretical maximum distance available. That's the way we played it anyway.

Random cards mean that you as a player do not actually get to choose a play or defense. You get to choose from the cards in your hand. Both of us suffered from the "nothin' but pass plays" syndrome. Luck of the card draw, you understand.

Time Out: A Moronic Mechanic

What we didn't do was call a Time Out. As the half ends when all the offensive cards are played, calling a Time Out does nothing to prolong the half. A Time Out makes both players discard their hands and draw five new cards. This is a moronic mechanic because if you're winning, you can call three time outs and get 15 new cards from the offense deck -- draining the deck quickly and ending the game faster than usual.

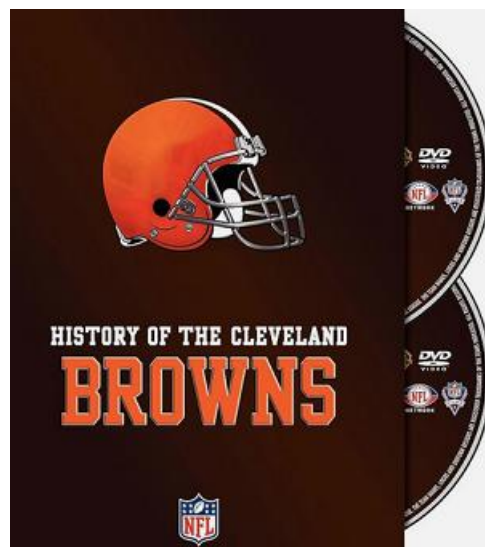
Told you it was dumb. It would be better to randomly add 5 offensive and 5 defensive cards to the appropriate decks. That would "stop the clock" and prolong the game. We never used a Time out.

The Game

Dan did a great job outguessing me in the beginning, especially with turnovers. It seemed every time he'd stick in a fumble or interception card, he'd get the ball back. I stopped him more than not, but the score was Dallas 21 to Cleveland 14 at the half -- and only because I had one of those freak automatic TD cards pop up in my favor.

In the second half, I started to look at the cards more and mix up my play calling. I also got a better mix of cards. It became 21-21 and then 28-21 Cleveland. The Fumble and Interception cards came my way and it was 35-21. Dan stormed back 35-28, but I added another freak TD card for it to be 42-28 and later added another TD with a long pass play to set up a good run for the touchdown.

Years ago, at the NFL Hall of Fame, I picked up this DVD set. The first DVD of the earlier years, like the Otto Graham era, was entertaining. Second DVD...not so much.



The Ultimate Football Board Game

This subtitle on the front of the box is nowhere near true. The "Ages 9+" on the cover is likely true because it's easy to learn and fast to play. I think it took about an hour, and that's including poking through the minimal rules and trying to interpret some fuzzy spots.

It was certainly worth a buck and an hour of time. It's probably a more entertaining game for 9-year-olds than for us gray-haired crowd.

Swords Around The Throne: Napoleonic Grand Strategy Wargame

by Russ Lockwood

Swords Around The Throne was designed by Renaud Verlaque, and guess who my opponent was... Renaud himself. The game covers the Napoleonic wars from 1805 up to 1815 in yearly turns, although smaller scenarios means you can start and stop based on campaigns.

The scale is huge: armies only and Lisbon to Moscow is only nine spaces. Each yearly turn is divided into six subphases of card play.

The cards represent one of three strategies: combat, diplomacy, and insurrection. Most cards contain one icon for one of the three strategies, but some cards contain icons for all three and you can choose which icon type to implement.

A Combat icon allows an army or stack of armies to move one space. If the card contains two icons, you can move two different stacks one space or one army two spaces. When you land on an enemy controlled space, a battle occurs. Count up the armies in the space, any commander or terrain benefits, card play, and supporting armies and the player with the most army icon points wins the battle. When you capture an enemy capital (like Vienna for Austria), the enemy faction surrenders.

Of note is that Britain can send one army by sea transport between ports. If the port is neutral, French, or French allied, it can be attacked via amphibious assault.

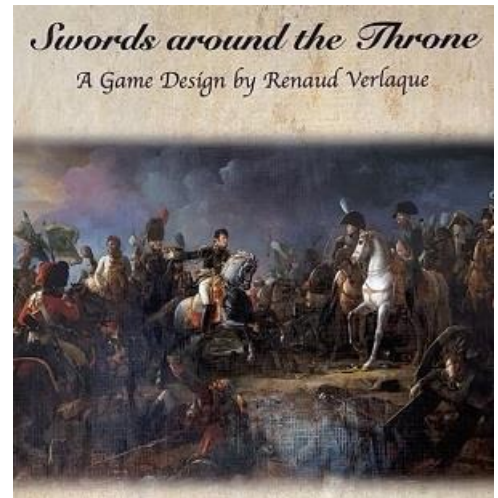
A Diplomacy icon allows you to try and sway one of the four major factions (Spain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia) or one of the six minor factions. Like combat, you count up icons and add in icons from card play. A minimum number of icon points are needed to sway a faction, perhaps turning an enemy into a neutral or a neutral into an ally. There's actually quite a bit more about how and when a player can try to turn the faction again, but that's the gist.

The Insurgency icons start partisan warfare in an enemy space, which can play havoc with supply lines and movement. Again, total up the icon points and so on and most points either starts an insurgency or crushes it.

The French player lays down two cards in advance. The British player lays down three. This means players have to plan ahead.

You pick your cards to create a deck and then randomly draw cards to create and replenish your hand. After three phases, all the cards in your deck go into your hand for maximum options.

Renaud sets up the game. Note the limited number of armies (square counters) at start, but plenty to recruit (bottom). Face counters indicate leaders. The circular counters indicate diplomatic status: red for British allies, blue for French allies, and white for neutrals. The crossed chains means the faction is unavailable to be influenced by diplomacy. Conquering is always an option.



Victory

The number of armies is the priority for victory, but not deployed per se, just that you have access to them. This means diplomacy can be just as important as combat victories.

I also recall that the French can win immediately by controlling the capitals of the major factions: Vienna, Berlin, Madrid, and Moscow and St. Petersburg. Notice that Russia has two "capitals" -- it's harder to conquer than the other major factions.

I expect if Britain takes Paris, that's an auto win for the Coalition.

Renaud gave me France as that is easier to play (good thinking!) and he took Britain.

Napoleon starts in Paris with one army and one French army is in Italy. Westphalia and Bavaria are French allies.

Archduke Charles starts in Vienna with one army. I can't recall if Russia starts with an army or not. I should have taken notes...

The 1805 French Build Up

Well. What to do?

I built two armies in Paris and then two more -- one in Westphalia and one in Bavaria. I launched a diplomacy attack that brought Spain under my control.

Meanwhile, the British built armies in Britain and Russia. Archduke Charles built an army and marched one army to attack Italy.

Austrian Charles brings an army to attack the French in Italy. Note that Napoleon recruited armies in Westphalia and Bavaria. Wellington and an army sit in London. Kutuzov and a Russian army guard Vienna – probably at Austerlitz.



In this first battle, I was able to play cards to enhance my combat icons to equal the Austrian total. We both lost an army, but I retained Italy.

That's when Austria went for a diplomatic attack against Italy. Now, that was clever -- Renaud stripped Italy of its army via combat and then tried to turn it into a neutral via diplomacy to protect his southern border. I played a double icon diplomacy card to thwart him. Italy, although army-less, was still mine.

Note that in terms of victory conditions, the Italy army was not on the board, but I had access to it, so it counted as part of my army total.

The Blitz of Vienna

My next card was a double combat icon. I elected to move Napoleon and his three armies in Paris two spaces to Vienna. Archduke Charles and his army, reinforced by Kutuzov and a Russian army, defended the capital.

Battle for Vienna. The + (plus) on a leader counters is a bonus in the attack. A - (minus) on a leader counter is a bonus on defense. All armies are equal.

My three armies (3 army points) plus Napoleon's leadership value in the attack (1 army point) and supporting armies in Westphalia and Bavaria (0.5 army point each = 1 army point) gave me a total of 5 army points. The Austrian and Russian armies (2 army points) plus Charles' leadership value in the defense (1 army point) totaled 3 army points. Renaud played a 1 combat icon card (1 army point) for a total of 4 army points for the defense of Vienna. I played a one combat icon card (1 army point) for a total of 6 French army points.

Napoleon won and since the difference was 2 army points, two enemy armies were eliminated. The Austrian and Russian armies were removed and I conquered Austria.

For doing so, I was to receive one army, but since 3 armies was the stacking limit, I didn't get one.



Renaud forgot to include the -1 army point penalty for moving two spaces to attack, which would have made the score 5-4 and eliminated only one army (presumably the Austrian), leaving the Russian army intact.

The Berlin Blitz

The 1806 turn found me blitzing Berlin for the win -- using the exact same tactic of three armies into Berlin with Westphalia and Bavaria armies in support.

I attack Berlin using the same armies that were victorious at Vienna. The green dotted lines allow armies to "support" attacks. The red dotted lines do not. Both colors allow movement from one space to another.

I managed to populate Spain with armies and launched a successful diplomatic attack on Portugal that saw me place the Portuguese army in Portugal as a French ally.

Diplomatic attacks from Britain into Spain failed, thanks to the lucky draw of that two diplo icon card. That proved to be handy all game and I held it back for just such occasions.



The 1807 St. Petersburg Campaign

Wellington and a British army appeared in Lithuania to join a newly created Russian army. Alas, I was getting strung out, so I took a page from Renaud's Italian gambit. I launched a diplomatic attack on Russia. It succeeded and became a neutral.

Wellington and the British army were sent back to London. The very next phase, I declared war against Russia and invaded Lithuania with Napoleon and three armies.

I thought that exceedingly clever, forcing the British army to leave and forcing the play of a Russian card to gain an army.

Unoccupied spaces like Lithuania have an intrinsic one army garrison, which I easily brushed aside.

Napoleon takes the Poland to Lithuania to St. Petersburg route, capturing that capital, too.



I attacked and took St. Petersburg, with the Westphalia and Bavaria armies strung out behind me. But remember: Russia also has Moscow as a capital, so I needed to take that, too.

The British Two Step

The British were busy. They launched a successful diplomatic attack on Austria, which was a French ally -- no doubt reluctant, but a French ally nonetheless. That took away armies and would force me to recapture Austria after I dealt with Russia.

Ah, but Wellington invaded an empty Berlin by sea. By dint of the garrison, support from the Westphalia army in Poland, and card play, I managed to thwart that effort and send Welly packing.

I wondered about the wisdom of this move. Then I saw it. By turning Austria into a neutral, Vienna no longer served as a source of supply to Napoleon's armies from Poland to St. Petersburg. If he had taken Berlin, that capital would not function as a supply source. Napoleon's armies would be out of supply. That's likely very bad.

Now that was another clever ploy. It barely failed, but it failed. Napoleon always did like lucky commanders. Meanwhile, the British launched a successful diplomatic attack on Naples and recruited an army there.

