

## If The Koz Be Just: KozCon 2024

### Setting Up

**Armored Actions:** WWII Desert

**Vampire Hunting:** *Silver Bayonet*

Other Games

Dice-Off Mania

Door Prize

## Lutter Nutter Butter:

1626 Danish Sandwich Cookie

## Coral Sea 1942: Double Blind Death

## WWII Undaunted: Normandy

## Confronting The World Eater: Space Base

## Confronting The World Eater II: Space Base

## NEWS

**LeeCon II:** CANCELLED

**New Figures:** Medieval Scots Highlanders

**March to Monmouth:** Zoom Talk

**New Wargames:** Aachen and Cassino

**New ECW Wargames:** Edgehill and First Newbury

**NATO:** Happy 75th Birthday

## Books I've Read

**Russian Invasion of Ukraine: 2022**

**Jagdpanzer**

**Charles XII Karoliner:** Vol 2 Cavalry 1700-21

**ME 163 vs Allied Heavy Bombers:** Duel 135

**FW 190 Sturmjager:** Dogfight 11

**Soviet Cruisers 1917-45:** NV 326

**British Aircraft Carriers:** ShipCraft 32

**Royal Navy Home Fleet 1939-41:** Fleet 5

**Italian Battle Fleet 1940-43:** Fleet 6

**SOE in Czechoslovakia:** Official History WWII

**UTI MiG-15:** Polish Wings 37

**Breaking the Siegfried Line:** Feb 1945

**Battle for the Bocage:** Normandy 1944

**Arming the World:** US Gunmakers Gilded Age

**The Tank Commander Manual:** 1939-1945

**Operation Dragoon and Beyond:** Then and Now

**The Town Well Fortified:** ECW Forts 1639-1660

**Fairchild A-10 A/C Thunderbolt II:** Duke Hawkins

**TS-11 Iskra:** Polish Wings 36

**Hermann Goring:** Rise and Fall: Images of War

**Armies of the Crusaders:** 1096-1291

**Carnation Revolution:** Vol. 2 - Portugal 1974

**South Pacific Air War:** Jan 1943 - Feb 1944

**UFO Movie Quiz**

**Pacific Profiles:** Vol 13 IJN Bombers, Transports

**Pacific Profiles:** Vol 14 Allied Bombers: B-25

**Gebirgsjager:** German Mountain Troops 1935-45

**Hospitaller Knights:** St. John/Rhodes 1306-1522

**Dunkirk:** Nine Days That Saved an Army



# If The Koz Be Just: KozCon 2024

by Russ Lockwood

Circumstances allowed for an obligation-free Saturday, so I joined Dennis at Oh-dark-30 for the trip down to Ferrell, NJ and KozCon 2024. Then again, Oh-dark-30 for me meant 7:30am at Dennis' house. I'm not much of a morning person.

*The gamers start to arrive.*

I grunted a hello to Dennis and bundled into his front seat. I would've caught some shut-eye on the way down, but potholes the size of tank traps rattled his car every 30 seconds, keeping me in a groggy, not unconscious, state. Somewhere on I-295 I transcended grogginess to a passable state of consciousness, or at least by the time we arrived at the fireman's hall just before 9am.

*Gamers: Start your dicing!*

Don calls it called KozCon to honor his wargaming friend, Dave Koslow, who passed away way too early from cancer, and also to serve as a fundraiser for the American Cancer Society. I knew Dave a little bit from the HMGS conventions, sitting and chatting away as he gamed. Yep. Way too early.

Your \$25 donation to this fundraiser included coffee and donuts -- ahhhh, caffeine and sugar, two of the four major food groups for wargamers. The other two are polyunsaturated fats and artificial preservatives.

*Lou (left) and Dennis in the middle of a LADG game.*

It also included a door prize ticket and a catered lunch of chicken and mushrooms, garlic knots, pasta, meatballs, sausage and peppers, soft drinks, and water.

My guesstimate is that 40+ gamers attended overall, based in part on a photo I took towards the end with the Dice-Off event that had 26 people showing. Yet I knew some folks left in the early afternoon and others that were not physically around the Dice-Off table.





## Setting Up

Dennis was there for the *La Art de la Guerre* tournament, as was about a dozen or 15 others. This is a three-round tournament set up and run by Don and counts among the international standings that LADG runs.

*LADG all the way to the back wall and then some.*

The coffee and donuts were already set up -- and I conducted an immediate charge to the table.

A gamer asked, "How you doing, Russ?"

I pointed at the cup of coffee and grunted, "Carhu a-obecot." That translated to "I'm about 8 ounces from being coherent."

Yes, I understand those who know me will argue I could down a tanker truck of coffee and still not be coherent. However, a donut and a cup later and my eyes popped open. Whatcha know...I've transformed from being feral to being in Ferrell. Scientifically, this dynamic duo mixture includes all four food groups and boosts gaming memory better than any jellyfish-tainted supplement pill.

Meanwhile, others deposited donated gaming items on the prize tables. Oh, those tables overfilled with miniatures, rules, wargames, and other games. I'll get to that later.

Otherwise, I sipped a second cup of coffee and chatted away with gamers I knew and met those I didn't.



## Armored Actions: WWII Desert

It's been a few months since I last playtested Lee Sowers' WWII miniatures rules (see the 12/13/2023 AAR, although the first version was back in the 12/01/2021 AAR).

*My three-prong force: Italians on the left and Germans in center and right.*



It uses a scale of one stand equals one battalion and one turn equals four hours. Each inch is 500 yards, give or take, so the 4-inch ZOC is about 2,000 yards.

*Umpire Lee (left) oversees deployment by British Bob and me. Blue areas are oases, not lakes, and passable to infantry.*

I've been creating a WWII *Snappy* version rules at the same scale on and off over the years. I've created many, many versions that just didn't meet the game I wanted. I've played a number of similar scale systems, including Frank Chadwick's upcoming *Breakthrough* (admittedly an





early playtest version -- see the 02/05/2018 AAR -- I'm sure it's been revised), Rich Kane's chart-heavy rules (see the 5/30/2018 AAR), and Chris Parker's grid-based rules *D-Day to Berlin* (see the 05/27/2021 AAR) to name drop a few.

Over the last couple years, I watched Lee follow the same path as I did with about the same results. But he kept refining and refining, tinkering away with a variety of suggestions from the peanut gallery.

*The German right. Two British armored car battalions delay the German tank division.*

The latest version, which I played at KozCon, is much smoother than previous versions. It also branches from the common path we both took.

This particular scenario comes from a British relief effort during Operation Crusader. I was the Germans and Italians and Bob was the Brits.

Each of us had three divisions. Remember, each stand is a battalion. Mine were two German and one Italian (stiffened with German motorized infantry).

## The Axis Divisions

Each German division had two mixed Panzer III/IV stands, one panzer grenadier stand (and transport), a Pz II recon stand, a HQ stand, a motorcycle stand, and a PzJgr stand. In addition, one division had an 88mm AT stand and the other had an artillery stand.

The Italian division contained two M13/40 stands, a Pz II recon stand, a HQ stand, a PzJgr stand, and two German motorized infantry (with trucks) stands. The Axis could call on up to three JU-87 Stuka squadrons for ground support.

All three divisions totaled 23 stands (plus two truck and two prime mover transports), or 26 stands if you include the JU-87s.

I'm a little sure of the British OB. From the photos, it looks like two armored divisions, each with one or two Crusader stands, one Valentine stand, one or two Honey/Stuart stands, one HQ stand, and three infantry stands (with carrier transports). The other division contained two recon stands, two truck-mounted AT stands, one HQ stand, one Valentine stand, and one infantry stand (with transport). In addition, the Brits had two 25lb artillery stands and four Hurricane stands for close air support. That's 26 stands (plus seven transports) or 30 if you count the aircraft.

*Turn 2: German Stukas attack the British on the move. It was only half successful, but did put a hit and delay one battalion. The red dice indicate that the British artillery had not fired yet.*





## Key Concepts

Command and Control is via card play. The umpire uses a deck of 10 cards ranging from Ace to 10 and hands three to each player. You look at your trio of the cards and place one next to each HQ. In the turn, Aces go first, then 2s, 3s, and so on. So, you're making a decision about which division activates when. Of course, you don't know which three of the seven remaining cards were dealt to your opponent.

*Turn 2: Italians on left. Note the smiley face cards. The long 4-inch toothpicks are used to enforce initial ZOC stops.*



Often, you get a back and forth sequence, but sometimes, you draw three low cards or three high cards. Luck of the draw, as they say -- and there are advantages to activating either first and last.

One key concept is a 4-inch Zone of Control. All units stop when entering any enemy's ZOC. The ZOC has yo-yo'ed from two to six inches in previous playtests, but four inches seems to hit the Goldilocks spot of not too close and not too far. Shooting (simultaneous) for all non-artillery units is four inches. Artillery ranges vary by gun type.

*The British halt at the 4-inch ZOC.*



Another key concept is Free First Fire. Not every unit has that ability, but if one does, it gets a "free shot" at a unit that first stops at the 4-inch ZOC. It then has a regular shot in the simultaneous shooting phase. This represents certain units' training and ambush capabilities.

*CRS in action. The dice show the number of hits on a unit. As with any other game, massing 2:1 and 3:1 is better than 1:1.*



Air and Artillery fire is during movement, although artillery can be held to give a +1 die modifier for close combat (melee by any other name). With air, you roll a number of d6s equal to the number of aircraft, with a 4+ activating a plane. Air strikes and Arty attacks are a separate chart from simultaneous firing.



A color-coded Quick Reference Chart holds unit stats, such as to-hit number, how much damage it can take, and so on. That takes a bit to navigate at times, but by the end of the game (turn 3), we had a decent grasp of where to look for what stat.

There's more, and more nuances, of course, but that's the core mechanics that drive the game.

## The Battle

I pushed the Italians up on the left of the oasis and the two Germans in the center and right. The idea was to use the Italians to mesmerize the Brits with easy pickings while the two German panzer divisions swept around.

The first part worked. The Italians drew a British armored division and a half. The lighter British division and the other half armor confronted the main German thrust.

*End of game on German right. Stymied!*

After trading of shots at 4-inch range, the smart thing to do for the Italians was to slowly withdraw. But I wanted to see how the new close action -- Close Range Shooting (CRS) in Lee's vernacular -- worked, so I stood fast. I quickly learned the folly of that idea.

Basically, CRS uses opposed die rolls where a d6 plus firer strength points is compared against a d6 plus target strength points. Yet there's a +2 (armor) or +1 (non-armor) die modifier kicker added to the firer's roll but not the defender's roll. Both sides in the CRS will first become the firer and second become the target. The idea is that both sides will likely feel the pain of nose-to-nose (at least on the tabletop) combat.

In addition, CRS generates 2 hits per successful shot instead of regular shooting's 1 hit. As each unit usually has three or four strength points, you can see that a successful 4-inch shooting and a base-to-base CRS shooting can eliminate or wrack a unit. If you're clever, you toss in an artillery attack and perhaps a bomber attack and you can punch out a unit in one turn.

If you do, an armor unit gets an immediate 2d6-inch breakthrough move, although the unit must stop when it enters a 4-inch ZOC. The thought here is that defense in depth is a good idea. I suggested an optional rule where if a breakthrough armor unit passes a Quality Test (d6), it can ignore the 4-inch ZOC and roll right into a CRS on the next unit. You only get one breakthrough move per unit.

The Italian M-13/40s were ultimately swamped and blown away, resulting in breakthroughs. Meanwhile, the Germans had limited effectiveness, in large part due to Bob's use of recon units as delaying units. They were destroyed, but effectively kept the main German attack out of range. Artillery and Stuka attacks took out an infantry stand, but it would take more time to develop the German side of the attack.

Losses were comparatively even. The Germans lost two M-13/40s and one motorized infantry (with a panzergrenadier stand down to its last hit). The British lost one Crusader, two scout recon, and one motorized infantry. Hits were scattered around a number of units. We played three turns in two hours, although Bob, Lee, and I discussed various rules and sought various clarifications, making this more a cooperative playtest than a competitive game. Nicely played.

## Better and Better

Considering where he started from, the new version is much better than the original. It's interesting to see how this version branched out from our common baseline. I still have some questions about certain aspects, but Lee takes these and others into account as he playtests towards an as yet undecided release date. Keep going!

Thanks, Lee for umpiring and Bob for a good game.





## Vampire Hunting: *Silver Bayonet*

“Calling Lockwood, party of five. Your seat at the table is ready for monster bashing.”

OK, I made that up, but when umpire Jeff asked if I wanted to game on a Church-dominated table, I readily agreed.

*Silver Bayonet* is a skirmish game set in the Napoleonic Wars where the real enemies are the vampires, zombies, and cultists. The goal was to slaughter as many enemy as you could. Being French, my enemies were the monsters as well as the British and Spanish.

*Jeff (center) umpires a game of Silver Bayonet. L to r: Dominic, Frank, Jeff, and Michelle.*



### Entre Vous

“This way,” Veteran Hunter Jacque commanded. The party of five Frenchmen - - Jacque, Supernatural Investigator Pierre, Sapper Claude, and Guards Jean and Francois -- wound their way up a small hill. The crisp autumn night made the trek in the Pyrenees foothills almost pleasant. Sight distance proved limited, but when the clouds parted, general outlines could be seen. The group overlooked an abandoned farmstead. Across a stream on another hill stood an impressive and equally abandoned church.

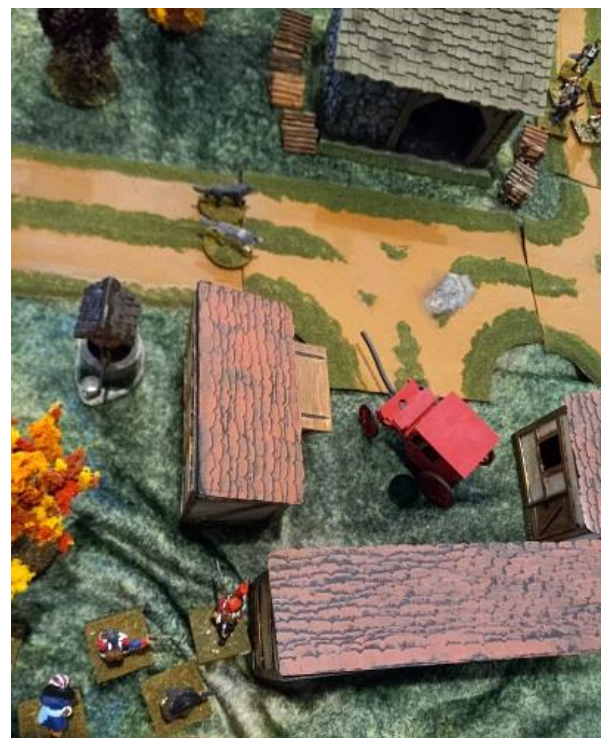
“Spread out and keep your eyes open. We'll check the stables first,” Jacque ordered.