The Push to Moscow

I took Napoleon and his armies and attacked Moscow, taking it. I sent the Westphalia army to Byelorussia for no other reason than to get closer to Moscow. My inadvertent repositioning saved Napoleon's supply chain.

What I didn't remember was that when you leave a space of a faction that is an active enemy, that space reverts to the original owner. So, leaving St. Petersburg open as I did -- figuring that once I took it, it was mine -- proved disastrous since it went back to being Russian. If I had not moved the Westphalia army, Napoleon would be out of supply in Moscow.

So, I left an army in Moscow, secured my supply line, and recaptured an empty St. Petersburg. Russia was now conquered.

Game End

I had not quite taken all four major factions' capital at once -- I was missing Vienna. By this time, about four hours had gone by in real time, including explaining the game and a break for dinner, so it was time to pack up.

It's a clever design. You can start to see the difficulty for France to keep hold of all she conquered, especially because conquered factions are ready to be subverted by diplomatic attacks the very next turn.

When you think about it, that's fast. Austria's 1805 defeat stuck around until 1809, and its 1809 defeat stuck around until 1813. Prussia's 1806 defeat stuck around until 1813. Russia's 1807 defeat stuck around until 1812. But that's the game, otherwise, the British would be able to do little except bother the French in Portugal and Spain...

Much also depended on card draws and play. I didn't have any ideas about how many card icons there were on British cards and pretty much ignored the chart on the French Quick Reference Sheet. Those two-icon cards can have a distinct impact on the game. The key is that you as player have to weigh the use of cards to build vs move vs combat. It's a tricky balance. I got caught a couple times with my icons down.

Good little game full of decision making and occasional angst -- and I mean that in a very positive way.

Postgame Thoughts on Balance

Renaud: 1) Maybe get rid of the -1 for seaborne attacks (it's hard enough to be limited to 1 army and no CinC with an offensive bonus)

Russ: Or allow a leader the offensive bonus or allow 2 armies to land.

Renaud: 2) allow the Coalition player to play up to 2 Diplomacy cards in support instead of just 1

Russ: Hmmm. I always kept the double diplo card in reserve. Same with the double insurgency card. However, I always knew I would get all cards after the third phase of a turn. One time I had nuthin' but single icon cards and played a single icon insurgency because I had no better card. The French do seem to have better cards to layer, but I often was left with all the single icons at the end of the turn.

Maybe instead of draw all cards after the third phase, draw two cards instead of one per phase? Dunno. I only played once and in a universe of one play, hard to make general comparisons.

Renaud: 3) change the Strength 1 Insurgency card in the British card to an unconditional Strength 2 (side by side with the conditional Strength 2 card)

Russ: That would help turn up diplomatic attacks. In some ways, the diplo attack can be more devastating than combat. That's why I turned Russia into a neutral -- got rid of a British army (and Wellington), allowing me to

immediately attack the next turn with the Russians "down" an army and would have to spend a combat icon card to build up a Russian army or resend the Brits instead of stirring up trouble elsewhere.

I thought the attack into Italy followed up with a diplo attack was a neat mechanic. I made sure to keep the double insurgency icon cards around for countering the British insurgency attacks. No Spanish ulcers!

Renaud: 4) allow the side gaining control of a major power to immediately muster up to 3 armies (if available) and add the power's Campaign cards to their hand (but perhaps at the cost of discarding an equal number minus 1 of their Leading Power cards)

Russ: Adding the cards is a nice bonus. Getting up to 3 armies seems a bit much. Historically, in 1805 France beat Austria, but didn't get any Austrian Armies. The victory did keep the Austrians from interfering with French designs until 1809, at which point the Austrians lost again. Then the French got the Schwarzenberg army for the 1812 campaign (not that it was enthusiastic about it). France beat Prussia in 1806 and kept them under lock and key, gaining a Prussian army for the 1812 campaign. The French "lost" the Schwartz and Prussian armies after 1812 French army defeat -- call it a diplo attack to turn them against the French.

It seems to me getting one army would be valid -- violating stacking would be OK -- and a card for defeating the enemy and taking the capital. Three -- a bit much. If you want to add another bonus, allow the victor to "lock" the former enemy into alliance for the rest of the year and also one additional (year) turn. So if the French beat the Austrians in 1805, they "lock" the Austrians away from diplo attack for the rest of 1805 and also 1806. Not quite the four years, but in game turns, an incentive.

Renaud: 5) make the roads in Russia difficult (-1 to attack) for the invading force (by the way I may have made you apply a -1 for attacking off a double move).

Russ: As for Russian roads, if you do make them difficult, it'll make it tougher for the invader, but also tougher for counter attacks, too.

No, I did not suffer a -1 for the attack off the double move. I did that in 1805 from Paris to Vienna. It would have cost the French an army, but then again, it would have made room for Schwartz army. Other than that, it was one move and attack Berlin. Then I think I did the two step again to move through Poland (Prussia) and attack Lithuania (Russia). That might have cost a French army. Not sure.

Renaud: The latter two can technically help the French too, but the first three are all Coalition-friendly.

Russ: The one thing that surprised me was that if you leave a space, it reverts back to the original owner (or whoever conquered the original owner). Historically, the French left a garrison at Smolensk (the Byelorussia space on the game map) and "retained" the place. And while there was a constant loss of men in Spain, and certain sections of the country were sketchily held by the French, the French learned to send mass groups to avoid/defeat ambushes -- the British/Spanish armies were needed to end French occupation.

I think you can use insurgency to "liberate" the spaces and cut supply, not just the absence of enemy armies. My two cents.

I was surprised by your attempt to take Berlin to cut off French supply. Had not initially realized the diplo attack against Vienna paired with this would cause a problem. Good thing I kept a 2 icon combat card (actually the multi-icon card) in reserve.

Whenever I run across imbalances, I use "optional rules" to insert balancing mechanics. Let the player decide if the game (or a player) needs tweaking. I'm sure you played lots of games in the playtesting stage to get the cards and icons right... Player feedback from the actual release would be a guide too.

No worries. Grand strategy never had it so good.

Books I've Read

By Russ Lockwood

To Besiege a City: Leningrad 1941-42. by Pritt Buttar. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 480 pages. 2023.

It's been decades since I read *The 900 Days*, so while I dimly remember the vicious siege of Leningrad in WWII, *To Besiege a City* proved to be a fascinating reminder at just how vicious.

It's not just the inhabitants of Leningrad, but the opposing armies outside: the Germans seeking to tighten the siege, including linking up with the Finns, and the Soviets trying to break the siege with attacks through miserable swamps and forests.

I admit to skimming over the first 65 pages that cover from Peter the Great's building of the city to Stalin's purges. The next 35 pages outlines the German and Soviet pre-war plans. There is marvelous analysis of forces involved, peppered with facts and figures. For example, the USSR had more than 10,000 T-26 tanks in its inventory, but half were immobile due to mechanical problems (p72). Soviet first-line infantry divisions were only at half strength and only at 1/3 strength for second line -- mobilization was expected to fill out the ranks (p79). Alas, Soviet logistics were a shambles and didn't get any better from its experience in the Winter War against Finland.

Germany, meanwhile, underestimated Soviet manpower and while German logistics were better, the successive plans estimated a shorter and shorter war where just about all Soviet divisions would be trapped in the west and annihilated.

Starting on page 101, Barbarossa rolls into the Baltic States, Eastern Poland, and the USSR, and the northern thrust naturally receives the lion's share of coverage. Although most accounts focus at the divisional and corps level, significant first-person reports provide examples of smaller regiment, battalion, and company-level action.

As Barbarossa surged forward, the Germans changed their strategy from capture of Leningrad to a siege and starvation idea in 1941 that would lead to a walkover capture in population-denuded 1942 (p152). When the German Army changed its mind and went back to an outright capture, it was too late and the Soviets were dug in and massing troops to prevent a direct attack. Even Manstein and his 11th Army, fresh from victory in the Crimea, didn't make much of an impression as Army Group North diverted much to fend off Soviet attacks elsewhere.

As 1942 played out and the drive to Stalingrad took up more and more resources, Soviet attacks and German defenses provided a stalemate via hard fighting in miserable terrain. Soviet incompetence in offensive coordination and logistics doomed its Army to heavy losses. And yet, it also pecked away at German strength and preventing units from rest and recuperation. A panzer division requires about six months for rehabilitation and restitution (p196). The 12th Panzer barely got any time off and was dispersed penny-packet sized to shore up the infantry and counterattack Soviet penetrations.

The book contains 28 black and white photos and 11 black and white maps.

This insightful account covers the campaigns around Leningrad. Buttar's sweet prose makes this a pleasant read, although I do find insertion of page-long extracts from reports to be unnecessary when events can be summarized in a paragraph or two. I find first-person accounts to be like spice in a meal: a little enhances the flavor, but a ton overwhelms the points being discussed. I already know he did his homework and then some.

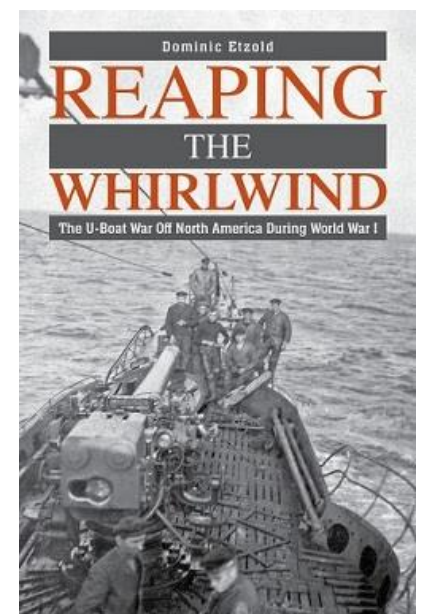
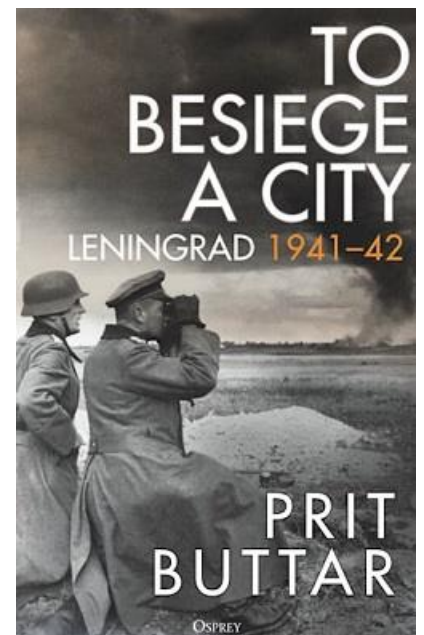
But when he gets rolling with analysis of command structures, operations, and logistics, it's an informative, masterful thing of beauty.

Enjoyed it.

Reaping the Whirlwind. by Dominic Etzold. Hardback (6.5x9.3 inches). 407 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The U-Boat War Off North America During World War I*

About a half dozen WWI U-boats conducted a naval war off the coasts of the US and Canada in 1918. This book details every last encounter, or at least as can be reconstructed since some U-boat logbooks were lost or destroyed.



Most of the U-boat attacks were made on the surface against unarmed fishing boats and small cargo schooners. As most of the US Navy destroyers were away in Europe, the anti-sub warships were few and far between. Arming the cargo ships was more effective, but the most effective method to avoid being sunk was sailing away at full speed. Those WWI U-Boat cruisers were slow and ponderous -- not to mention suffering from an increasingly shoddy construction from defective materials and inept worker skills as the war went on.

Indeed, the later U-boats seemed to be more under repair than fully operational as they sailed towards the US. Leaks, including the diesel tanks, were commonplace. That the U-boat could continue was a testament to the crew's skill.

Of surprise to me were visit by an underwater merchant U-boat, Deutschland, that carried out a cargo run to Baltimore, MD, in 1916, and U-53's 'official' visit to Newport, RI, to pay respects to the US Naval Base commander in 1916. The bulk of the book covers combat missions, especially laying mines, in 1918.

Of annoyance are the continuous and numerous parenthetical explanations such as "(as we shall see later in the chapter)" -- why these were not edited out of the text is beyond me.

All told, five WWI cruiser U-boats sank 42 ships worth 174,539 tons in 1918. Most of these were small unarmed ships stopped, searched, and scuttled by a boarding party. Some were larger cargo ships, mostly sunk by deck guns after a short duel. Only a few were targeted and sunk by torpedoes. As most larger merchants had a higher top speed than the U-boat, the ones that got away often laid on the coal and sped off.

This book is an admirable undertaking and quite an intensive one at that. Translating U-boat logs can be tedious and dull, but this is quite a readable account, save for those parenthetical gaffes, of each cruise.

Enjoyed it.

Charles XII's Karoliner: Century of Soldier Series Special 1. by Sergey Shamenkov. Softcover (7.2x9.8 inches). 152 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Volume 1: The Swedish Infantry & Artillery of the Great Northern War 1700-1721*

This detailed examination of Swedish uniforms is exactly what the wargamer needs for painting up a Great Northern War Swedish army. This volume covers the infantry and artillery, and presumably the second volume will cover cavalry and specialist troops. You can tell that a lot of painstaking research went into the text explanations on the uniforms and weaponry of the troops and officers.

A couple text quibbles of mine that could have used greater explanation. The grenadiers tossed grenades that were made of metal or glass. I would have liked to know more about "glass" grenades -- must have been thick if the shards after explosion would have made any impact?

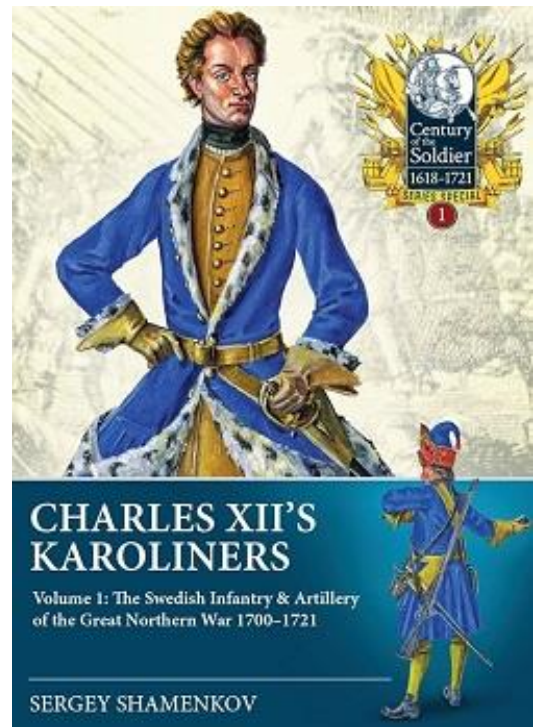
Also, some muskets had removable mortar barrels that could serve as hand mortars to throw grenades (p24). Er, how does propelling a metal or glass grenade out of the musket tube work in the early 1700s?

The length of cloth needed for a coat dropped from 5.5 to 4.5 cubits (p72). Cubits? You might as well use ells (German or the longer Polish) as measurement units.

The booklet contains a considerable amount of photos and illustrations that zero in on the most minuscule of details. While certainly a pleasant form of overkill for 6mm painters, the 28mm painters will revel in the attention. Images: 50 color photos and eight black and white photos of museum items, 16 color illustrations of period paintings or blown-up details from paintings, 31 black and white illustrations of uniforms and blown-up details from period etchings, and 41 color uniform illustrations (mostly one per page).

I'm not quite sure why this volume in the marvelous Century of the Soldier series merits being called Series Special 1, for it possesses the same excellence as any other volume.

Enjoyed it.



The U.S. Army Combat Historian And Combat History Operations. by Kathryn Roe Coker and Jason Wetzel. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 196 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *World War I to the Vietnam War*

Here's a different take on combat histories -- a history about the US military historians. From the initial schizophrenic creation in WWI and re-creation in WWII to the embedded historians of Vietnam, you get an organization history of the units that contained historians.

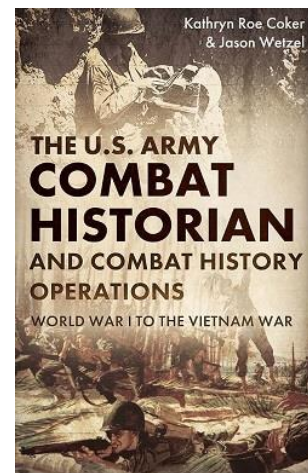
Much of the text concerns the TO&E organizational aspect of how many officers and enlisted men, which command would get them, fights over equipment and resources, fights for recognition by higher ups who concentrated on the operations at hand instead of the history to be written, and so on. This can get rather dull at times, but the prose perks up as soon as the TO&E details fade into accounts of personalities battling for recognition and support. The idea was that history needed immediate recording -- including during a battle -- so as to glean lessons for the next battle. Part of the growing pains included teaching troops assigned to the historical sections how to properly interview soldiers from privates on up to generals -- Allied, enemy POWs, and post-war former enemies.

After V-E Day, the mad scramble for German records, US records, interviews with 250 senior German officers, and a multitude of interviews of US troops gave the Historical Section tons of information to digest and analyze. It turned out 620 studies on all aspects of WWII (p95).

The book contains 53 black and white photos and seven black and white illustrations.

You won't find information for tabletop battles, but you will discover what went into producing the official histories we often rely on as tabletop scenario sources.

Enjoyed it.



Russian Campaign of 1812: The Memoir of a Russian Artilleryman. by Alexander Mikaberidze and Peter G A Phillips. Hardback (6.5x9.7 inches). 197 pages. 2023.

First volume of three translates the memoirs of Ilya Timofeyevich Radozhitskii, a Russian artilleryman who was in charge of two cannons of the 3rd Light Artillery battery at a number of 1812 battles, including Ostrovno, Smolensk, and Borodino. In the latter battle, he was injured from a cannonball in the foot and knocked unconscious. He recovered and continued to serve in the retreat to and through Moscow, and then the offensives that included Maloyaroslavets.

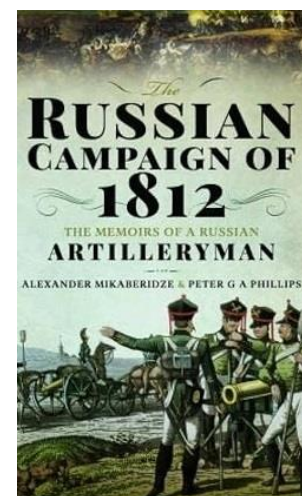
Besides the battle descriptions from his viewpoint, including the detail that when the guns ran out of ammo, he went to bring up a caisson and not pull the guns back to the caisson, you get all the campaign anecdotes of import to him on non-battle days. Food supplies, attentions of the ladies, endless marching, weather, sleeping accommodations, prisoner grabs during the winter, and more make this an interesting first-person account. There is even an encounter with a spy and you can get a wee bit of understanding about the Russian side of partisan attacks on French soldiers and units.

The book contains seven black and white maps and 28 black and white illustrations (paintings of battles and commanders).

A couple typos: "how far back n cannonballs" (p89), where the "n" needs to be removed; "the wooden path was disassembled the wooden path without" (p124) with the second "the wooden path" needs to be removed; and General Uvarov" cavalry" (p145) with the (quote mark after the v) needs to be replaced with a " 's ".

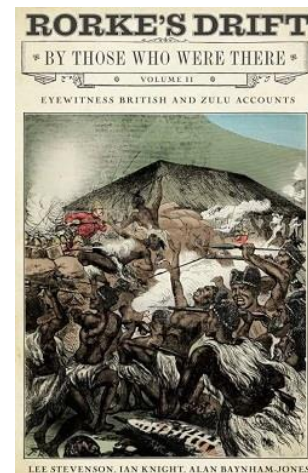
Memoirs offer a small window into a big campaign. This volume ends at Grodno. The next volumes are likely to be 1813 and 1814, with perhaps a bit of 1815. Radozhitskii also wrote memoirs of his time in the Russo-Ottoman War and War in the Caucasus as he worked his way up the officer ladder.

Enjoyed it.



Rorke's Drift: By Those Who Were There - Volume 2. by Lee Stevenson, Ian Knight and Alan Baynham-Jones. Hardback (6.5x9.4 inches). 266 pages. 2023 reprint of 2003 book.

This updated version offers a variety of accounts of the Battle of Rorke's Drift between the Zulus and the small British garrison. Ian Knight has long been an expert in the Anglo-Zulu wars, so if



you want a narrative of the battle, you can do wrong to read one of his books. Knight's six-part series in Volume I of the "new" *Courier* (the full-size 8.5x11-inch version vs the digest-sized one) magazine is still a classic introduction to the Zulu Wars.

As for this compilation of newspaper accounts, obituaries, letters, some British National Archives files, and a couple other resources, it offers many first-person recollections by British officers and soldiers as well as British troops who formed the rescue column.

The book tends to layer accounts of the main events. Indeed, the various accounts from different viewpoints often confirm events. Yet, that means it tends to get repetitious.

You also have to watch out that facts are in the eye of the beholder. For example: How many British troops were killed at Rorke's Drift? Between 14 and 17 depending on the account. To wit: 14 (p27 and p109), 15 (p200), 16 (p31), and 17 (p10, p50, p54, and p119). I included the "morally wounded" (when mentioned) in the totals.

When did the battle start? Any time between just after noon to 4:30pm. All agree that it lasted overnight, with most saying it ended around 9am.

The book contains one color photo, 29 black and white photos, 10 black and white illustrations, and one color illustration.

This is like the book *Albuera Eyewitness: 16 May 1811* (see the review in the 08/04/2023 AAR or up on hmgs.org) -- more fascinating for those seeking to write a history than read one.