The five formed a skirmish line. As they reached the downward slope of the hill, they noticed two parties of British troops. One made its way towards the church and the other towards the farmhouse. Jacque also spotted two parties of French, one heading up the lane to the farmhouse and the other peeling off to pick their way over a bridge that has seen better days to investigate the cemetery and church.

Jacque halted a moment and strained to see in the darkness. A pair of wolves trotted down another lane heading for the farmhouse. He let them be, expecting the beasts to tangle with the Brits.

*Bottom left corner: My French lads inch into the stables. Upper right corner: Dom's Brits exchange fire with Tom's French. On the lane: Wolves smell tasty British flesh.*

He then saw the French on the lane light up a torch. The good news was that it effectively doubled sighting distance and torches were quite effective against some monsters. The bad news is that everyone else saw the Frenchmen.





That was not Jacque's problem. He sent forward Jean the guard, who slid between buildings to investigate. A trio of rats, driven by a force greater than their fear of humans, immediately attacked. The rest of the team raced to help. Several stabbings and hackings later, the three rats expired from wounds. Claude the sapper killed two and Jacque killed the third. Nobody got wounds.

The wolves soon found the Brits, who eventually meleed the beasts into oblivion.

*Michelle (left) heads towards the cemetery and church while Tom trades shots with the British. In the bottom right corner, I'm beginning to enter the stables.*

## Mechanics

*Silver Bayonets* uses 2d10 (a red die and a blue die) for combat. You roll and add modifiers (usually +1 or +2) looking for a modified total equal to or greater than the target's Defense strength. Most characters had a defense of 13 or 14 and most monsters (including bandits) had 12. If successful, you applied the red die roll as hits from shooting or the blue die roll as hits from melee.

My characters had 10 to 12 hit points. Most monsters and NPC enemies had 10 hit points. Thus, it's possible to slay one outright if you roll a 10 with the correct die. Of course, it is also possible to roll a 1 and nick the target. On average, it usually takes two to three successful attacks to eliminate an enemy NPC and three to four for an enemy PC.

Shooting range with a musket is 12 inches at night, or 24 inches using torchlight. Pistols are slightly less. Movement is 6 inches.

*Dominic (left) advances on Tom's French while Frank's British cross the stream at a ford and head to the church.*

You get two actions (fire, reload, move, etc.). If the second action is a move, you move half speed for that second action (9 inches total). If you end up in base-to-base contact at the end of a move, you melee for "free." Hence, you can move 6 inches and shoot, move up to 9 inches and melee, reload and shoot, or shoot and reload. You get the idea.

Characters shot at and survive get to shoot back if they have a loaded weapon. Characters shot at and killed don't get return fire. Likewise, characters attacked with melee weapon and survive get to melee back. If killed, they do not.

*The wolves attack Dominic's troops. My lads admire the fangs from afar.*





Certain monsters, like vampires, can only be damaged with silver or blessed weapons. In my party, that meant Jacques had a pistol with silver shot, Jean the guard had a silver bayonet, and Pierre the supernatural investigator has a silver sword. Claude had a torch that would presumably do damage to a vampire, but guard Francois had nothing silver on him.

*A heady shootout with the bandits kills the first three and heavily wounds the next three.*

## Enter the Bandits

After skewering the rats, we noticed a trio of Spanish bandits in the woods across the lane. Jacques and party took cover as the first musket balls whined in. In the darkness, we aimed at shadowy figures advancing across the lane. A thunderous volley erupted from our muskets and three bandits hesitated from wounds. The reloading proceeded with fervor and yet the bandits came on.

Jacques proved to be a most excellent shot and felled a bandit, followed by kill shots from Francois and Claude. So concentrated were the group on these initial bandits that three more bandits snuck up onto the side of the stables. Francois shifted position and fired, severely wounding a bandit, but the return shot hit Francois and spun him around. Pierre and Jean blazed away to no effect. The firefight continued until all three bandits were far more dead than alive.

Pierre went into a trance and spun a spell of deterrence, placing overwhelming fear inside the bandits' heads. They broke and ran for the hills.

*Bottom left corner: Dominic calls for a truce with me as he trades shots with Tom's troops (right corner). My five lads reload and head down the lane towards the church. Upper left corner: Zombies attack Frank. Upper right corner: Zombies start to attack Michelle's troops as they head across the bridge.*

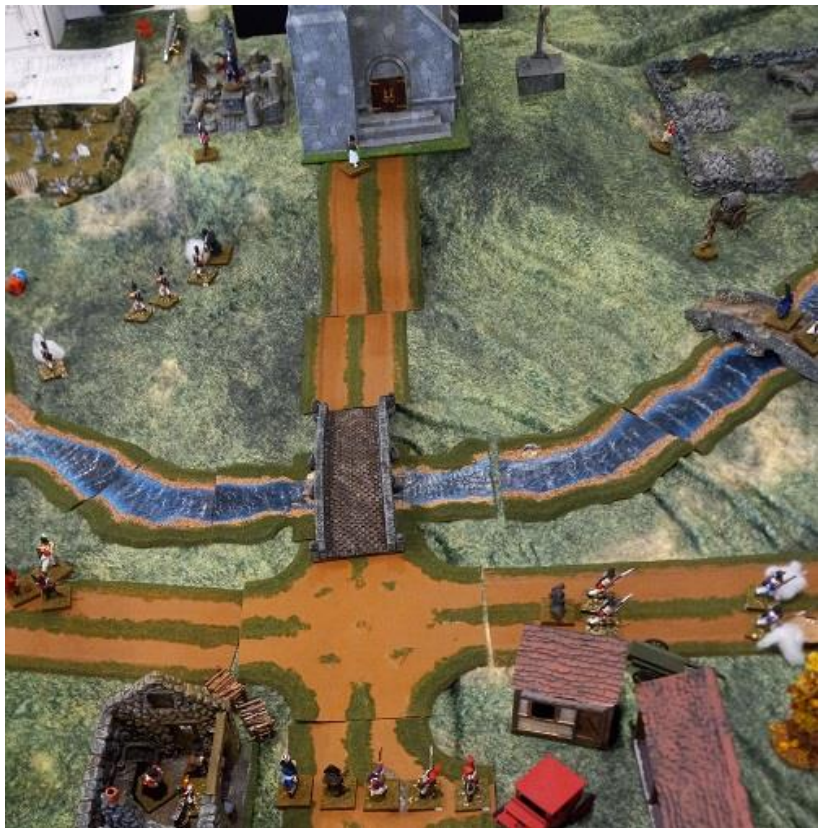
## British Firefight

Meanwhile, Dominic's Highlander troops defeated the wolves at the farmhouse and engaged in a long-range firefight with Tom's French troops coming up the lane. The torch proved a magnet for firing and was quickly dropped and extinguished. French fire drove many into the farmhouse while the others blazed away by the woodpile.

On the other side of the church, zombies threatened Frank's British troops, which diverted them from their mission to enter the church. Much gunfire and zombie parts flew.

It was hard to see, but a flash of light announced the arrival of something supernatural in the crypt outside the church. Jacques swore it smelled like vampire.

Meanwhile, Michelle's French troops crossed the river via the battered bridge and spotted zombies coming out of the cemetery. Ignoring them, her party advanced up the hill and into the church.





## The Truce

Jacque and party crossed the lane to reach the side of the farmhouse. Dominic, the Highlander officer in charge, shaken by the monsters and a little from the firefight, called for a truce. "If you don't attack me, I won't attack you," he offered.

Jacque agreed and formed up his men in line abreast and marched down the lane towards a more intact bridge over the stream. The way led to the church, but they had only just crossed the bridge when much screaming and shooting occurred within the church. Michelle's French tumbled out in a panic, racing away down the hill towards the cemetery. Hot on their trail was a vampire in all its supernatural glory.

"Hey, look!"

Jacque yelled. "It's Grandpa Munster!"

Veteran hunter that he was, he knew now was the time to steady the lads by mocking the monster. The vampire, intent on his next victim, ignored the mockery.



*My lads cross the bridge and open fire on the vampire (wood disk shows hits) and pick off two of the three bandits by the church. Frank's Brits help against the bandits. Cultists chase after Michelle's troops.*

Jacque loaded his musket with silver shot and fired. The shot shredded half the vampire.

A group of cultists emerged from the church and chased after Michelle's troops. If that wasn't enough, another trio of bandits emerged from around the corner of the church and headed for Frank's British troops by the crypt.

Jacque reloaded. His next shot seemed to be ineffective, but when the smoke cleared, the vampire lay dead. The others in the party fired lead shot, picking off the three bandits in only two volleys.

As Tom's French crossed the battered bridge to join Michelle at the cemetery, a zombie staggered to the end of the bridge and planted the pointy end of a pick in the head of one of the French, spewing brain juice around. Then, it withdrew it, swiveled it around, and planted the other end in the Frenchman's head, killing him. Another of Tom's



troops, having stumbled out of the stream, was similarly dispatched by the zombies. Those were the last zombie successes.

Frank's British and Michelle's French dealt with the zombies at the crypt and the cemetery, and the cultists at the cemetery fled for their lives for a future day of service to the undead.

Jacque and party surrounded the vampire. He nodded to sapper Claude, who drizzled oil on the newly dead undead and lit the fire. Grandpa Munster burned away. The French and the British went their separate ways.

*Burn, baby, burn. Vampire inferno.*

## Other Mechanics

As this was the first time I played *Silver Bayonet*, I'm guessing that Jeff put on a streamlined version. I noticed something about fatigue, but that wasn't in our scenario.

I also noticed that characters were just as good when fresh and intact as they were with only 1 hit point (HP) remaining. I learned that from the first trio of bandits. As for the second trio of bandits (10 HP each), I hit them for 9 HPs, 9 HPs, and 7 HPs. My party carried a token good for one monster/bandit befuddlement that changes the movement of said monsters/bandits.

Not wanting to chance fire, I used the token to convince the severely wounded bandits to flee for their lives. They limped and staggered away into the darkness.

In addition, I had a blue token and a red token that were good for one re-roll of that colored die. In the second vampire shot, I did not score the 15 needed to hit the vampire. I kept the red die number but used the blue token to reroll the blue die. I needed a 6+ (50-50 chance) and rolled an 8 -- good for a hit. The red die already showed a 7 (and Jacque had a special +2 die modifier for shooting). The 7 red hits plus the previous 7 hits was good enough to kill the vampire (needed 14 hits in total).

If there are differences from what I described, Jeff simplified the system for a great convention game. Thanks, Jeff, for umpiring and thanks to Frank, Dominic, Michelle, and Tom for a good game.

*LADG: Venetians vs. Burgundians.*

## Other Games

Although I was involved in my two games, I took a few photos of other games.

The *LADG* tournament ended after three rounds. The overall winner was Dennis.

I saw a *Black Powder* ACW game, a *Blood and Thunder* pirate game, a *Wings of War* WWI air combat game, and a *Frostgrave* fantasy skirmish game, all with gamers contemplating their situations, rolling dice, and having a good time.

*Don (left) runs the Dice off. You lay your donation down and grab a number of dice. Then all roll.*







*Dice off mania!*

## Dice-Off Mania

A big part of the fundraising comes from the dice off. \$1 gets you four d6s, and plenty of folks put down \$10 for 40 dice. Don places a prize and everyone rolls dice. In the first case, it was several boxed sets of *O200* WWII figures donated by Dennis of On Military Matters.

On the first roll, all 1s are taken off the table and put back in the big box o' dice. Then the participants re-roll. Then 1s and 2s are removed and put back in the box. Eventually, everyone left is rolling for 6s. The person who won the *O200* set rolled a lot of consecutive 6s using only one die.

Other boxed sets were up for die-rolling grabs.

*Table of prizes.*

## Door Prize

Don then drew a ticket for a door prize. The winner got his pick of whatever was on the table. Then the next ticket was drawn and that gamer got his pick. Ticket by ticket, gamers selected items.

I was near the end of the basket, but I snagged a trio of MMP hex wargames: *Autumn for Barbarossa*; *Bastogne*, and *Last Stand at Moscow*.

## A Great Day of Gaming

As the games finished, we packed up and started clean-up. Tables were folded up and stored. Folding chairs were folded and stored. Garbage collected and placed in a receptacle. Many hands make work light. We left the hall just about as spotless as when we arrived.

That's a great day of gaming!



*More of the LADG tournament.*



## More Photos



*Left: Blood and Plunder*

*Above: Frostgrave*

*Below: Black Powder ACW*







*Night rangers, all. L to r: Pat, Sam, Umpire Troy, Mike, Dave, and Jay.*

## **Lutter Nutter Butter: 1626 Danish Sandwich Cookie**

*by Russ Lockwood*

Just before Christian IV took the field of battle against the Catholic League in the Thirty Years War, his jester sang him a tune of retrospection.

Regal Christian, oh, the war's begun,  
Banners high and flapping in the sun,  
Today,  
Okay.

Where you marching? What you fighting for?  
What makes you be-lieve that you de-serve more?  
So new,  
Not true.

You're gam-ble-ing!

What're the odds to fight?  
For Saxon oversight?  
Who knows if might makes right?

Babe, you are good with an economy,  
You're not so good with a military,  
Today,  
Let's play.

Regal Christian, there's so much to choose,  
You should give it up before you lose,  
A clue,  
It's true. It's true, yeah.

You're gam-ble-ing!

What're the odds to fight?  
For Saxon oversight?  
Who knows if might makes right?



*Christian IV. Image from web.*



## Slogging to Battle

Danish King Christian IV and the Danish-German Army retreated from the Count of Tilly's Catholic League Army, but rain turned the roads to mush. Alas, his baggage train became mired in the woods behind his position, so the King decided to make a stand behind the river at Lutter am Barenberge. The two forces stared at each other across the river.

*My pike block.*

That's where we gamers came in. Umpire Troy set up the battle and I'm guessing that only he and Jay knew about the battle. Jay says he had put on the same battle a decade earlier, but our collective memory held no such knowledge. Ignorance is bliss. Well, not on a wargames table.

*Imperialists (l to r): Marc, Pat, and Sam.*

The Catholic League commanders were Marc, Pat, and Sam. The Danish-German commanders were Russ, Dave, Jay, and Mike. We had to jigger the command responsibilities on the Danish-German a bit to allow all four of us to play front-line troops. Originally it was set up as three lines parallel to the river plus the cavalry on the right. We sliced it so all of us had parts of all three lines.