Agincourt: Battle of the Scarred King. by Michael Livingston. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 336 pages. 2023.

I was impressed with Livingston's previous book, *Crecy: Battle of Five Kings* (see my review in the 06/29/2022 AAR or up on hmgs.org), in which he relocated the battle based on interpreting the extensive research he dug up. So, now he's done the same thing for Agincourt -- relocating the battle and offering his interpretation of the English formation and tide of the battle.

Henry V was called the Scarred King because at the 1403 Battle of Shrewsbury, he took an arrow in the nose that pierced all the way through to the back of his skull. It was laboriously extracted by Dr. Bradmore, who left an account of the operation and lengthy recovery time (p30-33). The wound was only mentioned in passing in Shakespeare play. Apparently, one side of Henry's face wasn't quite as handsome as Laurence Olivier or Kenneth Brannagh, but H the V was as effective at war as the movies portrayed.

His campaign to the capture of Harfleur gets a solid treatment. After that, the day-by-day march towards Calais covers the twists and turns of campaign success and failure in trying to cross rivers. Ultimately, the French ran Henry to ground near Agincourt. The battle receives full details, including examining sources from both sides to pinpoint the location. Interpretation discusses the English formation of archer wedges and the advance that provoked the French to launch their attack. Analysis discusses who's where in the fight, including the order to massacre the prisoners.

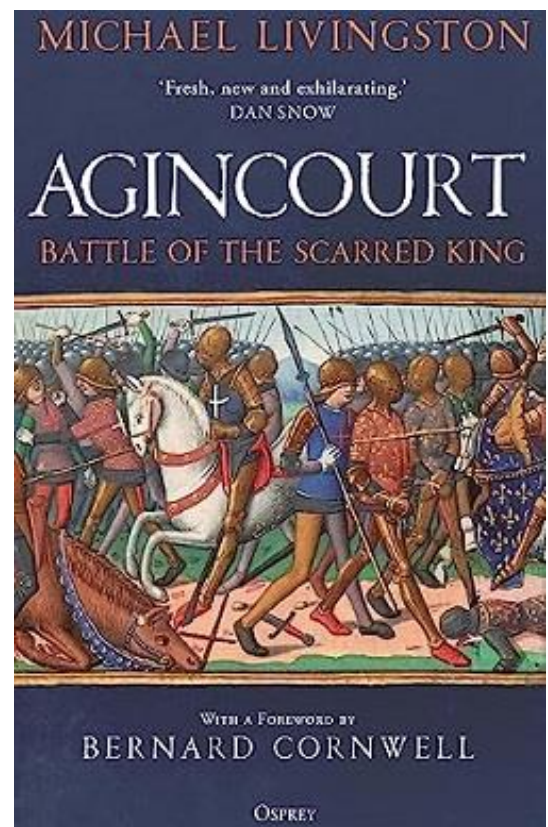
The book contains 18 color photos, 11 color illustrations, four black and white illustrations, and two black and white maps.

A typo (p249): The English longbows were 6-feet 6-inches long and shot "30-foot arrows." No wonder English longbow were feared when they could shoot telephone pole-sized arrows!

And another (p267): "lives of this men" should be "his men."

Re-evaluations of battles are always welcome if backed by reasonable interpretations of old sources, and better yet with archeological finds. As the scavengers at the end of a battle picked the battlefield clean, I'm not sure any metal objects remain, but there's usually always something that might nail down the actual site. Maybe later. As I often note: There's nothing new like history.

Enjoyed it.



Rif War: Volume 2 (Africa at War 62). by Javier Garcia de Gabiola. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 96 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *From Xauen to the Alhucemas Landing and Beyond 1922-1927*

This continues the Spanish subjugation of Morocco started in *Volume 1 1909-1921 - Africa at War 56* (see the 03/03/2022 AAR). I knew nothing about the war before reading *Volume 1*, and *Volume 2* is just as brilliant in detailing the personalities, forces, objectives, battles, and skirmishes that made up this colonial endeavor.

The war turned out to be far more balanced than expected, at least until a change in government vaulted colonial conquest to the top of the foreign affairs priority list.

Spanish troops and material then poured into Morocco. Militia, Foreign Legion, tanks, and aircraft of all sorts were organized and sent. A certain lowly officer named Franco learned how to navigate the perils of combat and found good fortune as his superiors were wounded or fell in battle, clearing the way for his numerous promotions.

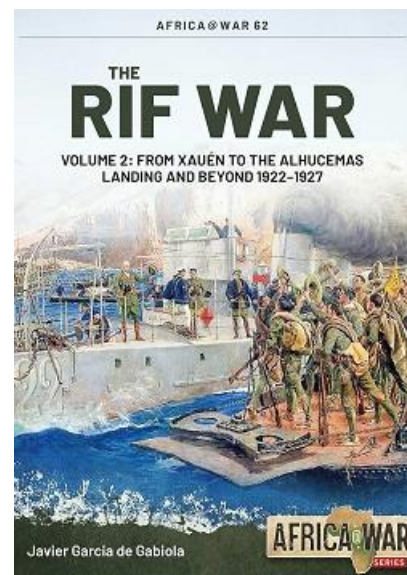
A number of typos: "on 23 December 1923, an a SRAT pilot..." should have the "an" removed (p21); caption "but being was shot dead..." should have the "being" removed (p42); and hyberite (p50) (mustard gas) is later called "yberite" (p53).

The book contains 129 black and white photos, nine black and white maps, and six black and white illustrations. The maps, which are generally good, need scales. It also contains 15 color aircraft profiles, three color ship profiles, three color vehicle profiles, four color uniform illustrations, and one color map.

The tables serve as a nice OOB, although you'll have to trawl the text for specific numbers of troops and such.

While Spain suffered a number of setbacks, including a considerable number of outposts lost to hit-and-run attacks by the natives, the tide of war slowly turned in favor of Spain. There's even a joint expedition with French troops in the Algerian border area. Plenty of small to middlin' skirmishes and battles await within the pages. Indeed, a campaign game is not out of the question.

Enjoyed it.



Bombers North. by Dr. Tom Lewis. Softcover (6.8x9.8 inches). 156 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Allied Bomber Operations from Northern Australia 1942-1945*

In many ways, this is the Allied version of the bombing campaign between Northern Australia and Japanese-held islands. For the Japanese point of view, see the review of *The Empire Strikes South: Japan Air War Against Australia* (6/26/2020 AAR).

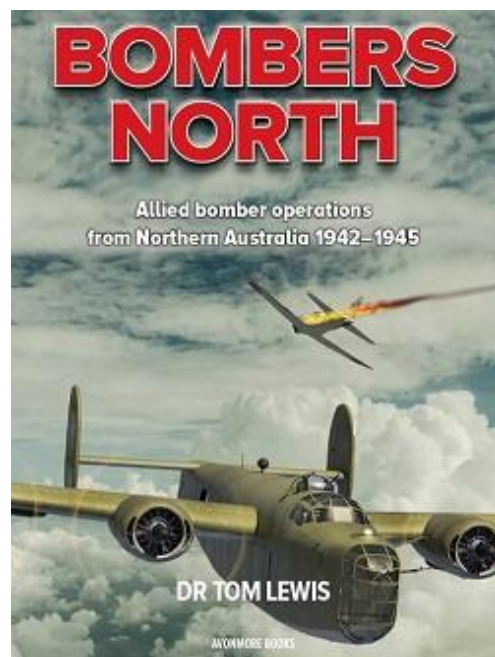
The bombing campaign started off small, with limited numbers of Lockheed Hudsons and B-17s, typically three to six per mission, hitting ports and shipping. Later, Beaufighters, B-24s, Catalinas, and B-25s joined the air offensive. The number of aircraft per mission also increased.

The text contains detailed recaps of missions and aircraft, including fates of individual aircraft, likely taken from logbooks. I can't say that the prose is scintillating, and indeed in places it is repetitious, but the little details kept me reading and you get a real feel for the pace and attrition of operations.

Not all losses occurred in the air from flak or Japanese fighters. For example: In Australia, a kangaroo hopped in front of the right engine of a B-25 during take off. Despite the chutnied 'roo, the plane rose in the air, the pilot dropped the bombs in the sea, and the B-25 landed safely with a damaged prop (p55). Into the shop it went.

The book contains eight color aircraft profiles, two color maps, 67 black and white photos, and seven color photos. Bomber specs are included as well as a discussion of Japanese fighters and AA.

Enjoyed it.



British Reconnaissance Aircraft of the 1970s and '80s. by Chris Goss. Softcover (6.6x9.5 inches). 96 pages. 2022.

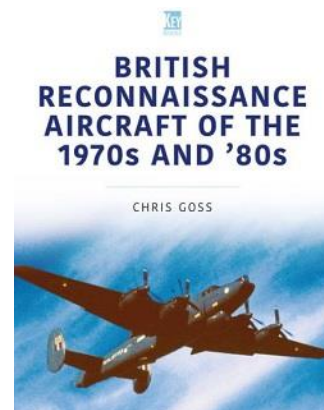
This book profiles four UK recon aircraft: Canberra, Gannet, Nimrod, and Shackleton, in photographs and extended captions. There is no lengthy prose per se, just the captions.

I did like to read about the ultimate ends of individual airframes -- mostly scrapped but some in museums. Ominously, many an airframe ended with "believed to be at _____." When the blank is a museum, you'd think it would easy enough to phone or e-mail and ask if it has a plane on display. Oddly enough, many cockpits ended up in private hands.

Other than that, it's a photographic record of the planes in various squadrons, including squadron badges. The book contains 155 color photos and 28 black and white photos.

If you are interested in recon missions, this isn't the book for you. If you interested in modeling the four recon aircraft, this book can help.

Ties go to the author: Enjoyed it.



The Reconquest of Burma 1944-45: Campaign 390. by Robert Lyman. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *From Operation Capital to the Sittang Bend*

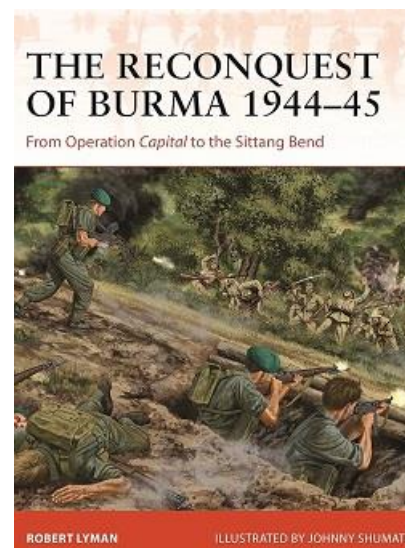
This makes a marvelous companion volume to *The Japanese Conquest of Burma: Campaign 384* (see the review in the 12/01/2022 AAR). It follows the usual *Campaign* format of background, plans, OOB, equipment, opposing commanders and armies, and the campaign itself. I would have liked more numerical information about the forces involved -- you get aggregate numbers within the text, and the OOB has a few Japanese numbers, but for wargamers, it would be nice to spell it out.

The overview captures the difficulties of operating in the jungles as well as the successful misdirection strategy employed by Lt. Gen. William Slim that winkled the Japanese out of their carefully prepared position. With two main thrusts, one in the middle to and along the Irrawaddy River and the other mostly down the coast, the Allied forces pushed the Japanese back towards Rangoon and then back towards Thailand.

The booklet contains 65 black and white photos, seven color maps, two 3D color battlefield maps, and three color two-page action illustrations.

I've reviewed other good and more extensive books about the Burma campaigns, including: *Nations in the Balance: The India-Burma Campaigns December 1943- August 1944* (see the 08/21/2023 AAR), *A War of Empires: Burma 1941-45* (see the Oct 3, 2021 AAR), *The Battle for Burma 1942-1945: Images of War* (see the 07/28/2021 AAR), and *The Tenth Air Force in World War II* (see the Nov 2, 2020 AAR). All these reviews are also up on hmgs.org, which has a search engine.

Enjoyed it.



Sword and Scimitar: Malta 1565. by Simon Scarrow. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 436 pages. 2012.

Historical novel follows Sir Thomas Barrett, English Knight of the Order of St. John based in Malta in 1545. While raiding Ottoman shipping, he helps capture a ship and free Maria, an enslaved Italian woman promised to a Sardinian nobleman. Their hearts being what they want, their illicit affair is eventually discovered and Sir Thomas is tossed from the Order ... until the Ottomans come to besiege Malta in 1565. Recalled to the Order, Sir Thomas begins to unravel what occurred during the decades in between.

It's a page-turner of a book with twists and turns of a veteran plot-smith. The siege, which takes up much of the book, covers all the bases of a good siege, from the outlying Fort St. Elmo to the bombardments and assaults on the main city Birgu. Naturally, our hero Sir Thomas is often in the thick of the action and decision making.

Enjoyed it.



The Anglo Saxon Conquest of England. by Jim Storr. Softcover (6.2x9.3 inches). 312 pages. 2023 reprint of 2016.

Note that the original title of the book was *King Arthur's Wars: The Anglo Saxon Conquest of England*. This reprint includes 'revised and amended text,' although since I hadn't read the original, I'm not sure what changed or was added. I do give kudos to the author and Helion for making the revisions.

His technique in showing the transition from Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon Britain rests on a couple key points: village naming conventions and a thorough personal recon of geography, especially the then Briton-made 'dykes' that formed a defensive barrier to further Anglo-Saxon incursions. All of this is supported by 98 simple black and white maps (with scales) and various figures. Now, that's the way to integrate graphic information with the text.

However, while the text contains marvelous information, insight, and reasoned speculation, the prose leaves me a tad flat. Structurally, there's nothing wrong with the organization or sentences, but the prose that would make me want to keep reading lacks the spark for me to actually do so. It's like I'm stuck inside a lecture hall and provided with a torrent of information without being engaged with it.

I read the first 100 pages and then decided to abandon text. Likely, there's more information in the next 100 pages. I just couldn't get there.

French Naval Aviation. by Henri-Pierre Grolleau. Softcover (6.6x9.5 inches). 96 pages. 2022.

This encyclopedic compilation of all things French and naval aviation covers fighter, patrol, and other aircraft, plus the full range of helicopters and noteworthy weapons and equipment. It also includes a quick look at the aircraft carrier Charles DeGaulle.

It is well illustrated with 138 color photos and 25 color unit patches.

I'm not much of a modern aviation buff, so the spec info tended to go in one eye and out the other, but for real buffs, this overview offers many moments.

Ties to the author: Enjoyed it.

Travis Air Force Base. by Scott Cuong Tran and Nick Tran. Softcover (6.6x9.5 inches). 96 pages. 2022.

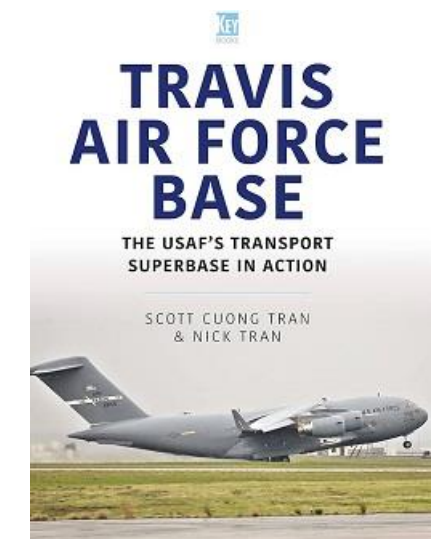
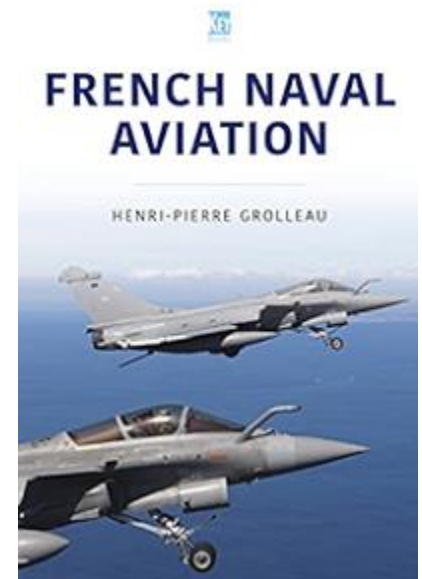
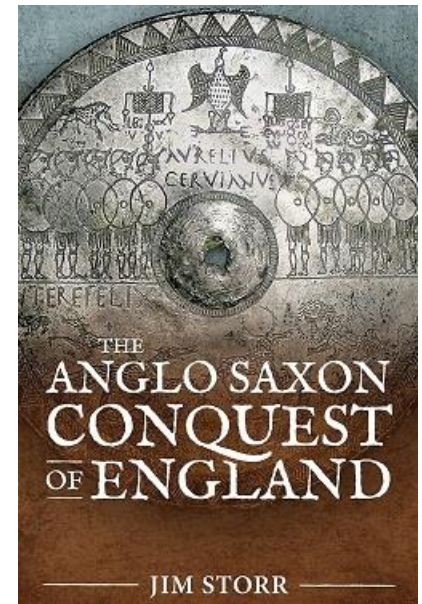
Travis AFB is in Fairview, California, and was first activated in May 1943. It currently also includes a museum and outside aircraft park with 22 planes.

Apparently, the two authors received a week-long tour of the AFB and most of its operations, including control tower, dog security patrols, Phoenix Ravens security force, band, and the all-important aircraft and equipment used on refueling missions. Travis AFB supported the withdrawal from Kabul (Afghanistan) with aircraft, Ravens, and medical personnel.

Aircraft covered include KC-10s, C-17s, KC-46As, and C-5s. The book contains six color unit logo patches and 150 color photos of planes and personnel. Modelers can glean a considerable number of markings from the photos.

Refueling tankers may not have the tabletop allure of fighters or bombers, but an interesting tabletop scenario can revolve around refueling fighters -- just as enemy fighters hone in on the operation. After all, "NKAWTG!" That acronym stands for: "Nobody Kicks Ass Without Tanker Gas" (p89).

Enjoyed it.



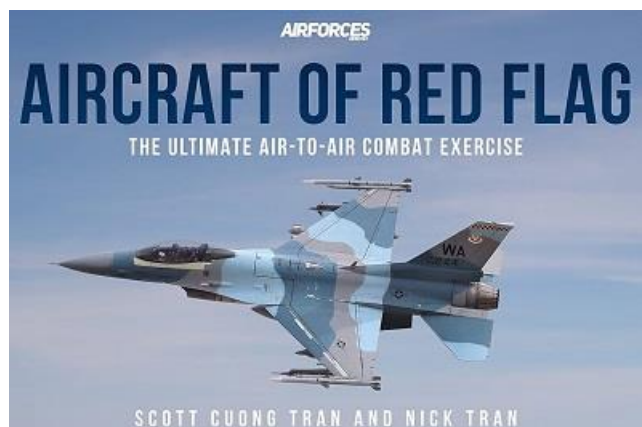
Aircraft of Red Flag: Ultimate Air-to-Air Combat Exercise. by Scott Cuong Tran and Nick Tran. Softcover (horizontal: 9.6x6.6 inches). 128 pages. 2020.

Another photo-heavy book by these two is less about the US military's Red Flag exercise than it is a photo album of the aircraft that participate. Indeed, it is a US version of *Military Low-Level Flying: From F-4 to F-35* (see the review in the 6/30/2023 AAR or up on hmgs.org).

The super-sharp 150 color photos, taken with 200mm and 600mm telephoto lenses at Las Vegas, NV, cover fighters, bombers, transport, tankers, ground attack, and command and control aircraft. Oh, and helicopters, too.

No specs. No stirring first-person accounts. Just page after page of photos, including F-22, F-35, and B-1s. Non-US aircraft are also in the book as Red Flag included US allies' aircraft.

Modelers will be able to get some markings and camo schemes, although most US aircraft are gray. Enjoyed it.



Colombia: Air Force of Latin America. by Santiago Rivas. Softcover (6.6x9.5 inches). 96 pages. 2022.

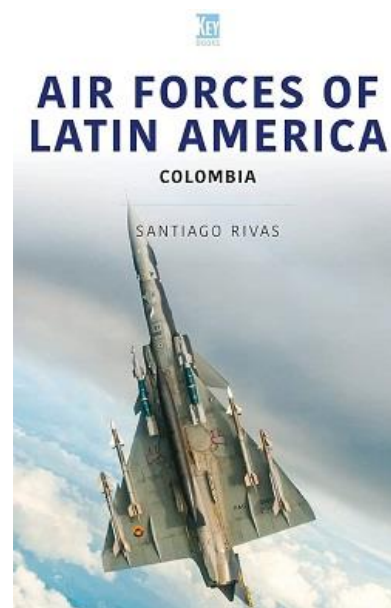
Santiago Rivas is often a contributor to *Jane's Defense Weekly*, a magazine which I read, er... weekly. Here he summarizes the Colombia Air Force, which was officially established on December 31, 1919.

Squadron by squadron, and group by group, he builds an OOB of the CAF, including Navy aviation (established 1932) and its seaplanes, Army aviation (established 1996), and National Police (from 1950s but officially established in 1963). Complete OOBs of the aircraft flown by each of the major services are included, although you'll have to ferret out the numbers from the text.

One possible typo: Caption explaining helicopter armament notes "1.27mm rifle," which is likely "12.7mm" (p52). At least it looks like a 12.7mm gun.

The book contains 186 color photos of aircraft, helicopters, personnel, and equipment -- enough to keep a modeler busy. The nice part is that photos often show the undersides of the aircraft, not normally seen, but good for detailed modeling.