This battle uses pike and shot blocs as the prime infantry formations. The biggest restriction came from the restrictive firing -- straight ahead and no angling. We played it as such, but were not quite sure what happens when two pike units facing each other slightly askew decide to fire.

*Hold that ford! I advance pike and cavalry.*

Something we did understand was that the Catholic League's tercios (pike and shot blocs) could fire musketeers three stands deep and the Danish-Germans only two deep -- apparently a more





efficient firing formation and training. As we were using a Fire & Fury Brigade adaptation, that had significance in shooting results on the *F&FB* charts.

We also understood that Catholic League tercios were Veteran units while the Danish-Germans were only Trained units. That had significance in maneuver and firing results.

Both had significance in the game.

*Marc moves up the Impis with a "right horn" strategy.*



As for the terrain, that river separating the armies had three crossing points: a bridge in the center and a ford on each flank.

### **Battle of Lutter am Barenberge**

On the left side, I knew I needed every advantage possible, so I advanced up to the ford with a pike bloc and my cavalry. That +1 for favorable terrain might be the difference in melee.

Um....No.

*Well, that's my pike in the upper right corner, but it's Marc's cavalry next to it. My two cavalry units flee, but at least one from the second line stands tall...for the moment. When you roll three 1s in a row... Imperialist skirmishers appear out of the woods in upper left corner.*



Marc came at me with his cavalry and crossed the ford to battle my cavalry. I managed one good roll of a 10 and two bad rolls of 1 and 1. Hence, I lost two of three battles and tumbled backwards, disordered and lacking many a trooper in a saddle.

It was good that I had moved up a second line.

Meanwhile, Marc's three-rank shooters slowly shot up my two-rank shooters.

In the next two melees, I rolled yet again a 1 and then another 1. That did in most of my second line.

As my pike bloc had lost its supporting cavalry, I formed an all-around defense that took away flanks but at the expense of losing the second rank of shooters. Marc continued to peck away at me. Yet the bloc held, for it is rather large and I finally managed to roll well for morale and keep it there.

### **In the Center**

Jay and Dave tag-teamed Pat who struggled mightily to get across the bridge against the combined fires of two blocs and all three of our artillery batteries. And yet he reached the other side starting in Turn 5, but his lead tercio was in even worse shape than mine from all the shooting.



## On the Right

Mike also adopted a forward defense with his all-cavalry, all the time force. He, like me, reveled in rolling lowest of the low 1s on the d10. His cavalry was running just as fast as mine. Sam, like Marc, rolled quite well and stormed across the river.

*The end of Turn 4. Mike's cavalry do just as well as mine. He rolled four 1s in a row...*

## Flanking Attacks

That's when the Catholics unleashed flanking attacks. On my side, two units of blunderbuss-wielding maniacs came out of the woods and shot at me. I only had one dinged unit of cavalry left to try and counter them. Alas, them being in the woods, I did not charge. Fortunately, and finally, Marc decided to roll low enough not to ding me.

On the other side, Sam unleashed more cavalry on Mike's already denuded flank. Mike proceeded to roll four 1s (on a d10) in a row for melees. That flank caved in, too.

## End of Game

That's about where we left it -- only five turns. However, there was little doubt about the outcome. This was more like Cannae than a 30 Years War battle, but it was good fun to shove some pike around. Thanks Dave for hosting, Troy for umpiring, and the usual suspects for gaming.

## Future Game Thoughts: TYW

*by Jay*

First off, let me thank you for going above and beyond regarding a game in my favorite period. Sadly, the Danes could do no better than Mike's forebear who got them into this mess.

*End of game. Turn 5.*

Going forward however three issues came up that come to mind that bear resolution:

- \* Should artillery have an arc of fire as per *F & F* rather than simply its direct frontage?
- \* Shouldn't all gunners (except those gunners attached to pike blocks) in this period simply flee if charged?
- \* Might not all the musketeers attached to a pike block fire at any target that even partially presents itself in its direct frontal zone?

*We're still noodling this. – RL*





# Coral Sea 1942: Double Blind Death

by Russ Lockwood

For those of you, like me, who were intrigued by Bruce's double blind *Bismarck* game pitting the Kriegsmarine versus the Royal Navy (see the Jan. 25, 2024 AAR), he followed it up with a double blind 1942 Battle of the Coral Sea. He was also kind enough to invite me to participate and assigned me to the US side.

*Bruce (left) umpires the game while the Japanese players John and Garth (right) plot the offensive.*

## Operation Mo

The Japanese had a two-prong plan to extend their conquests: One prong would establish a seaplane base in the Solomon Islands at Tulagi and the other would be an invasion of Port Moresby in New Guinea. Longer-ranged prongs would capture New Caledonia and Samoa while another would bombard the Australian coast.

*Phil (left) of the Lexington watches Bruce explain the map coordinates as Joe serves as an observer.*

For the first two prongs, the IJN sent two carriers, the *Zuikaku* and the *Shokaku*, with escorts as well as a small carrier, the *Shoho*, with escorts to cover the invasions.

The US learned of the operation via signals intercept and dispatched the carriers *USS Yorktown* and *USS Lexington* plus escorts to intercept the Japanese. Us gamers come in here.

## The Sides

Phil took the *USS Lexington* task force and I the *USS Yorktown* task force. We also had a modest number of land-based aircraft (B-17s, B-26s, B-25s, P-39s, P-40s, and Hudsons) stationed in Australia, New Guinea, and New Caledonia that could be used for search or strike.

Over on the IJN side, Garth and Joe commanded the Japanese forces and had more to coordinate than us as they were essentially on the offense. Besides the naval forces, they also had land-based fighters and bombers.

*Japanese John and Garth are way over there. The table in the middle is where the hex tactical battles are fought.*

## The Modified Game System

Bruce used the Coral Sea variant of the old Avalon Hill *Midway* game with a few modifications. The map is divided into





small squares (zones -- 50nm each) and large squares (areas -- nine zones per area).

*The map. Image from web.*

Each carrier and each land-based bomber gets a search of one area -- called out by the player as Letter-Number. A search of the upper left corner of the map would be A-1, or as we shouted across the room, Alpha-1. The aircraft have a range, so you go up to half the range out and then the other half back.

If enemy ships are in that area, the umpire calls out the zone letter and a short description of ship types, such as "Carriers and escorts," or "oilers and destroyers," and so on. Let me tell you, when you hear that sweet, sweet sound of "carriers," your immediate thought is: "Am I in range?"

Obviously, search planes would fly and likely spot anything along the way, but the game system only allows searches at the end area. That's a simplicity versus reality check. The alternative would be to either call out each zone as the plane flew, or, plot the flight paths on a map and hand to the umpire, who would compare paths and actual ship locations. Both are laborious and time consuming, so the original *Midway* system of calling out an area is just fine with me.

*Cards up top are stat cards for the various aircraft. Counters show status of aircraft. Note the arrows shunt aircraft around depending on your actions.*

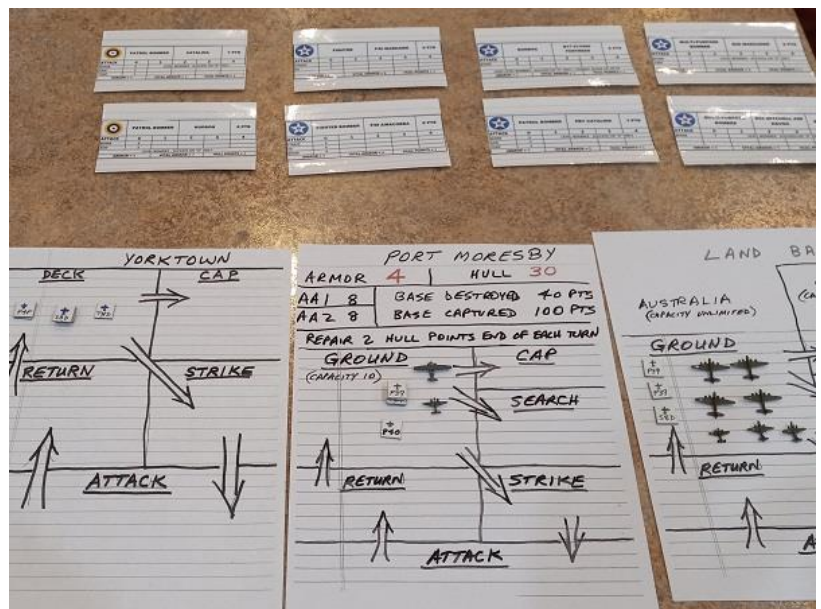
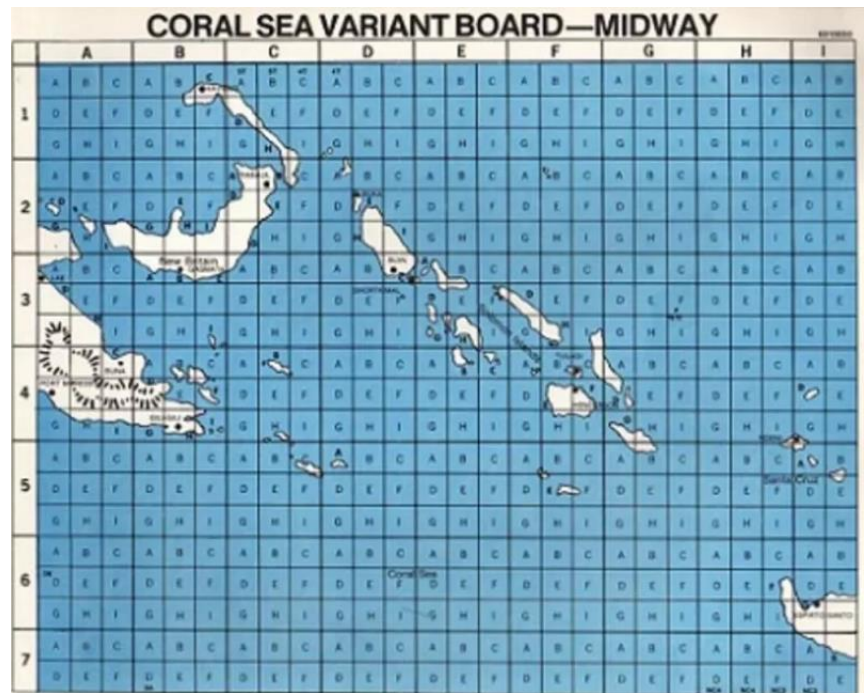
## Combat System

Bruce uses the *Axis and Allies* ship combat system. This is a system using 1:1800 scale plastic ships on a hex, not the A&A boardgame version and not the *Midway* game system.

In short, up to two ships are allowed per hex and ship AA only fires in the hex (although the original ship system did have special AA rules for some ships that could shoot one hex over). A maximum of four planes may be placed per hex, with players alternating placement.

*Our two submarines at start.*

Defending fighters (CAP) fight escort fighters. If defending fighters outnumber escorts, the overage may fight a dive bomber or torpedo bomber. Each plane has a number of hits needed to abort and more to shoot down.





One quirk: Bombers do not get to roll “defensive” dice. The fighter either does nothing, aborts the bomber, or shoots down the bomber. Afterwards, the fighter is done for the combat.

*Begin May 4 Turn: Our searches concentrate on defending the way to Port Moresby.*

The system uses d6s, with rolls of 1, 2, and 3 missing, 4 and 5 scoring 1 hit, and 6 scoring two hits. So even an oiler (3 AA dice) has a chance against some types of incoming bombers.

There is no height limits with AA. A ship shooting at a B-17 bombing at 20,000 feet or a torpedo bomber down on the deck fires the same number of dice. The only difference is the number of hits needed to abort or shoot down and you only get one ship AA shot against one plane.

The Japanese did have a big advantage in range -- they could launch a strike up to seven zones away while our dive bombers could go only five zones away and the torpedo bombers only three zones. We would have to be sneaky and lucky.

*We find Japanese CAs and CVs within our five-zone Fighter and Dive bomber distance, but outside the Torpedo planes' three-zone distance.*

## Clever US Deployment

So the game started and Phil and I on the US side sailed onto the map from below New Caledonia on the lower right part of the map. We weren't sure where the Japanese started, although Rabaul was our guess. However, we were absolutely confused why the Japanese searched the upper right corner of the map. No matter, we sailed our carrier task forces in the general direction of Port Moresby.

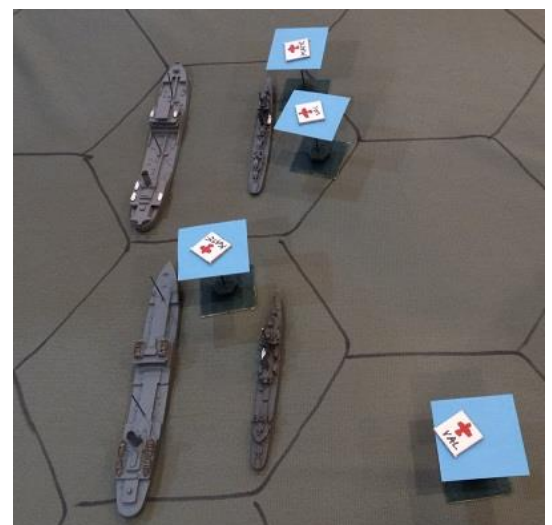
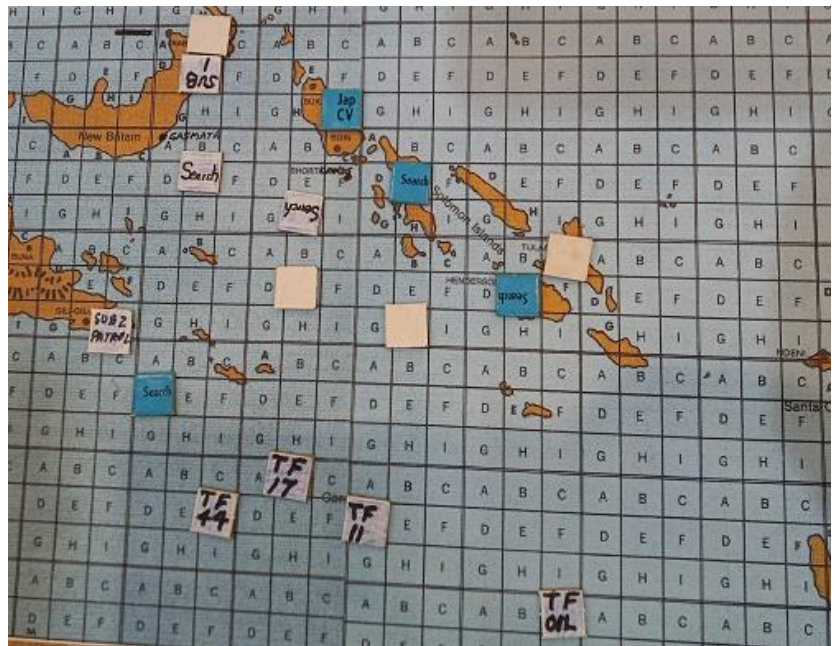
We had two submarines: One we planted outside Rabaul, where the Japanese Port Moresby transport invasion fleet was located and the other we kept at the tip of New Guinea, the presumed course of the IJN invasion fleet.

We ignored the Solomons and sure enough, the Japanese started establishing a seaplane base at Tulagi.

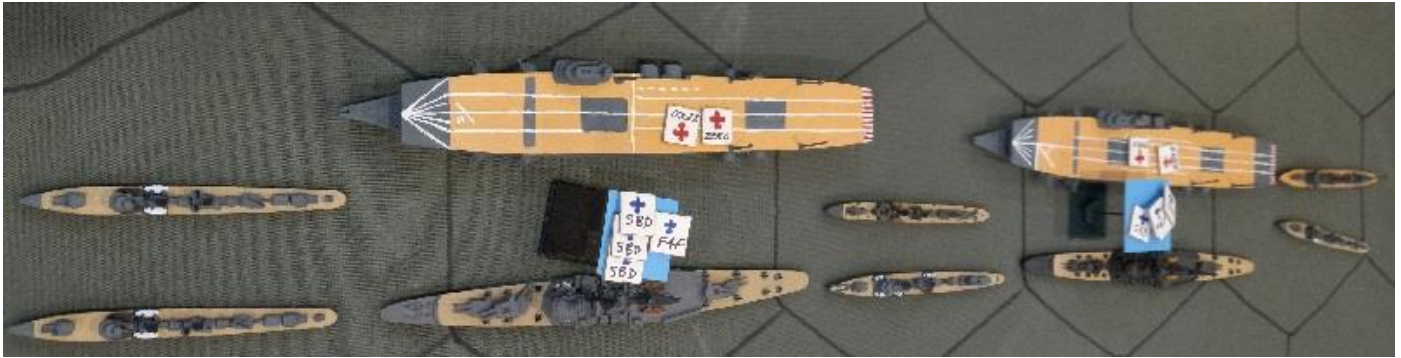
Our sneaky move was to send the oiler and destroyer task force out as bait. To be fair, this was a tad gamey since the game didn't include refueling at sea.

The Japanese found them and launched a carrier strike. It was successful -- sunk the destroyer *USS Worden* and damaged the destroyer *USS Simms*, but the oilers were intact.

*Japanese planes find our oiler task force.*







*My strike on the Shokaku (left) and Phil's first-wave strike on the Zuikaku.*

## US: Strike Or No Strike?

That, however, led to us finding the IJN carriers, although the umpire noted “carrier and escorts.” We figured we found the *Shoho*.

We debated the merits of launching a strike because that would likely bring on the wrath of the Japanese.

Our other concern is that while aircraft on strikes go out and come back in one turn, there is a one-turn delay as the returning aircraft are refitted and refueled. So, you don't just launch on one turn and launch on the next and launch on the next and so on. You have to consider the one-turn delay.

Remember that our dive bombers only had a five-zone range. That provides the Japanese players a limit and thus they can concentrate on in-range search areas.

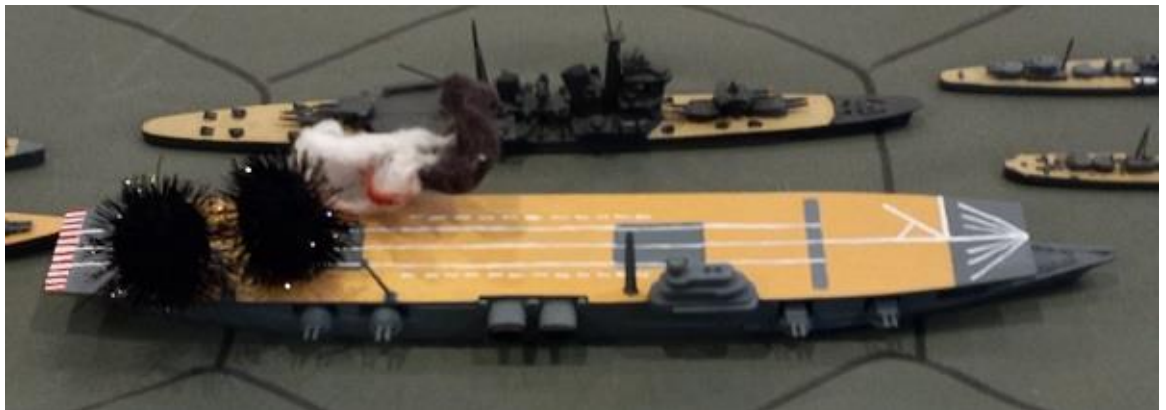
In the end, we figured that attacking and possibly sinking a light carrier was worth it. Off our strike packages went.

Arriving over the IJN, boy-oh-boy were we pleasantly surprised to be wrong.

We

found the main IJN carrier force of the *Zuikaku* and *Shokaku*.

*Phil's three hits on the Zuikaku ends air ops for the Japanese carrier.*



## Our Strike Packages

Phil and I each sent one F4F fighter as escort and four SBD dive bombers. The torpedo planes were out of range and so stayed on the *USS Yorktown* and *USS Lexington*. We also left 1 F4F each behind as CAP. As you can only put four planes in a square, I put the F4F and three SBDs on the *Shokaku* and Phil did the same on the *Zuikaku*. I gave Phil my extra SBD and he held his own 'extra' SBD and joined these two for a second wave.

My dice at the outset were feeble, although I did place one hit on the *Shokaku*. All my planes returned.

Ah, but Phil's dice were turbocharged and winged vengeance came screaming down from the heavens.

Between the two waves, he manages to roll well enough to place three hits on the *Zuikaku*.

The carrier takes four hits to sink, but three “cripples” the ship, which means all its AA dice get a -1 die modifier, the carrier cannot perform air operations, and it sails only one zone instead of two per turn.

The US carrier planes were rather jubilant as they flew away from the smoking IJN carriers.

## IJN Strike

As we expected, it didn't take the Japanese long to find our carriers. In came carrier-based and land-based air units.

Float planes attacked my *USS Yorktown*. Given that the *Zuikaku* was unable to launch or recover aircraft, I guess this was the land-based units within range.



This time, my dice proved lethal. My F4Fs shot down Zeros and the AA nailed Vals. The Japanese flew away with fewer planes than arrived and without scoring a hit. Another good time for the *USS Yorktown*.

*My Yorktown task force just before the Japanese planes arrive. One F4F squadron on CAP.*

The attack against the *USS Lexington* proved almost as lethal versus the Japanese aircraft and just as ineffective against the carrier. Phil continued his hot streak of die rolling and Garth and John continued their streaks of poor die rolling. The *Lexington* emerged unscathed.

*Japanese aircraft try to hit the Lexington.*

## More US Strikes

The one-turn reprieve didn't help the *Zuikaku*. Because it sails at half speed, we found it quickly and it was in range of the *USS Yorktown* aircraft. As it didn't have aircraft to fly, I didn't send an escort fighter, preferring to keep it as CAP.

I was surprised to see a Zero over the carrier.

Ah...land-based CAP. The Japanese could perform that mission, the US not. No matter, in went the four SBDs.

*The Yorktown's unescorted dive bombers sink the already crippled Zuikaku.*

One was aborted by the Zeros, but the other three bore in. Once again, I had magnificent dice and not only sunk the crippled *Zuikaku*, but also its destroyer escort.

The *Yorktown* air crews were ecstatic once again.

Meanwhile, Phil concentrated on the *Shokaku* and placed two hits on that carrier. Added to the earlier hit and that crippled the carrier and took it out of the game.

We even sent our idle bombers with fighter escort to pound a Japanese airbase at Lae.

*The Shokaku is hit.*





*The Zuikaku sinks. Image from web.*

## US Victory

We stopped the game at this point, in part because the three hours had elapsed and it was time to clean up and in part because the IJN was gutted. The US was way ahead on points.

In considering the outcome, we struck first, which seems to be a game (and historical) advantage, and then I proceeded to defy 50-50 roll odds with 70-80-even 90% hits with the d10 SBD rolls, followed by Phil doing the same on his rolls.

Couple that with John and Garth not making 50-50 odds and you have a number of Japanese planes in the drink, a number of IJN ships on the ocean floor, and the Americans with minimal damage.

Bruce opined that the IJN should have waited and baited, just as the US did. With the die rolling disparity, I doubt any strategy would be effective.

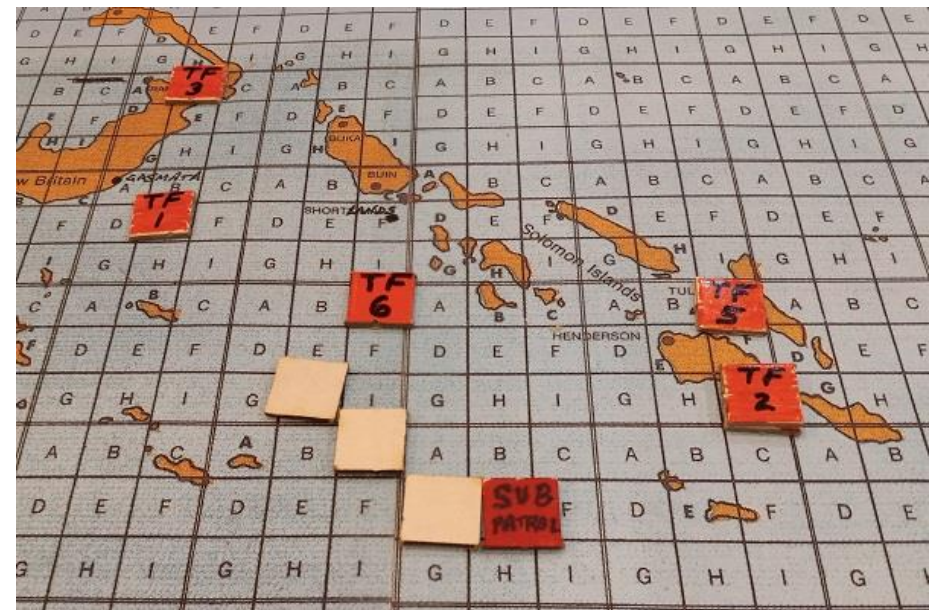
*The IJN map at the end of the game.*

## Scenario-Specific Rule

I thought about the game and came up with an idea. Given the Japanese expertise early in the war, you could impose a scenario-specific rules that certain carrier air crews would hit on 3-4-5-6 and torps on 5-6. You'd need to color code them to keep 'em straight.

Likewise, in 1943 the demise of the pre-war training excellence means that advantage would disappear.

In 1944, Japanese pilots were so green, you might give all Japanese aircraft -1 on all die rolls to simulate lack of training and then the US pilots would get +1 to their die rolls.



## The Opposing Sides:

In case you were wondering:

USN: TF 17 - carrier *Yorktown* (2 F4F, 4 SBD, 1 TBD); cruisers *Astoria*, *Chester*, and *Portland*; and destroyers *Morris*, *Anderson*, *Hammann*, and *Russell*.

USN: TF 11 - carrier *Lexington* (2 F4F, 4 SBD, 1 TBD); cruisers *New Orleans* and *Minneapolis*; and destroyers *Phelps*, *Dewey*, *Farrault*, *Alwynn*, and *Monaghan*.

USN: TF Oil - oilers *Neosho* and *Tippecanoe*; and destroyers *Simms* and *Worden*.

USN: TF 44 - cruisers *Australia* and **Chicago**; light cruiser *Hobart*; and destroyers *Perkins* and *Walke*.

USN: 2 submarines on patrol.

Allied: Land-based Air - 4 B-17, 6 P-39, 1 P-40, 1 SBD, 1 B-25, 1 B-26, 2 PB-1, 1 Hudson plus another 4 P-39, 1 SBD, 2 B-25, and 3 B-26 in reserve.







# WWII Undaunted: Normandy

by Russ Lockwood

Dan pulled out an Osprey game called *Undaunted: Normandy*. It's a lightweight WWII squad-level game that uses hexes -- or, more accurately, square tiles placed in a brick-like pattern. We played the introductory scenario of a meeting engagement between equal German and US forces. By dint of randomness, I was the US side and Dan the German.

Each square contains a die modifier ranging from 0 to -3 that represents the cover in the square. That settles all differences of opinion about what constitutes terrain in a hex or on a tabletop.

In this game, you need a Scout marker to investigate a square. Then and only then can you move a Rifleman counter into the square.

Each side had two scouts and two riflemen counters, plus a squad leader and a platoon leader. The latter two types are represented only by playing cards, not counters.

## Card Play Drives The Game

Each player receives a deck of cards. In our case: two scouts, four riflemen, two squad leaders, one platoon leader, and two Fog of War. You draw four per turn for your hand and select one to place upside down as a bid for initiative. The initiative bid cards are turned over and highest goes first. If a tie, the player with initiative in the last turn goes first again. Yes, it is possible to go second in one turn and then go first in the next.

You play one of the three cards left in your hand to activate an order listed on the card, for example, move. Scouts move two squares and Riflemen one square. Or you can shoot at a target. Or invoke some other order -- they're printed on the card and the rule book well explains each one.

When done, you play a second card and then a third. Then the other player plays his three cards.

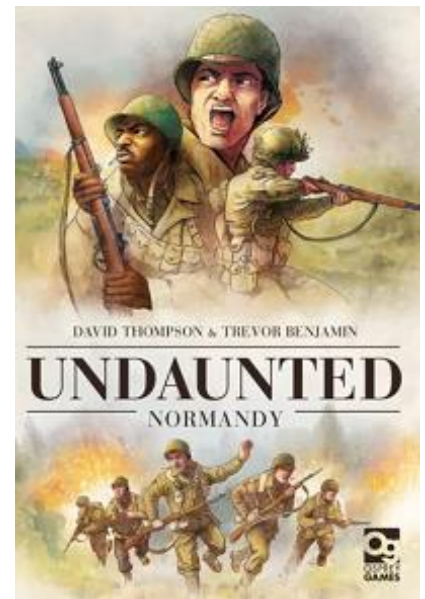
*Sample cards. Image from web.*

## Combat By Dice

Each card contains a shooting factor. Add 1 for every square in between shooter and target (zero if in the same square). That's the number to meet or beat to get a hit. Roll a d10 die and subtract the cover modifier. If you meet or beat the number, the target is hit.

When hit, the targeted player removes a card from his deck. If not from the deck, then from his hand. If not from his deck or hand then the discard pile. If no cards are available, then the counter is removed from the board. Simple.

*Set up for introductory scenario.*





## Bolster And Command

The leader cards (they do not have counters) include special orders to replay a card or increase your game deck with more cards. If you add cards, your counters can take more hits and stay in the game longer.