Enjoyed it.



Junkers Ju 88. by Malcolm V. Lowe. Softcover (6.6x9.5 inches). 127 pages. 2022 reprint of 2018 book.

The versatile JU-88 of WWII receives a full development profile of all the variants, even the ones where few versions were built. The JU-188, JU-288, and the single version of the JU-488 are also covered.

The book actually starts with a history of the Junkers company, including its WWI aircraft designs and the subsequent hostile takeover by the Nazi organization.

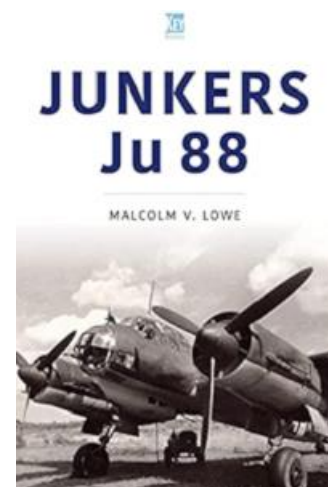
This is mostly a book about research and development, but also includes accounts of its use in combat. Of note was the development of the four-engine JU-488 with the idea of a strategic bomber, but the only prototype was destroyed by the French resistance in the attack on its French factory.

The Mistal experiment is also covered. A JU-88 packed with explosives had a ME-109 mounted atop it. The ME-109 piloted the flying bomb to a target and then detached and flew off, leaving the JU-88 to crash and explode on the target. It didn't work very well.

The book contains 159 black and white photos and seven black and white illustrations.

Night fighters, in foreign service, and other special uses are covered beyond the usual bomber role. It was quite the versatile WWII aircraft.

Enjoyed it.



Black Sunday. by Michael John Claringbould. Softcover (6.8x9.8 inches). 156 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *When Weather Claimed the US Fifth Air Force*

Subtitle: *Second Edition*

The subtitle is a little bit more dramatic than history, but the sad reality is that about 300 Allied bombers and fighters which hit a horrible storm front. It cost the US Fifth Air Force 43 planes, of which only six could be repaired and 37 destroyed (p102) -- although Appendix III lists 46 aircraft in total. The planes were B-24s, P-38s, A-20Gs, B-25s, and some recon versions of B-24s and P-38s.

The US raid on Hollandia on April 16, 1944 had its share of problems, including a number of aborts due to mechanical problems, but the return flight through a storm front proved especially hazardous. Accounts by the pilots and what the author could pull from flight logs and official reports explains the losses. Besides outright crashes are the sometimes grim tales of bailing out and trekking through jungle to get back to friendly lines, or, floating on the water waiting for rescue. Those are the ones that got back. To this day, three P-38s and one B-25 have never been located and are still missing.

The blurb notes that this revised edition includes dozens of new photos. Also, several Missing In Action cases were resolved and the details included in this new version.

The book contains 45 color aircraft profiles, three color maps, 44 black and white photos, four color photos, and one color chart of aircraft.

Of course, I'm always tickled when I find a possible relative involved. Tech Sgt. Allen Lockwood was involved in the rescue of the crew of the A-20G Lady Constance and flew Gibbons out using a L5A observation plane (p95).

Claringbould is famous for cross-checking details from both Allied and Japanese reports and this book offers the same meticulous research.

Enjoyed it.

MiG-21 Fishbed: Dogfight 8. by Istvan Toperczer. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Opposing Rolling Thunder 1966-68*

As with all the volumes in the *Dogfight* series, this one concentrates on the air-to-air combats, liberally sprinkled with first-person North Vietnamese accounts, of opposition to the US Rolling Thunder air campaign during the Vietnam War.

The MiG-21s did some damage to the USAF and shot down a number of them. They avoided F-4 Phantoms whenever possible, but F-105s were targeted with vigor. The US revamped its tactics in response.

The book contains 35 black and white photos, four black and white illustrations, nine color photos, one color map, one color two-page action illustration, four other color illustrations, and four of those ribbon illustrations to present a particular dogfight step by step.

It's good to read the other side's story, although as you expect, it is rather optimistic given the disparity in losses.

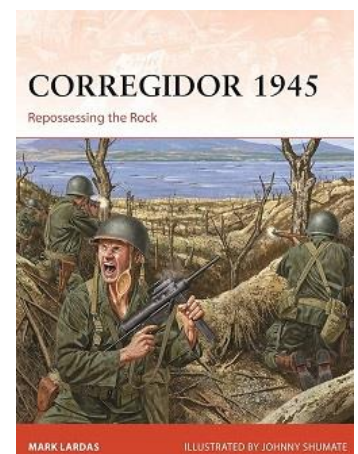
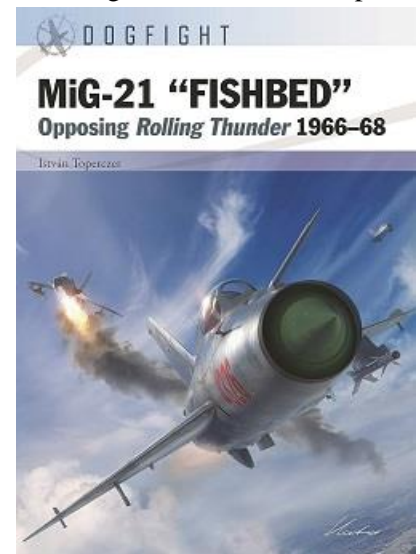
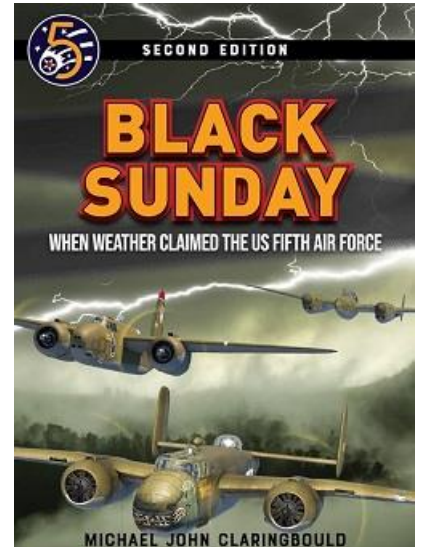
Enjoyed it.

Corregidor 1945: Campaign 325. by Mark Lardas. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Repossessing the Rock*

MacArthur's "I have returned" line may get all the press, but he also returned to the island of Corregidor in Manila Bay in the Philippines the same way he left: via PT boat.

The battle to retake Corregidor and three other islands in Manila Bay may not be as well-known as his flight, but it included a parachute drop along with the usual air



and naval bombardment and amphibious assault.

The Japanese commander, Captain Akira Itagaki, had positioned his makeshift defense to foil an amphibious assault akin to what the Japanese did in 1942. Two things precluded its attrition-inducing strategy: first, the US dropped paratroopers on the top of the island to surprise the outward facing defense, and second, Itagaki was away from his HQ observing the bombardment when he and his small staff tangled with those paratroopers. He and the staff were killed and there went the Japanese leadership.

The rest of the battle was the usual Japanese piecemeal attacks to recapture the heights. Indeed, the most damaging attacks on US troops came from blowing up underground ammo dumps.

The booklet offers the usual *Campaign* format of background, chronology, plans, OOB, equipment, opposing commanders and troops, and the campaign itself. For tabletop scenarios, the Japanese numbers are quite good. The US, not so much. You get the round number of 6,000 for the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team, 34th Infantry Regiment, 151st Infantry Regiment, and 113th Combat Engineer Battalion. Estimates based on full TO&E are probably good enough. Nice touches are information about unit competence and morale.

The booklet contains 62 black and white photos, two color photos, seven color maps, one black and white map, two 3D color maps of limited value, and three color two-page action illustrations.

Enjoyed it.

The Malaysian Emergency: The Crucial Years 1949-53. by Mark Forsdike. Softcover (7.4x9.7 inches). 252 pages. 2022.

A volume in the photo-heavy *Images of War* series covers the British intervention against the attempted takeover of Malaysia by the communists. In particular, it follows the Suffolk regiment's patrols into the jungles and the resulting small-unit actions.

Mostly, it's ambush and counter-ambush as patrols sweep sections of the jungle. Most contacts are with less than 10 communist guerrillas. The text is particularly good at explaining how a patrol operated, including movements, setting up camps, and even how to brew tea.

The 302 black and white photos show a marvelous collection of uniform and terrain features that will help define differences between jungle, plantations, streams (chaung), grassland, and various flora encountered. One factoid: movement through the heavy jungle is about 50 yards per hour (p76).

As most of the shots are from private photo albums with inexpensive 1940s-50s cameras, the reproduction is actually quite good. Kudos, there. Four black and white maps and one black and white illustration are also included.

Excellent text and photos. I smell a skirmish game in the making.

Enjoyed it.

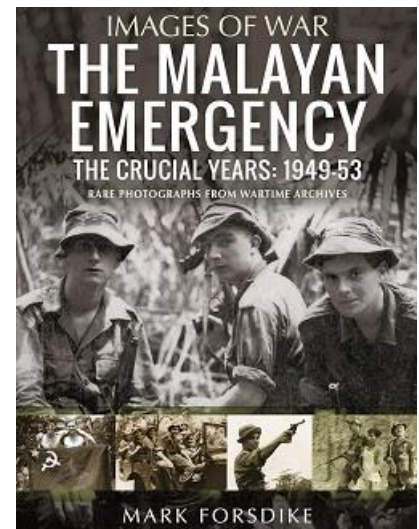
Spitfire Photo-Recce Units of World War 2 (Combat Aircraft 150). by Andrew Fletcher. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2023.

I'm afraid the teeny-tiny font size of the text gave me OSP -- Over Squinting Phenomena. I could get no more than a third of the way into the booklet when my eyes became crossed and then the left eye rotated in the clockwise direction and the right eye in the counter-clockwise direction.

I've mentioned this before. Pity, what I read contained a selection of the budding nature of photo recon by Spitfires, complete with first-person pilot accounts.

The booklet contains 52 black and white photos and 22 color aircraft profile illustrations.

I find it just too tough for my grognard eyes to read. Maybe grognards are not the main audience. If the format is written in stone, then either you need less text or you need to increase the page count. If you change the format you can use the margin that's 1/3 of the page and move the captions. Just a suggestion. Again.



Burma Victory 1944-1945. by Jon Diamond. Softcover (7.4x9.7 inches). 239 pages. 2022.

This volume in the photo-heavy *Images of War* series generally covers the Japanese offensive to take India (Imphal and Kohima) and the Allied counter-offensive to clear Burma of the Japanese. The text offers a succinct overview of operations, supplemented with six black and white maps with extensive captions that help place the photos in context. There's also a good chapter on the commanders as well as an evaluation of the units involved.

The 260 black and white photos cover the period and a little before, and you'll soon see that while jungle dominated the terrain, not all of Burma is jungle. The uniforms, especially the tattered versions, will be of interest to modelers and painters.