*End of Turn 2.*

## Victory

The scenario lays out victory counters on the tiles. You need to occupy a square tile and use a "Control" order to grab the square and its VPs. In our game, only riflemen had the Control order. First one to a VP total wins. In our game, it was 5 VPs. The US started with 2 VPs, the Germans with 3 VPs, and most squares contained one or two VPs.

## Game Play

Dan opted to head across the board and try and grab a 2 VP square. I tried to grab the nearer 1 VP squares. We sorted through the Scouts scout and Riflemen follow up, bolstered our deck with some additional cards, and took a few pot shots.

I tried to intercept a rifleman with gunfire, but that squad slipped through. I nailed the second counter enough times to take all its cards out of play, but failed to make that last hit on the enemy in open field.

By Turn 6, Dan had a Scout and Rifleman in the square with 2 VPs, but I had advanced a Scout into the same square to contest. Dan shot him out of the game. I pushed a Rifleman into the square.

The shootouts were pathetic on my end. My riflemen got shot up quickly and were out of the game. Dan used a control order and grabbed the VPs to reach 5 VP.

*End Turn 6.*

## An Odd Mechanic

One thing I noticed was that as I shot up a Rifleman counter and Dan pulled out those cards, the result is the cards left are for the other counters. This increases the efficiency of the remaining forces -- in effect drawing twice as many cards for the remaining units than the other side.

That seems to me to be the Achilles heel of the system. The remaining troops move and shoot faster and faster than their intact opponents.

Furthermore, although you can add cards to your deck, the supply per counter is limited. Thus, as I hammered the one German squad, the other became super Germans with one card after another. Insert a leader than can reuse the cards in play and all of a sudden that remaining rifleman can go four times in a row. And when the deck reshuffle occurs, out come the same cards.

I ran across this before with a box game called *WarChest* or something like that. Load up your deck with one type of card and you can blitzkrieg across a hex map when the other side plods with lots of different types.

Note that more advanced scenarios include MGs, snipers, and mortars.

After our first play, we decided that we'd rather play *Chain of Command* or *Squad Leader* -- admittedly larger and more complex tactical WWII games than *Undaunted: Normandy*. But then again, we've been playing these games a lot longer than *Undaunted: Normandy*. There are likely additional rules to mitigate the Achilles heel of the card-based system.





## Confronting The World Eater: *Space Base*

by Russ Lockwood

Dan and I continued the *Space Base Shy Pluto* campaign by confronting the World Eater. Additional cards are laid out: four Level 1, four Level 2, and four Level 3. Each player also receives two Patrol fighter tokens.

You take your normal turn and roll a special black World Eater d6 along with your two regular d6s. If the icon doesn't appear, play normally.

*The black World Eater die, brown Patrol Ship counter, and the new cards that provide gold and ships.*



If the World Eater icon appears, then you roll six tiny red d6s -- five sides are blank and the sixth has an icon. If you spend a Patrol fighter, you gain all the icons -- VPs, money, and so on. If you don't, you lose the icons from your board.

Many a time we rolled the World Eater icon, but then rolled six blanks. So, no effect. Other times, we rolled an icon on only one die.

The World Eater has a card with a number of spaces. Each time someone plays a Patrol fighter, the marker moves up one space. When you fill all the spaces (15 or so), the World Eater is defeated and you move to the next part of the story arc.

At first, we were so worried about the World Eater, we loaded up with cards that gave up Patrol fighters. Then we had a bunch of 'em. Dan was smart enough to switch over to VP cards when he had a sufficient number of Patrol fighters. I was not.

*Five of the six World Eater cubes. One side has an icon. The other five are blank.*



Dan for the win with 43 VPs. I had zero VPs. I'll have to pay more attention next time. I obviously was distracted by Shy Pluto Sailor and Shy Pluto Soldier.

We destroyed half the World Eater.

## Confronting The World Eater II: *Space Base*

by Russ Lockwood

We played another game and finally knocked out the World Eater, which turned into asteroid goo (six smaller pink d6s with one icon side and five blank sides) that require a certain number of patrol tokens to obtain. When you roll the icon, you gain that resource.

The game calls this akin to asteroid mining.

*Mining goo with Patrol ships.*





The original six red dice join a dozen or so other small d6 red dice in a bag. As you buy the pink dice, you randomly draw a red die from the bag and replace it on the mining card.

And that's it for the *Shy Pluto* expansion. It's clever enough and the cards match the story, but it's about the best they could do to extend the basic 2d6 system. I will say the anticipation was delightful and when Dan rolled a number of the small d6s and got almost all icons, it helped him buy higher cost cards.

*The World Eater turned into goo after 13 hits.*

The best part was mixing in the new cards with the old for a larger 1-2-3 decks and the increase in card trick combos. You can really load up a number. Dan had the 7 column loaded up. When I rolled a 7, lots of gold flowed into his coffers from the variety of column shift effects. For the record, he made far better use of the resource accumulation strategy that I did.

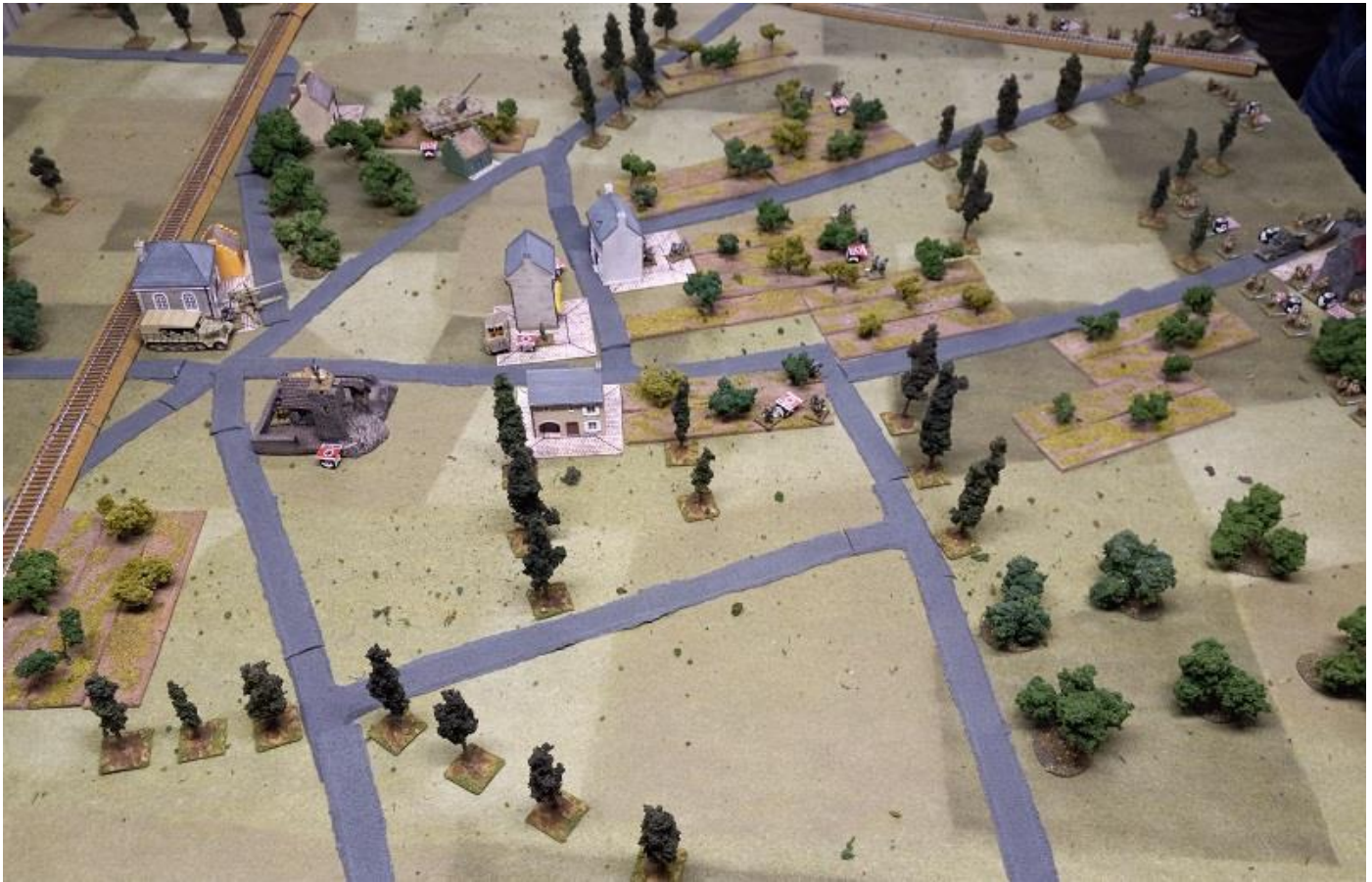
I'm surprised they haven't come out with a "4" deck of really expensive cards. Who knows? Maybe in the future. Maybe that will be named Soldier Pluto or Sailor Pluto?

In the meantime, we enjoy playing *Space Base* for a quick, no-muss, no-fuss game of planning and die rolling.



*Two less-than-shy Plutos: Soldier Pluto (left) and Sailor Pluto. Images from web.*





## Road to Arnhem: Battle of Elst

by Russ Lockwood

Newly promoted Oberstleutnant Von Lockwood arrived within the headquarters maelstrom that served as the center of defense for the town of Elst. Phones rang non-stop, for just as soon as a member of his staff hung up, it rang anew with more updates of Allied airdrops and advances across the Netherlands. Hastily scribbled notes merged within the cacophony of recons and rumors.

*Marc (left) and Pat plot to blow through the German defense at Elst.*

Von Lockwood stood in the doorway, absorbing the chaos until a Feldwebel managed to lift his nose out of the paperwork long enough to spring to attention and salute.

"Carry on," Von Lockwood responded with a lackadaisical salute. "Where is the major?"

"Dead, sir. Artillery two days ago."

"Then who's in command?"

"Hauptmann Sturges."

Von Lockwood waited. The Feldwebel remained at attention.

"And he is where?" Von Lockwood asked. No sense berating the soldaten.

"Yes! At once! This way, sir," and the Feldwebel led the way down the stairs to a basement office. A couple raps on a doorframe announced them.

"You may return to your duties," Von Lockwood told the Feldwebel, who scooted back up the stairs.

The Hauptmann rose to his feet and saluted along with a number of Leutnants leaning on a table looking at a map of the area. They looked haggard with faces dripping with fatigue and body language signaling duty rather than optimism.





"As you were," Von Lockwood ordered while returning the salutes. "Hauptmann Sturger. Regiment says the situation is in balance, but what is the real situation?"

"Two Tommy battalions are heading up the road trying to break through to Arnhem," the Hauptmann reported, pointing at two roads leading to Elst. "We are stretched thin. Three infantry companies in the orchards forward of the town cover the roads. One mortar platoon in support. Somebody sent us an 88 AT platoon, which I placed along the main road where all the other roads converge before heading over the railroad tracks. That's it."

"Estimated effect?"

"We can hold for a moment or two, but not for long."

"Then I bring good news," the Oberstleutnant said. "A Panther platoon is covering the east flank in case the Tommies try and skirt the town. I'm told a Panzer III platoon is heading this way from the west and two STuG III platoons are heading from the east. I'm not sure when they will arrive. I also brought a company of panzergrenadiers to beef up the center of Elst. It's not much, but it will have to do."

"That's more than I hoped for."

"There's a nebelwerfer battery assigned to us. It should be in position."

"Excellent. Now we have a chance to stop the Tommies."

*Marc's advance peeks through a hedgerow.*

## Kampfgruppe Sturger

So began another game of *Command Decision*. The goal for the British (Pat and Marc) was to reach the railroad tracks at the northern end of town. The Germans had to stop them. The Brits have some time pressure, but the space is wide and the German force small.

The elevated railroads block line of sight. The orchards and woods offer light cover (-1) while the stone buildings offer heavy cover (-3). The lines of trees also block line of sight unless you're in them.

The ruined church possesses a tall bell tower that the Hauptmann can use as a place to spot the British anywhere on the table ... however, it is raining, so normal 60-inch sighting distance was cut in half.

That gives the British an advantage as they can creep along the edges of the battlefield to reach their objective. On the plus side, the Germans don't have to worry about Jabos strafing them from above.

The Germans fielded three infantry companies (three platoon stands each) and one panzergrenadier company, the 88 platoon, the Panther platoon, and a mortar platoon. Reinforcements were one Panzer III platoon and two STuG III platoons. All German infantry stands were equipped with panzerfausts.

The British battalions each have three companies (four stands each) of infantry, a Sherman tank company (three platoon stands each), a 6-lber AT platoon, and a supporting artillery battery. All infantry were armed with PIATs. Pat's command also had one towed 17-lber AT gun platoon.





## The British Advance

Pat on my left (East) scurried behind the railroad line, using it as impenetrable cover. He deployed the 17lber AT gun on the road. The artillery fired some annoying fire. Marc in front (South) edged towards my right (West), fanning out to try and skirt the town with his Shermans and some infantry.

*Turn 3: Marc's infantry lead the way from bottom right corner while Pat's troops creep on the other side of the railroad embankment in upper right corner.*

Hauptmann Sturger climbed the bell tower. As soon as he saw the British infantry advance out of the woods and mist, he called in the nebelwerfer -- only it did not answer the radio. In CD terms, it's a 50-50 chance to make contact with the battery and get it to fire a salvo.

Fortunately, the mortar spotter in the bell tower had a better connection -- just lean over the edge and yell. Mortar fire caused some minor concerns and even managed to wipe out a platoon in the open.

British artillery was sporadic in its effectiveness, but usually managed to arrive.

*At the end of Turn 4, the Germans retreat into Elst with Marc and Pat hard on their heels.*



## The German Fighting Withdrawal

For my part, the two infantry companies facing most of Marc's British were going to be overwhelmed, so I slowly withdrew them back from the orchards to the relative safety of the stone buildings. The panzergrenadiers also fell back, maintaining their position as a reserve.

The third infantry company opposite Pat would do the same, but I waited to pull them out. At one point, I had Pat believing they were dummy units.

*Marc advances on Turn 6.*

Alas, I misunderstood the use of the "umbrella" order. It's really a withdraw order, but to me the icon looks like an umbrella. I had never





used it before. Previously, when I wanted to leave a spot, I used a cautious advance (one chevron icon) or full advance order (two chevrons). When I withdrew the other companies, that's what I used. As Marc said I needed to use a withdraw order, not one of the advance orders, I guess those were illegal moves on my part, but he patiently allowed 'em.

I thought the withdraw order was done before all other commands (regardless of initiative) implemented their orders.

Er, no.

The Withdraw order operates the same as any other order -- the side with initiative does all its orders first. As the British had rolled and gotten initiative that turn, Pat went first and charged into my infantry company with the withdraw order.

The bottom line was that I should have pulled out the troops the previous turn. Pat vaporized two of my three stands and the third hightailed it through the orchard and back to town.

Learn something new about these rules every time I play.

*Pat's infiltrated through the orchard and into the hedgerow as my Panther and one platoon of Germans guard the left flank.*



## The Never-werfer

Meanwhile, while the British infantry cavorted in the open beneath the Hauptmann's nose, the 50-50 die roll for calling in the Nebelwerfer seemed to fall on the wrong side of the 50-50 divide.

Except once.

The rockets screamed down and plastered the area, taking out some infantry and blinding (Suppression -2 die mod) the Shermans. Now we're talking.

And that's the last rocket I ever saw. In the nine turns of the game, Sturger only made the 50-50 roll once. That's it. Once.



*The Leutnant points the way to salvation as two British infantry companies and a Tank company roll up to say 'ello.*

## Infantry in the Town

Marc chipped away at one of my infantry companies over the turns, turning the western block of the town into a crematorium. Yet one stand stubbornly held out -- in part helped by the mortar.

The center German infantry company did its best, but was driven out and obliterated.

As for the Shermans, they concentrated their fire on the bell tower and finally drove Sturger and the mortar spotter to ground. Then Sturger failed his morale and stayed in the church basement. There went even the chance of rockets coming in.

The Shermans ground forward. The Panzer III annoyed them, was forced back, came back, and was blown apart. There was nothing to stop Marc from reaching the rail line objective by Turn 11.



## Eastern Advance

Pat chased the broken German infantry through the orchards while looping his other infantry in from the east. His Sherman tanks plowed directly north. The only thing holding the onslaught back was that single Panther platoon and possibly the long-range support of the 88 -- although that never fired the entire game. No juicy targets and if it did, you can already hear the British artillery adding even more rain to its parade.

*SUPPRESSED by artillery and hammered by PIAT teams, the Panther platoon makes a stand...*

Pat massed two infantry companies against the Panther, which defended itself admirably, slaughtering one of them in the open. Meanwhile, two surviving platoons slipped around the side and fired PIATs while Pat formed a gun line with the Shermans and the 61ber AT gun in the cover of trees. The Panther shrugged off most hits, but eventually turned about and scampered for the rear.

That's just when the STuGs finally arrived. One managed to burn a Sherman, but the other obviously had a completely green crew -- all its shots against the AT gun were complete misses. Even my tank riders fired at the AT gun and missed. The British AT gun didn't. A STuG platoon went up in flames.

We called the game after turn 9 of an 11-turn game.

*...And lives long enough to shoot up infantry and run.*

## British Victory

A 2-on-1 Allied to German force is right for 1944. Technically, four Sherman 75s, two Sherman 76s, two 6-lber AT guns, and 17-lber AT gun on attack is about the same as one Panther, an 88, a PzIII, and two STuG IIIs on defense. Six British infantry companies vs and one panzergrenadier and three regular infantry companies is also about right. Defense has an advantage in this game and rightfully so. I can't complain about the forces.







*The luckiest 6lber AT gun platoon of the battle knocks out a STuG while the other nails a Sherman.*

I can complain about my nebelwerfer die rolling. Abysmal! Making a 50-50 roll only one of eight times (the other turn Sturmer was hiding in the basement) is abysmal! And that also allowed Marc's infantry freedom of movement. Don't you just hate free-range enemy soldiers?

I saw the results of the one shot that did come in. Another three of them would likely strip the infantry support from the Shermans.

I also erred on the withdrawal order. Live and learn on that one. Or in the German infantry's case, die and learn.

That was a well-earned British victory.

Thanks, Marc for hosting and Pat for gaming.

*With the mortar team pinned, one platoon covers the road. Meanwhile, the most inept spotter in the Wehrmacht hides behind the bell tower as Shermans reach yet another hedgerow line.*





# NEWS

## LeeCon II: CANCELLED

by Russ Lockwood

Alas, LeeCon II NJ Game Day and Wargame Flea Market, originally scheduled for May, is cancelled. If you need a contact: Dennis Shorthouse (OMM). E-mail: [militarymatters@att.net](mailto:militarymatters@att.net)

## New Figures: Medieval Scots Highlanders

by Russ Lockwood

*Adapted from the press release.*

-- RL

Chris Parker Games continues to roll out a variety of 3D resin-printed miniatures. His new figs, among many, are Highlanders with Claymores in 28mm, 40mm, and 54mm.



Each set contains six miniatures -- all unpainted and all in a single piece.

Price for 28mm: \$15 per set; for 40mm: \$21 per set; and for 54mm: \$36 per set. If you order 2 to 3 sets, you get 10% discount. If you order 4 to 20 sets, you get 15% discount.

More info about these and other figures: <https://www.chrisparkergames.com>

## March to Monmouth: Zoom Talk

by Russ Lockwood

*Adapted from the press release. -- RL*

The Washington Crossing American Revolution Round Table continues its series of lectures.

On Monday, June 10, 2024 at 7:30pm, historian John Fabiano, trustee of the Friends of Monmouth Battlefield, will present the lecture: The British Army's March to Monmouth. He will discuss the challenges encountered by the British army on their 1778 retreat across New Jersey and their battle with Washington's army near Monmouth Courthouse.

For a Zoom link to the meeting, or to learn about upcoming talks, please send an email to: [wroundtable@gmail.com](mailto:wroundtable@gmail.com)

The WCARRT was founded in 2004 and is sponsored by the Swan Historical Foundation.

You can view recent presentations on their YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbSuYlzn1LYD9tebcETbDgA>



## Dr. Benjamin Rush

For example, historian Steve Yacik talked about Dr. Benjamin Rush and the roles he played in the American Revolution and the field of medicine in the early Republic. This presentation was made to the Washington Crossing American Revolution Round Table on March 11, 2024.

YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_t5MHw5qRBw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_t5MHw5qRBw)

You can also visit the WCARRT website:

[www.swanhistoricalfoundation.org](http://www.swanhistoricalfoundation.org)



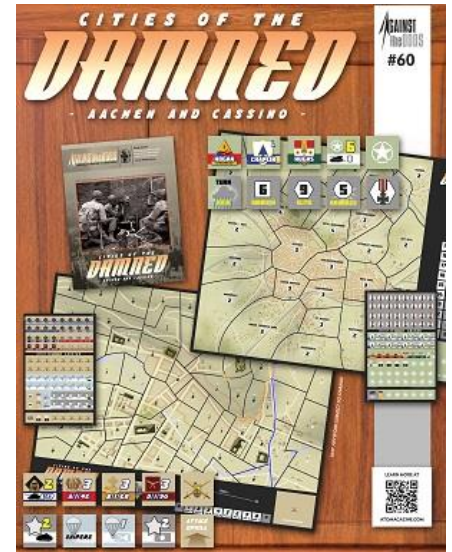
## New Wargames: *Aachen* and *Cassino*

by Russ Lockwood

*Against the Odds Magazine* will be releasing two games in its issue number 60. Price: \$34.95 includes US shipping (\$47.95 international)

*Aachen 1944*, a solitaire game by Mike Rinella, simulates the campaign by the American VII Corps to capture the German city of Aachen between October 13 and October 21, 1944. The player commands the attacking American forces and game rules handle the defending German forces. American troops would have to storm the city and take it by force. Hidden among the picturesque buildings was a fortress of bunkers, gun emplacements, sniper holes and death traps. The GIs advancing into the city would soon be fighting in the nightmare battlefield of Aachen.

*Cassino*, a solitaire game by Paul Rohrbach, simulates the attack on the Italian city in early 1944. Facing some of Germany's best soldiers, the area was only captured 5 months later after four separate assaults, with the vast majority of the city was destroyed by aerial bombardment and vicious street to street fighting. Taking the town and heights resulted in 55,000 Allied casualties, with German losses being far fewer, estimated at around 20,000 killed and wounded. The stubborn defense of Cassino would reveal flaws in Allied tactics and bolster the confidence of the Third Reich to keep fighting.



## New ECW Wargames: *Edgehill* and *First Newbury*

by Russ Lockwood

*Adapted from the press releases. -- RL*

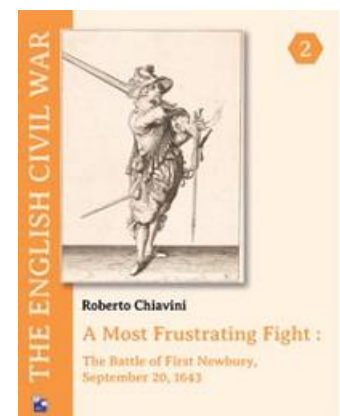
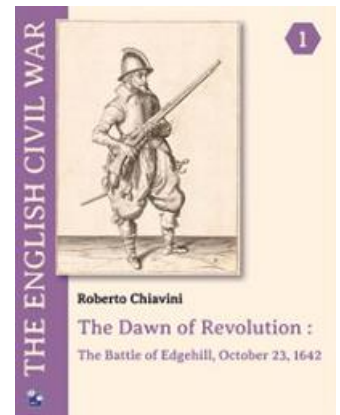
### **Dawn of Revolution: The Battle of Edgehill, October 23, 1642**

Debut game in a 10-game series depicting famous battles of the English Civil War. Low complexity game. Designed by Roberto Chiavini.

Includes: One 11x17-inch map; 135 single-sided, un-mounted counters; One Players' Aid Sheet; and four pages of rules.

Price: \$16.95 plus shipping. Mounted counters can be had for an additional \$8.00.

More info: [www.hfdgames.com/ecw1.html](http://www.hfdgames.com/ecw1.html)



### **A Most Frustrating Fight: The Battle of First Newbury, September 20, 1643**

Second in a 10-game series depicting famous battles of the English Civil War. Low complexity game. Designed by Roberto Chiavini.

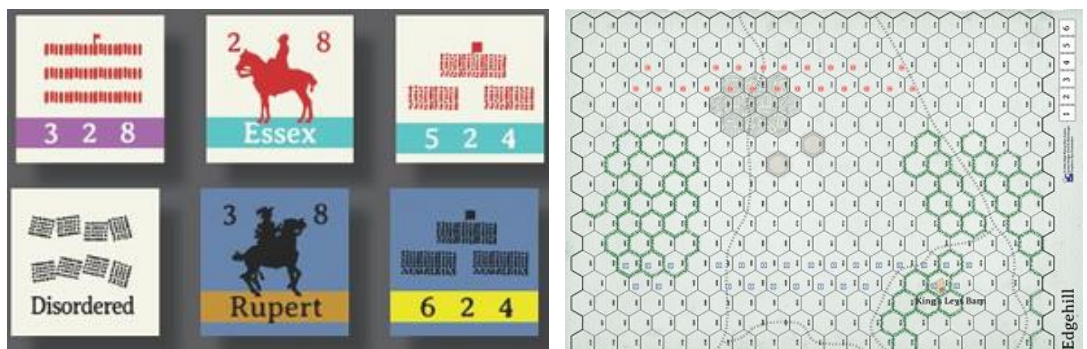
Includes: One 11x17-inch map; 157 single-sided, un-mounted counters; One Players' Aid Sheet; and four pages of rules.

Price: \$16.95 plus shipping. Mounted counters can be had for an additional \$8.00.

Info:

[www.hfdgames.com/ecw2.html](http://www.hfdgames.com/ecw2.html)

*Counters and map from Edgehill.*





## NATO: Happy 75th Birthday

by Russ Lockwood

*Adapted from the press release. -- RL*

On April 4, 1949, foreign ministers from the United States and 11 countries (Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United Kingdom) gathered in Washington, DC to sign the Washington Treaty.

*February 24, 1969 NATO meeting.  
Image from web.*



Also known as the North Atlantic Treaty, the treaty derives its authority from Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. Article 51 affirms the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense.

After the signing of the Washington Treaty (North Atlantic Treaty), all member nations needed to ratify the agreement. The United States Senate debated the ratification from July 5th to July 8th and eventually approved the Treaty on July 21, 1949 by a vote of 83 to 13. The treaty came into effect on October 24, 1949.

You can view the pages of the treaty at the US National Archives site:

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/348806325>

NATO archives online is at: <https://archives.nato.int/>



## HMGS.ORG: Book Reviews

Hmgs.org contains all my book reviews on historical topics (including historical fiction, but not sci-fi) that you see in the AAR. Use the search engine to find a topic, author, or title. You might see other non-book review posts from other people, but it's quite good.

<https://www.hmgs.org/blogpost/1779451/Historical-Book-Reviews>

At present, 1,385 of my reviews are up on hmgs.org with these April 2024 reviews being posted in May at a rate of one or sometimes two per day -- so all reviews get a spot at the top of the hmgs.org list for at least a day. As this April 2024 AAR contains 29 reviews, the end of May will find 1,414 book reviews posted.

Enjoy.



## Books I've Read

By Russ Lockwood

**The Russian Invasion of Ukraine.** by John S. Harrel. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 232 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *February - December 2022*

Subtitle: *Destroying the Myth of Russian Invincibility*

The author is a retired US major general in command of the California National Guard, which helped train the Ukrainian Army in Western-style tactics and command. Much of the Ukrainian success against the Russian invasion stems from better leadership and tactics.

His commentary of the invasion offers superb analysis of everything the Russians did wrong and everything the Ukrainians did right. Exceptions to this generalization are mentioned.

Better yet, he delves into the rampant corruption of the Russian armed forces, which is apparently riddled through and through by money-hungry officers who sold lots of items on the black market. And by items, that includes spacing material between armor layers in tanks, wiring from various electronics, fuel, and more. That's communism, comrade.

Of course, quantity is a quality all its own, but smaller, well-trained Ukrainian forces consistently outmaneuvered and outfought poorly-trained, poorly-led, and under-supplied Russian troops. He even examines the operations and capabilities of the Wagner Group mercenaries, who did slightly better than the regular Russian forces, but not by much.

The book contains 16 color photos, 19 black and white maps, and a back cover illustration of a Ukrainian postage stamp with the illustration of a Ukrainian soldier flashing the universal single digit of defiance to a Russian warship.

The prose is quite good, from the opening battle for Antonov Airport near Kyiv to the grinding war of attrition after the front stabilized. It's an expert view of the beginning of an ongoing war.

Enjoyed it.

**Jagdpanzer.** by Thomas Anderson. Hardback (7.8x7.8 inches). 272 pages. 2024.

The vehicle series continues with another fine volume outlining the development of German anti-tank (AT) armored vehicles. The first chapter discusses ever-increasing power of towed AT guns between the wars and then transitions into WWII jagdpanzers.