Some interesting photos: Merrill's Marauders (in intact uniforms) crossing a stream over a wooden footbridge (p64), a MG firing at the edge of a village (p70), an OSS detachment with Kachin natives (p81), and then my favorite: a truck driving along the Ledo Road that had been carved out of the side of the mountain (p232). I always find it amazing that the US hacked out hundreds of miles of "road" (admittedly gravel) through jungle and mountains in WWII. Now, if we could only replace the bridge over a creek by my house in under six months...

Enjoyed it.

Motorsport's Military Heroes. by Bryan Lightbody. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 199 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Iconic Individuals and Their Stories of Bravery in Conflict and Racing*

This collection of 18 mini-biographies covers drivers of race cars and motorcycles who served in the British or US militaries in WWI and WWII. The racing and business anecdotes generally outnumber the war service anecdotes in each mini-biography.

I only know of four of the racers: Eddie Rickenbacker, Enzo Ferrari, Carroll Shelby, and Ken Miles -- the last only because of the movie *Ford vs. Ferrari*.

I found the stories of early racing interesting, even if I know virtually nothing about the pre- and post-WWI races, but that's why you read books.

It contains 42 black and white photos of the racers.

While very little applies to tabletop wargaming, if you're running an RPG set in the 1920s and 1930s and need a little racing history, here's an option.

Enjoyed it.

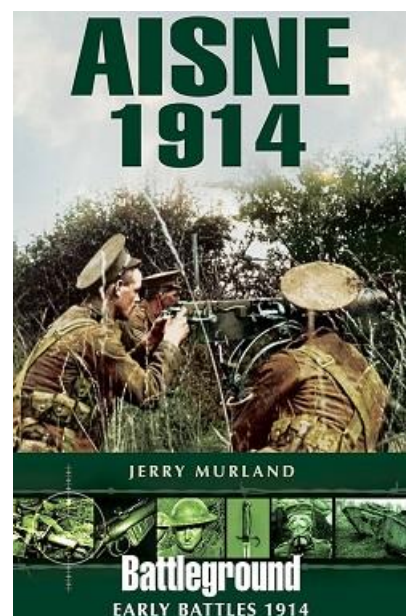
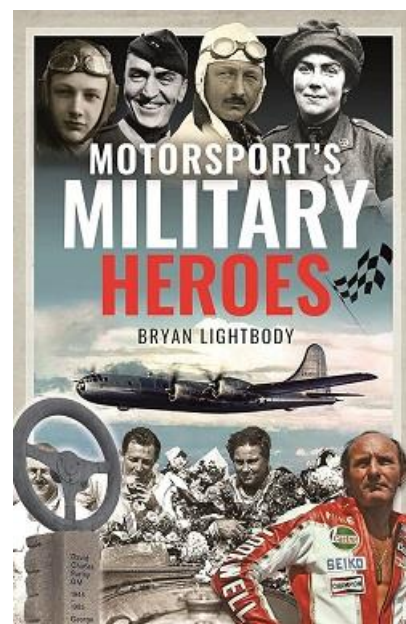
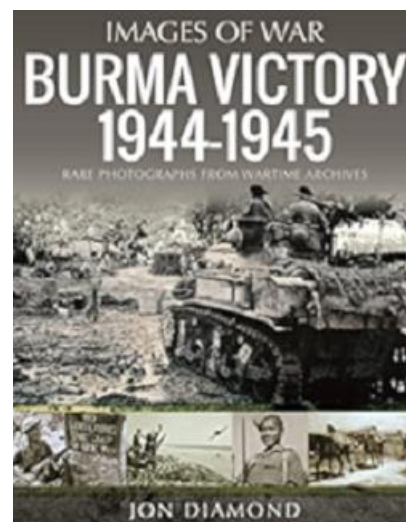
Aisne 1914: Battleground. by Jerry Murland. Softcover (5.4x8.5 inches). 208 pages. 2013.

Although 10 years old, it's unlikely too much changed since this book's 2013 publication that covers the September 1914 British attack across the Aisne River.

As per the *Battleground* series, this volume offers the usual mix of text, first-personal accounts, period photos, and maps organized in British division-by-division chapters, with brigades and regimental subheads events throughout.

The text offers a summary of unit and individual actions, including "Coldstream casualties amounted to two killed -- including Second Lieutenant Richard Lockwood -- and 63 wounded in 2nd Battalion" (p82 and p154). The six-division attack against entrenched German positions on the heights above the river had little artillery support whereas the Germans received artillery support and was stopped cold and cavalry was called upon to plug gaps to stop the German counterattacks.

The book contains 185 black and white photos, 24 black and white maps (not including the maps on page 142 that duplicate the maps on p48), and



seven black and white illustrations.

Per usual, it ends with car, bicycle, and walking tours of the former battlefields and includes modern photos of important locales.

Enjoyed it.

Panzer Leader: Memoirs of an Armored Car Commander 1944-1945. by Otto Henning. Softcover (6.2x9.2 inches). 189pages. 2022 reprint of 2018 reprint of 2008 book.

A breezy read of a German soldier in an armored car unit during the last two years of the war. Henning volunteered in July 1941 to avoid the six months of compulsory labor service and was allowed to pick his service. He chose panzers. It was a 12-year enlistment.

Put in recon, he was ultimately sent to North Africa. By dint of luck, he was flown home in April 1943 and missed the surrender.

Note that this memoir does not contain more than a passing mention of his training and North Africa. He was then assigned to the Panzer Lehr division and that's where the memoir picks up a detailed account of his service. He originally was sent to Budapest (Hungary), but the unit was sent to Normandy.

What follows is a fascinating look at three-vehicle recon operations, complete with equipment and tactics commentary. Reconns were later downgraded to two vehicles and occasionally one vehicle as the war progressed. He had patrol leaders good and bad and eventually became a patrol leader himself. Of course, leave and downtime is also covered, for better or worse depending on the state of transportation and rear-area roadblocks looking for deserters.

Contains 31 black and white photos and two black and white maps.

Enjoyed it.

Controlling the Frontier: Musket to Maxim 30. by High Driver. Softcover (7.2x9.8 inches). 133 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Southern Africa 1806-1828: The Cape Frontier Wars and the Fetcani Alarm*

Before the Boer War...Before the Zulu Wars...Yet after the Napoleonic Wars...The British strove to colonize the Southern part of Africa and ran head-on into the Xhosa natives. At least six Cape Frontier Wars pitted tiny British/Boer forces against thousands of Xhosa warriors. And it all started with cattle rustling and a civil war between Xhosa factions.

Indeed, the Battle of Grahamstown is a little like Rorke's Drift. About 350 British soldiers and civilian combatants, including a couple artillery guns and a small contingent of cavalry, defended a small town against 6,000 Xhosa warriors. This little-known (at least to me) April 22, 1819 battle sounds like it would make a nifty tabletop scenario. No real map in the book, but period drawings of the town (hamlet) and the text help define the terrain.

As for the Fetcani, the term refers to an aggressive, wandering, pillaging tribe (p91) originally thought to be separate from the Xhosa, but in actuality a separate Xhosa faction. The British and allied Xhosa fought in an 1827 skirmish. By 1828, Shaka Zulu sent an embassy to the British about boundaries even while a Zulu force invaded Xhosa land.

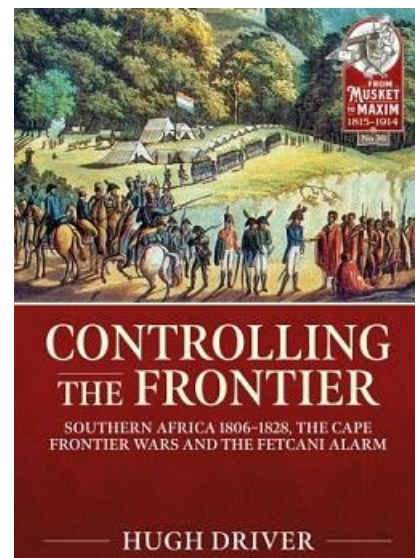
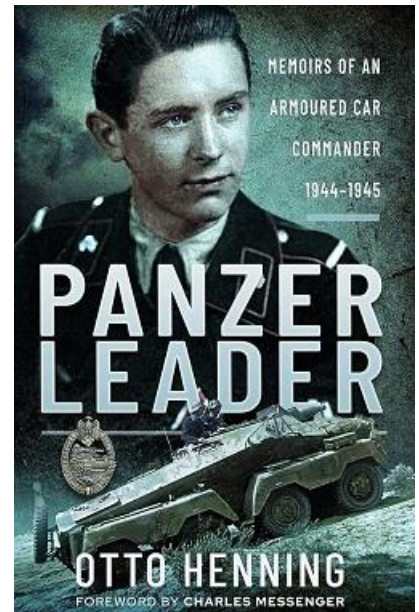
Contains 43 black and white illustrations, four black and white photos, and four black and white maps.

If, like me, you knew nothing about this period in Southern Africa, this booklet offers up a splendid overview of the area's events.

Enjoyed it.

JU-87D/G Stuka vs T-34: Duel 129. by Robert Forsyth. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2023.

Robert Forsyth has written a considerable number of outstanding booklets on WWII aviation for Osprey. I've reviewed a number of 'em: *Ju 87*



Stuka Vs Royal Navy Carriers: Mediterranean (see 9/2/2021 AAR); *Junkers JU-188 Units: Combat Aircraft 146* (see 6/29/2022 AAR); and *FW-190D-9: Defense of the Reich 1944-1945* (Dogfight 1)(see 3/3/2022 AAR); as well as the book *Luftwaffe Special Weapons 1942-45* (see 9/2/2021 AAR) and his tour de force book *To Save an Army: The Stalingrad Airlift* (see 1/21/2023 AAR or all the reviews are up on hmgs.org).

This *Duel* series volume tackles the German Stuka, armed with a variety of bombs and the 37mm AT guns vs the Soviet T-34. The usual format follows technical development and specs of the plane and tank, training, and first-person accounts in combat. Indeed, one criticism is that the accounts are mostly from the German standpoint. It'd be nice to hear from the Soviet crews who survived German bombing and strafing.

I found the mention of a cluster munition -- SD-4-HL Splitterbombe (p71) -- to be new to me. Apparently, a 400kg container dispersed 74 of the Splitterbombe bomblets.

A couple unusual editorial slip-ups: A sentence (p21) about turret redesign virtually duplicates one before (p20); "VAlthough" (p72) needs the "V" deleted; and the Introduction (p4) says T-34s were first encountered during "the savage grip of Russian winter," but more accurately the Germans first encountered T-34s on June 24-25, 1941 (p52).

The booklet contains 50 black and white photos, one color photo, nine color illustrations, one color two-page action illustration, six color profiles (three JU-87 and three T-34), and one color map.

Grognaards probably won't find a lot new per se, but I found the discussion, based on German testing, about how close a bomb had to be to damage or destroy a tank and crew to be quite interesting.