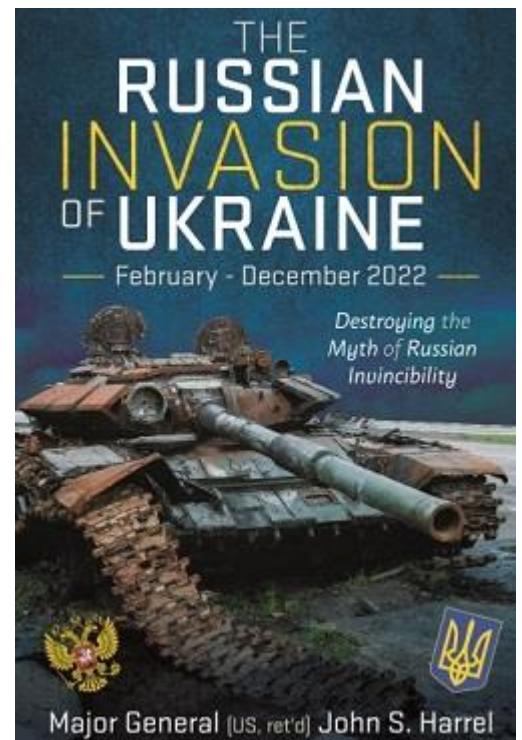
Starting with the PanzerJaeger I mounting a 47mm AT gun on a Panzer I chassis and ending with the Elefant and JagdTiger, the book covers the development and operational use of these and those in between. The development is usually handled with the author's smooth prose. The combat is usually passages from official reports. I say usually because some welcome overlaps occur.

Three aspects stand out, especially with the later and heavier versions. First, the vehicles broke down a lot more than you'd anticipate due to weak designs of the gearbox and drive subsystems. Second, the recovery vehicles were often few and far between, so almost intact vehicles were often abandoned. And third, spare parts were often in short supply, so even if the vehicle reached a maintenance area, the mechanics had problems fixing a damaged vehicle.

The book contains 214 black and white photos and three black and white illustrations. Modelers will appreciate these.

Enlightening, expansive, and well written.

Enjoyed it.





**Charles XII's Karoliner: Volume 2.** by Sergey Shamenkov. Softcover (7.1x9.8 inches). 163 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Swedish Cavalry of the Great Northern War 1700-1721*

This is the follow-up uniform guide to *Volume 1: The Swedish Infantry & Artillery* (see the review in the 09/28/2023 AAR or up on hmg.org).

This detailed examination of Swedish cavalry uniforms is exactly what the wargamer needs for painting up a Great Northern War Swedish army. Besides extensive text info, including discussions about the various shades of blue and yellow within all the variations of uniform pieces, the book contains 34 color uniform plates.

The text is sprinkled with 69 black and white illustrations of close-up views of various portions of period paintings. These would be better off in color, but much depends on the condition of the artwork. The book also includes 56 black and white photos of various uniform pieces in museums.

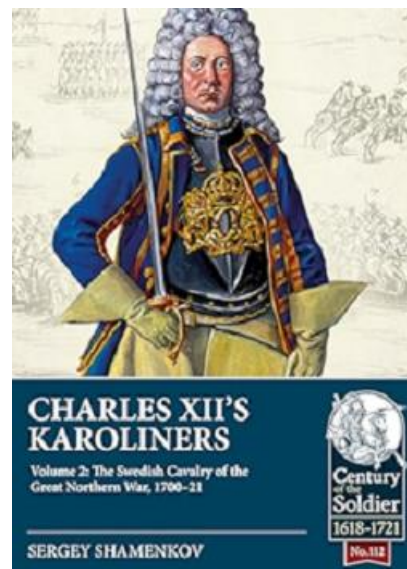
Organization and tactics are also covered, although uniform info dominates the text. Musical instruments and horse equipment are also covered. A chapter is on the Drabant Corps, which is really a company-sized unit whose commander was Charles XII.

One interesting period image shows a hand mortar (p38), which looks like an elongated blunderbuss. Put that on your tabletop for a skirmish game for variety.

One hiccup concerning the cavalry trooper uniform (p39, p41-p43): the item list is all in the Swedish language, not English. This editorial oversight needed a translation. Otherwise, for all I know, these are pick-up lines at a Stockholm bar.

Otherwise, this is an excellent uniform reference for the Great Northern War.

Enjoyed it.



**ME 163 vs Allied Heavy Bombers: Duel 135.** by Robert Forsyth. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2024.

In 1928, Opel produced a prototype RAK-2 car powered by 24 Brander rockets and fitted with stubby wings on the sides. On May 23, 1928 it achieved a speed of 230km per hour (143mph) on a test track in Berlin (p5).

Development of a rocket-powered plane started in the 1930s. The Delta I, a tail-less prototype aircraft similar in shape to the ME-163, flew with a pusher-propeller configuration in 1931 (p16). The rocket-powered Heinkel 76 aircraft totaled 29 flights by 1939, and a DFS-194 aircraft slew in the summer of 1940 and reached over 1,000 230km per hour (622mph) on August 13, 1941 (p20).

The first ME-163 prototype flew on June 26, 1942, but production snafus -- caused in part by B-17 bombings -- delayed delivery of the first production ME-163B until January 1944. The first mission was not until May 1944.

Meanwhile, the four-engine Boeing Model 299, the precursor to the B-17, began flying in 1935. Despite crashing, the US Army ordered a dozen aircraft to keep the program alive as development continued through an alphabet of variations.

Gunnery and piloting training are covered along with the weapon systems. Combat finds the jet-powered plane individually effective at times, but a limited fuel supply meant limited combat time -- about 7 or 8 minutes.

The booklet contains 47 black and white photos, two color photos, two black and white illustrations, nine color illustrations, one color two-page action illustration, one color one-page action illustration, and three color ME-163 profiles.

Between 1935 and 1945, Boeing produced 12,731 aircraft of all variations. Messerschmitt and allied companies delivered only 319 ME-163Bs. That sums up the air effort over Germany in the last year of the war and the booklet does an excellent job of laying out the disparities within the context of an aircraft vs aircraft Duel format.

Enjoyed it.





**FW 190 Sturmjäger: Dogfight 11.** by Robert Forsyth. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Defense of the Reich 1943-1945*

It's a Robert Forsyth double feature about the WWII air war over Germany - similar topic and excellent overview -- in the *Dogfight* format.

Development of this heavily-armored and armed version of the FW-190 was spurred on by the ever-increasing destruction caused by US bombing of German industry and infrastructure. In the hands of an experienced pilot, it could be quite effective, but outnumbered Luftwaffe pilots could only do so much against numbers of P-47 and later P-51 escort fighters.

The booklet contains 52 black and white photos, three black and white illustrations, one color map, three color two-page ribbon illustrations of various combats, three color illustrations, and one color two-page action illustration.

Nicely written with a nice mix of recap, analysis, and first-person accounts. Enjoyed it.



**Soviet Cruisers 1917-45: New Vanguard 326.** by Alexander Hill. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *From the October Revolution to World War II*

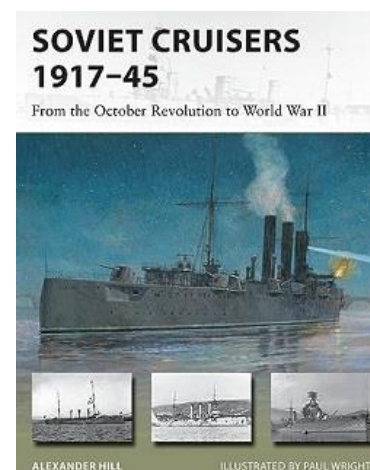
Compared to the Red Army, the Red Navy receives second-class status. After the Soviet revolution, the Tsarist navy fell into disrepair, although six cruisers made it into WWII. The text contains the specs, design and development, and wartime operations of these six. Another cruiser, the Aurora, survived the Russo-Japanese War, WWI, and WWII and is now a museum ship. Project 26 and 26bis cruisers laid down in the mid to late 1930s are also covered.

In WWII, the Baltic fleet mainly stayed in port, but the Black Sea fleet engaged in many raids and troops transports, first in support of Sevastopol and then in the Crimea.

The booklet contains 37 black and white photos, three color photos, and 14 color profile illustrations.

It's a nice, quick overview.

Enjoyed it.



**British Aircraft Carriers: ShipCraft 32.** by Robert Brown. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 65 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Hermes, Ark Royal and the Illustrious Class*

The excellent modeling series continues with a look at a variety of nine British aircraft carriers. It follows the usual format.

History (p1 to p16) covers ship designs, developments, and constructions and includes 19 black and white photos.

Model Products (p17 to p31) covers kits and aftermarket sets, most in 1:700, but other scales, too. Includes 55 color photos.

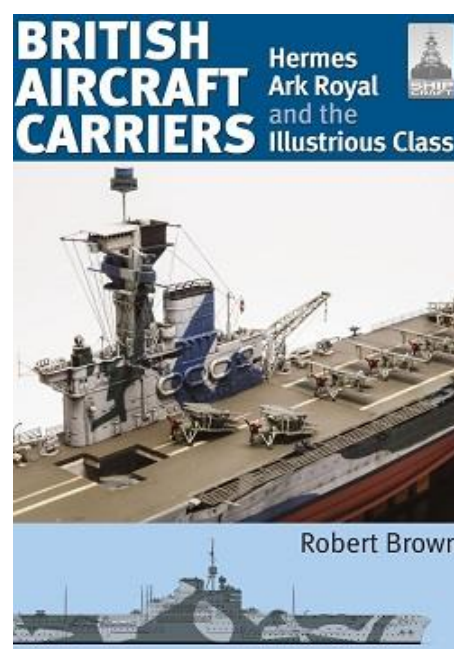
Showcase (p32 to p42) displays completed kits by talented model makers. Includes 36 color photos of seven carriers from 1:192 scale to 1:1200 scale.

Color Schemes (p42 to p48) provides color camouflage schemes used over the war years and includes 19 color illustrations of carriers and nine color illustrations of aircraft.

Alterations and Repairs (p44 to p58) moves back into the history portion with all the various changes that occurred to the ships. If you are portraying a specific carrier in a specific time frame, this is very helpful. Includes 10 black and white photos.

Plans (p59 to p64) offers 21 Includes 10 black and white illustrations of profile and top-down plans, although no scales are listed.

Finally, the Bibliography is on page 65.





My modeling days are long over, but I can appreciate the talent that goes into each model. The history offers a concise overview for those with a bit of interest in ship design and construction.

Enjoyed it.

**Royal Navy Home Fleet 1939-41: Fleet 5.** by Angus Konstam. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The Last Line of Defence at Scapa Flow*

A nicely done overview of the British fleet at Scapa Flow in WWII with a complete order of battle along with analysis of its communications, intelligence gathering, doctrine, and combat operations.

As for the latter, the big operation was in Norway against the German invasion. The Narvik operation was a high point, although the fleet had plenty of missed opportunities and setbacks, and the hunt for the *Bismarck* would be a secondary major operation. The booklet ends after the *Bismarck* as the fleet dealt less with surface ships and more with U-boats. No Jutland-sized engagements in WWII in the Atlantic Ocean as the German Navy wasn't that big. Besides Narvik and *Bismarck*, a couple of the convoy battles would make for a good scenario.

The various upgrades of the fleet, especially radar, offer an examination of how technology altered doctrine. Nicely done, that.

The booklet contains 27 black and white photos, one color photo, two color maps, five color illustrations of fleet deployments, and three color two-page action illustrations.

Enjoyed it.

If you like this topic, you should also look at *Naval Battles of WWII: Atlantic and Mediterranean* (see the 08/04/2023 AAR or the review up on hmgs.org).

**Italian Battle Fleet 1940-43: Fleet 6.** by Enrico Cernuschi. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *'La Squadra' The Pride of the Regia Marina*

This relatively optimistic look at Italian naval operations in the Mediterranean is at odds with the historical outcome. It does cover with aplomb the 1920s and 1930s cavalcade of incompetence, policies, contrasting construction programs, and other leadership turf battles that crippled inter-service cooperation and ultimately naval efficiency.

The booklet contains 34 black and white photos, two color photos, one color map, five color battle maps, and three color two-page action illustrations.

The Italian Navy exemplified leadership incompetence. While individual sailors and captains were generally competent, admirals and above were shaped by political battles. I've said it before, but if any country should have sat out WWII, Italy should have joined Spain and declared neutrality. This book is more ammunition to support that theory.

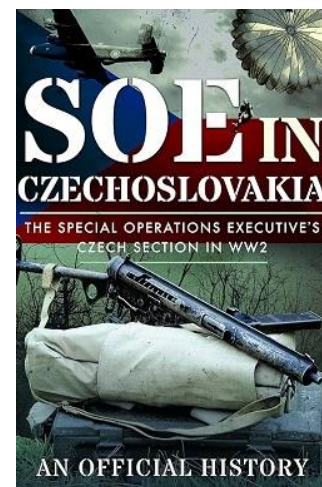
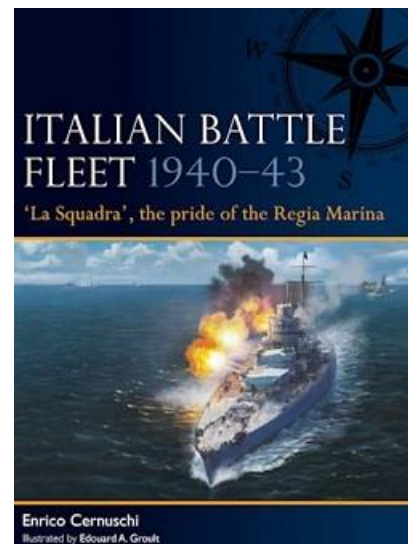
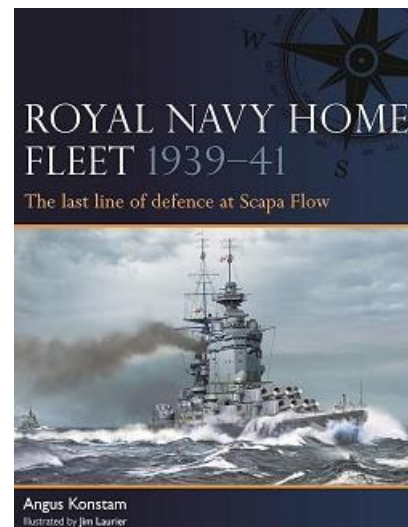
Enjoyed it.

**SOE in Czechoslovakia: An Official History.** Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 143 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The Special Operations Executive's Czech Section in WW2*

This is a reprint of various WWII-era British reports about special operations in Czechoslovakia from 1942 to 1945. It's a tale of a few successes and many failures as the Gestapo proved adept at capturing many operatives, usually from the populace pointing out irregularities. Yet, some wireless contacts kept on transmitting information back to London. It would be fascinating to learn the Gestapo's side of Czech counter-espionage, as British reports -- by definition -- only tell half the story.