Enjoyed it.

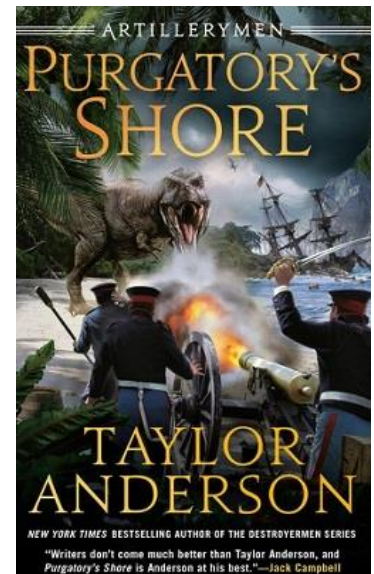
Purgatory's Shore: Artillerymen Book 1. by Taylor Anderson. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 482 pages. 2021.

Years ago, I read about a half dozen books of Anderson's *Destroyermen* series about a US four-stacker WWII destroyer going through a portal to land in an alternate Earth. Same Pacific Ocean geography, but much wilder and more lethal flora and fauna, including the semi-intelligent Grik beasties and various other civilizations.

This book is exactly the same, but with 1847 US infantry and artillery from the Mexican-American War being sent to an alternate Yucatan peninsula instead of a ship. They battle the Grik and the religious-fanatical Dominion Empire that came to invade the Yucatan.

The prose suitably captures the dismay and determination of the US troops under a talented Major Lewis Cayce (at least he wasn't named Edgar), and the terrain and local non-Dom civilization rolls out in suitable fashion. The business of training up and arming native sword-wielders with modern muskets before the arrival of a big Dom army becomes a suitable part of the narrative.

Nothing wrong with the book, but I've read it all before in the aforementioned *Destroyermen* series. Same plot. Different names.



For the Boys. by NCR Davis. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 222 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The War Story of a Combat Nurse in Patton's Third Army*

A smooth read primarily about Lt. Bette Balster's experiences as a nurse sent to France and Germany during WWII. Her Evac unit of doctors, nurses, and orderlies was close to the front lines as a precursor to the MASH units of the Korean War.

Her happy go lucky nature, sense of fashion, and good looks combined with graduating from nursing school as a Registered Nurse earned her an officer's commission when she enlisted. Her Army training and ultimate transfer to Europe soon provided her with a more realistic appreciation of war. Surrounded by a cadre of friends, she often broke the strict rules and came close to discharge, but always managed to land on her feet. The wartime chaos and mutilations gave her a more somber look at life, but she did meet a tanker officer who became her husband after the war.

You get a gritty sense of what being a nurse was like in WWII and what was done and could be done with the medical tech of the time. The unit was shelled and bombed from time to time, including one attack that left her alive but buried in



rubble.

Interspersed throughout are excerpts from the voluminous letters she sent to her parents, who kept them and even had them retyped into a volume. These are full of the details of daily Army life as well as personal problems and observations. My only complaint is that they are in a much smaller font and tough to read. I get the page-count dilemma for publishers, but this grognard is getting awfully tired of squinting.

The book contains 45 black and white photos and one black and white map.

Entertaining and enlightening, even if I skimmed through the small-font letter excerpts.

Enjoyed it.

Japanese Combined Fleet 1941-42 (Fleet 1). by Mark Stille. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The IJN at Its Zenith: Pearl Harbor to Midway*

Osprey started a new series, the *Fleet* series, with the IJN as its first subject.

It starts with pre-WWII background and follows with a technical and spec overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the main ships. This is all fairly standard fare.

However, the next section, How the Fleet Operated, delves into an analysis about organization, command and control, doctrine, intelligence, logistics, and other aspects of using the fleet for combat operations. This 22-page section brings the IJN into focus as a potent, if flawed, force that ran wild for six months. The next section, Combat and Analysis, offers a fascinating recap of major operations and why they succeeded or failed.

The booklet contains 42 black and white photos, four color two-page action illustrations, three color one-page tactics illustrations, and two color maps.

One factoid of interest: The US built 725 major combat-related ships during the war, while Japan produced 198. Of those ships, the US produced 30 carriers of all types versus seven carriers for Japan (p56).

In many ways, this is a cross between an Osprey *Elite* series and *Campaign* series treatment. For a nice introduction to the IJN, this is a great kickoff booklet.

Enjoyed it.

German High Seas Fleet 1914-18 (Fleet 2). by Angus Konstam. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Kaiser's Challenge to the Royal Navy*

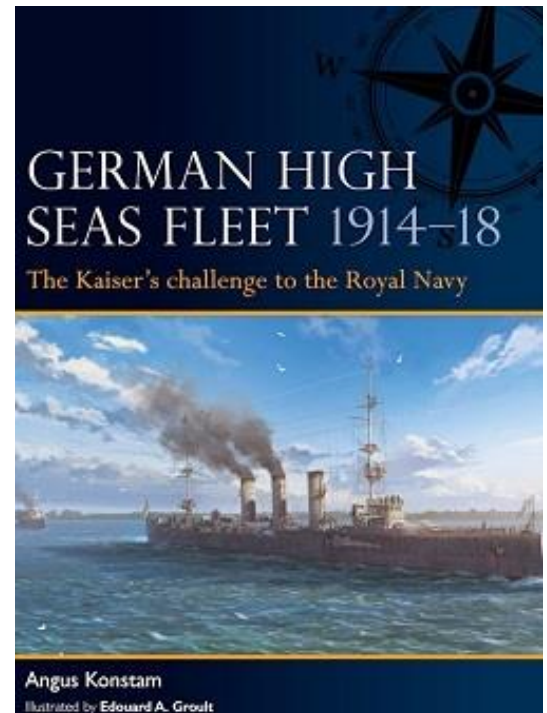
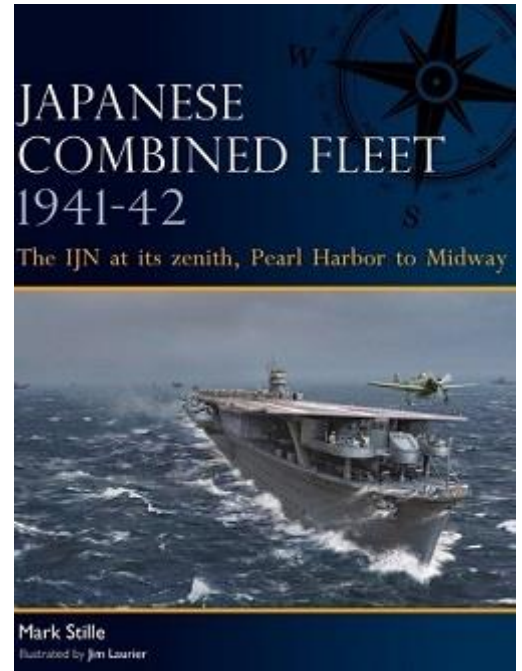
The second entry into the *Fleet* series uses the same format as the first: pre-war background, technical and spec overview, organization and operation, and then combat and analysis.

As with the first booklet, I found the organization and operations section the most interesting to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the fleet. This preps you for the combat analysis of various battles and raids, Jutland being the most prominent.

The booklet contains 28 black and white photos, eight color illustrations, three color two-page action illustrations, three color one black and white map, and eight color maps.

Ospreys offer overviews and recaps of subjects, and this one about the WWI German fleet is another good one. Plenty of other, thicker books explain WWI naval warfare in more detail, but this recap will get you started.

Enjoyed it.



The 406th Fighter Group: Legends of Warfare. by Steven A. Brandt. Hardback (Horizontal: 9.3x9.3 inches). 112 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *P-47s Over Europe in World War II*

The photo-heavy series tackles a specific US WWII fighter group: the 406th. As you would expect, the 210 black and white photos showcase the P-47s in all sorts of markings and with a variety of nose art.

Better yet, the book takes a page out of the excellent Pacific Profiles playbook and provides 105 color profiles and 12 color nose art illustrations. Also included are 39 color photos, two color cowling paint schemes, and two black and white maps.

The text takes a chronological approach to the unit's creation, deployment, and combat operations of its three squadrons from its arrival in the UK in April 1944 to its disbandment in August 1946. First-person accounts populate the history as the Group advanced onto French and German airbases as the Allies advanced.

By the way, the 406th is the unit that was chosen to do a flyby for visiting Soviet dignitaries. They practiced flying in formation to spell "USSR" going one way and "CCCP" going the other. The US brass panicked and demanded to see the formations a couple days ahead. That lack of confidence made the pilots mad. For this HQ review, they made a third pass to "form another four-letter word that began with S and ended with T" (p86). Naturally, the third word wasn't performed in the actual fly-by with the Soviets watching, but I expect the point was made. And no, there is no formation photo of the third word.

Another well-done volume in the *Legends of Warfare* series.
Enjoyed it.



The U.S. 37-mm Gun in World War Two. by Charles C. Roberts, jr. Hardback (8.1x10.2 inches). 167 pages. 2023.

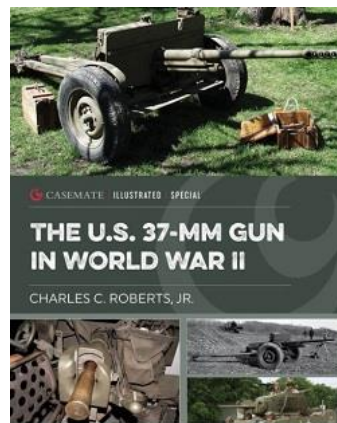
This *Casemate Illustrated Special* follows the same photo- and technical detail-heavy format as the other volumes in the series. While it starts out with a short pre-WWII development chronology followed by a quick overview of 37mm guns by six other countries before getting to the multitude of variants cranked out by the US.

Research and development take priority throughout the text, with considerable technical specs and associated commentary. The bibliography shows almost all sources as US Army technical and field manuals. I never knew we had so many 37mm gun variants, not to mention variations of ammo for the gun. Guns include those on their own trails and those mounted on vehicles. It seems quite comprehensive.

While valuable from a modeling standpoint, from a tabletop standpoint it might be fun to introduce some of the esoteric ammo into a scenario. Try a spigot grenade for a bunker buster in a Pacific War scenario. The other ammo, like the Littlejohn AT round, often lacks text about performance, hence the graphs at the back of the book for some of the ammo. Still, muzzle velocity is less important to wargamers than range in yards. It's the only shortcoming for the book.

The book contains 118 black and white photos, 66 color photos, 41 black and white illustrations, and 13 color illustrations. Of those 41, Appendix A contains 33 design drawings reproduced from manuals of limited value due to poor reproduction. The 13 ballistics graphs that follow are also poorly reproduced, but their simple nature means you can read them.

Enjoyed it.



Painting Up a Storm

Jon sent along this photo showing progress for his upcoming *Snappy Nappy* game.

Looks like enough troops for two to three players and lots of markers.