Of note is the Slovak Rising, something I had not heard of before, when two divisions of the Slovak Army revolted and four German divisions were sent to crush them. It took a while, and even included a B-17 landing supplies in Slovakia, but the Germans suppressed the revolt with the same efficiency as crushing the Warsaw





Rebellion.

The book does not contain any photos or illustrations.

It's not exactly a page turner, but if you wanted to know the ebb and flow of dropping agents and supplies into occupied Czechoslovakia, here's your book. Bits and pieces were quite interesting.

Enjoyed it.

**Mikoyan Gurevich UTI MiG-15: Polish Wings 37.** by Lechoslaw Musialkowski.

Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 112 pages. 2023.

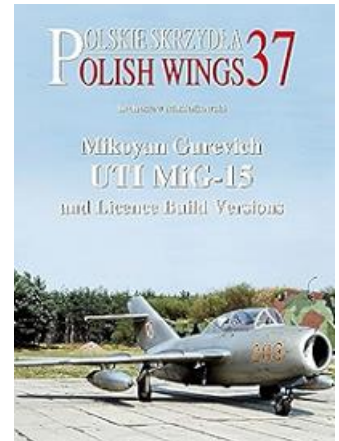
Subtitle: *And License Build Versions*

A comprehensive examination of the UTI MiG-15 trainer aircraft, almost factory number by factory number, covers planes' histories in the Polish Air Force -- although mostly in a "crash - repair - crash" cycle. This two-seater was originally imported from the USSR and Czechoslovakia, but later converted LIM-1 single-seat planes to twin-seat trainers. It also includes the artillery recon/spotter aircraft.

As such, I only skimmed the text. While the details are considerable, it probably will only be of interest to those who really want to trace trainer aircraft use within the Polish Air Force.

The book contains 150 black and white photos, 70 color photos, 52 color aircraft camouflage profiles (although most are silver), and four color squadron emblem illustrations.

For a general reader, the prose is quite repetitive. Yet for modelers of the aircraft, this is a fantastic reference book.



**Breaking the Siegfried Line: Rhineland February 1945.** by Tim Saunders.

Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 276 pages. 2023.

Never mind that this book is well written. Never mind that this was a two-corp (British XXX and 1st Canadian) operation towards the end of WWII against sporadic German resistance. All you need to know is that the book is filled with maps -- mostly enlarged sections of 1:25,000 scale maps that you can, albeit with a bit of squinting, use to set up tabletop scenarios.

How many maps?

50. Yes, you read that right, fifty maps.

There is one problem. Just about all of them do NOT have a scale. A square grid, yes, but not a scale. That said, using a hint in the text and eyeballing the distance, I believe each square is 1,000x1,000 yards. I don't know that for a fact, but it's a start.

And did I mention a general topographical analysis contained in Appendix II? Nice.

In any case, after an intense discussion of the logistics needed for the offensive to provide each 251ber gun with 1,677 rounds (p28) and each 3-ton truck carried 180 rounds, the prep work for two corps for ammo, food, and other supplies needed 25,000 vehicles.

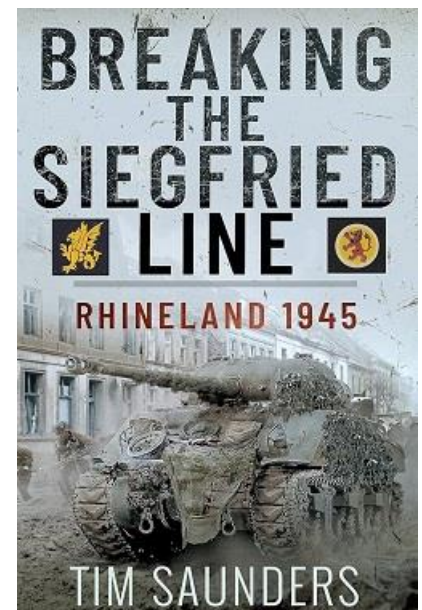
Food for artillery bombardment: All that blasting of German lines netted about 5% German casualties (p68).

The British squeezed in four divisions into a 6-mile front (p73). A full OOB is on p259-260, often down to troop level. The ground was defended mostly by the German 84th division plus some attachments -- About 5,500 soldiers in 14 infantry battalions, two artillery battalions, and a HQ battalion. As this was a rebuilt division, most of it was of limited staying power except for the three Fallschirmjager battalions (p47). Reinforcements, including panzer formations, would arrive later.

The book contains 160 black and white photos, 50 black and white maps, and 25 black and white illustrations.

The number of excerpts from official accounts towards the end of the book tends to overwhelm the prose -- as if a deadline loomed. Nevertheless, the prose is quite good through the first three-quarters of the book when the British ground forward in the mud and the Germans counterattacked with panzers. The more tactical your games, the more scenarios you can pull from this book.

Enjoyed it.





**Battle for the Bocage: Normandy 1944.** by Tim Saunders. Softcover (6.2x9.2 inches). 358 pages. 2023 reprint of 2021 book.

Subtitle: *Point 103, Tilly-Sur-Seulles, Villars-Bocage*

It's a Tim Saunders day as I dove into his earlier book. This one covers from D-Day on June 6, 1944 through the battle of Tilly-Sur-Seulles on June 16-18, 1944. The same level of detail contained in his above book is in this one, too. It has a few too many official excerpts that I believe would be better served with his sterling prose, but otherwise, he covers the battles down to the individual tank and soldier level.

In that level of detail are marvelous nuggets of info about operations in the bocage, from the usual to the amazing. For example, the Panzer Lehr division averaged 10 km to 12 km per hour in their march to the beaches and ultimately took two days and one night to travel 140km. It lost 40 trucks, five tanks, 84 half tracks and prime movers, and 90 other vehicles to air attack on the march (p49).

The 101st Heavy Panzer Battalion of Tiger tanks started its road march on June 7 at a place called Gournay-en-Bray and passed through Paris the next day. On June 9, air attacks were so frequent, it switched to night only travel. On June 12, the first two companies assembled neared Villars Bocage, but even by June 15, the third company was several days march behind. All 14 tanks per company made it, but 1st company had eight ready and six under repair, 2nd company had six available and eight under repair, and third company had four available at Falaise and 10 under repair. At least the HQ company's three Tigers were available for combat (p339-340).

There's plenty more interesting tidbits that accentuate the detailed battle accounts. One nit: Asserts Montgomery's plan was to draw off panzer forces from opposing US forces (p224). Enough books in recent decades have argued he was seeking to be the hammer of a breakthrough force, not the anvil of a holding force.

The book contains 205 black and white photos, 70 black and white maps, and 27 black and white illustrations. Let me praise the use of all those maps, especially when the segments are enlarged on the page. You can pull lots of scenarios from the pages. However, a scale would be nice, although I think each square is 1,000 yards by 1,000 yards, but I don't know for sure.

It's another marvelous tactical-level look at a series of desperate battles around significant geographic areas. Nicely done again. Makes me want to search out more Saunders titles.

Enjoyed it.

**Arming the World: American Gun-Makers in the Gilded Age.** by Geoffrey S. Stewart. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 296 pages. 2023.

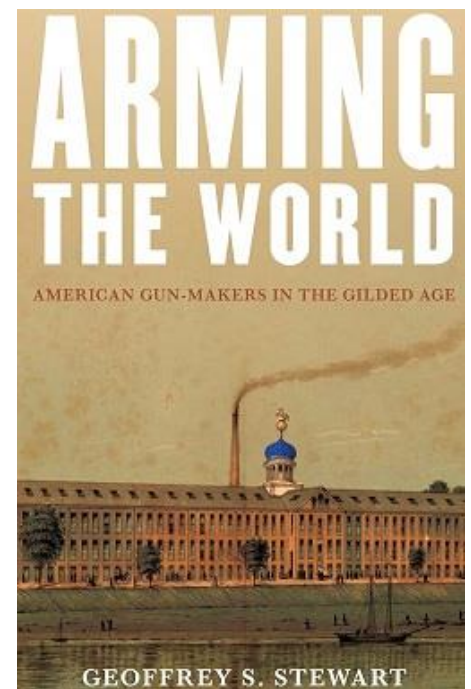
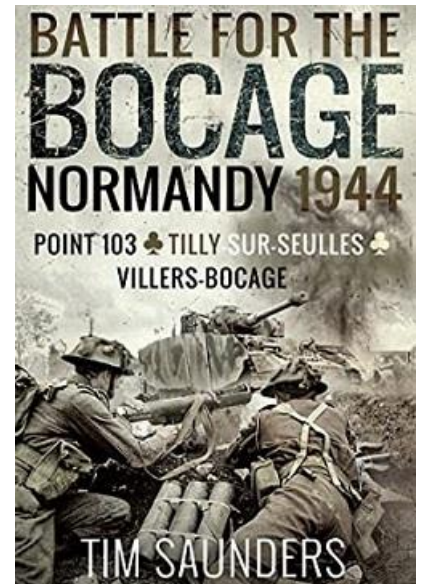
The "Gilded Age" subtitle is a bit of a misnomer, as the book covers from the American Revolution forward, and especially in the ACW. It is a fascinating look at pairing Yankee ingenuity with industrial mechanization as a variety of gun companies began and sold firearms all around the globe.

Besides the focus on those two aspects, the other main feature of the story is the widespread corruption among government officials here in the US and in foreign governments. Bribery and kickbacks were the absolute norm and the book describes instances in delicious detail.

The switch from muzzle-loading to breach-loading technology, and the resulting patent lawsuits and buyouts, are fascinating. The prose well pairs the influence of the various wars on invention. For example, the ACW didn't do as much for sales of breach-loading guns as the German victory using Dreyse "needle guns" over the Austrian muzzle-loaders. You won't find much for the tabletop unless you're designing an arms race game.

Lots of facts and figures, especially dollars amounts and production details, pepper the text. The heyday of US arms sales was in the 1870s, especially in Europe, as countries revved up armaments to counter other countries' increase in armaments.

Enjoyed it.





**The Tank Commander Manual: 1939-1945.** edited by R. Sheppard. Softcover (5.0x7.8 inches). 137 pages. 2024 reprint of 2016 book.

Cheap paper, smallish font, and squinty diagrams make this a low-cost option to obtain bits and pieces of various manuals. The British deployment diagrams are quite interesting, especially company formations off the march. It provides distances between tanks such that a company is about 400 yards wide (p13).

British tanks expected to make 200 yards per minute across good ground and only 50 yards per minute across difficult ground (p57).

US tank doctrine apparently was to allow enemy tanks to get to 800 yards before opening fire (p46) and HE rounds at 800 yards proved quite effective (p46).

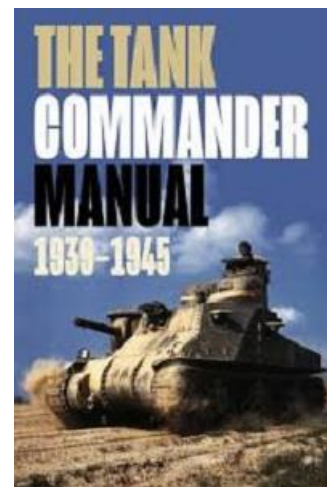
German maximum communications distance is about 3.75 miles (p21).

There's quite a bit more to the book than this, such as tactics and reports of tank actions. There are also aspects of tank maintenance, which is less than helpful on the tabletop.

The book contains 47 black and white illustrations.

The first half of the book is more helpful than the latter half, but ties go to the author -- well, compiler of manuals. This literally could be an AI-created book because there is nothing of actual analysis to it. Whether you can find old manuals on the web or not is up to you.

Conditionally, enjoyed it.



**Operation Dragoon and Beyond: Then and Now.** by Jean Paul Pallud. Hardback (7.1x10.0 inches). 296 pages. 2023.

The book with thick glossy paper is a reprint of sorts from *After The Battle* magazine. The intro says "three chapters" and then proceeds to list issues from 1973 to 2004. Granted, most of the reprints were originally written by Pallud, so you can consider this a recycled work with some new photos.

For the record, I had not read those particular issues back in the day, although I once visited *ATB* offices for a MagWeb chat.

The idea is to use the photos to often compare the same spot: once with a WWII-era photo and once with a modern photo. The text offers the historical context that found combat at the locations. The cover gives you the photographic idea of *Then and Now*.

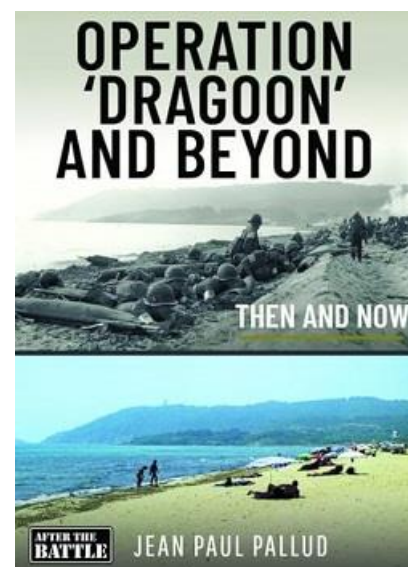
The prose does a fine job of explaining the planning, invasion of Southern France, and advance to the Rhine River. This is roughly the same ground covered by a US Army green book.

One interesting tidbit: US 1st Lt. Clarence Coggins was captured by German troops as he scouted alone in a jeep ahead of the American Army. This fella must have had a gift of gab, or at least a touch o' the blarney, for he somehow convinced the Germans to surrender to him -- 982 enlisted men and 17 officers did so (p155). Put that in your next late-war scenario. Amazing.

The book contains 482 black and white photos and 10 black and white maps.

I'm not quite sure why the book ends at the Rhine, unless it was following the US Army green book. Indeed, one of the chapters was called *From the Riviera to the Rhine*, which is the name of the green book.

Enjoyed it.

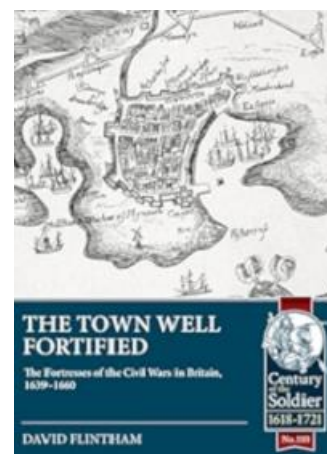


**The Town Well Fortified.** by David Flinham. Softcover (7.1x9.8 inches). 243 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Fortresses of the Civil Wars in Britain 1639-1660*

While concentrating on the ECW, the book also contains an overview of European forts of the period as the Dutch influence on English fortifications is explored throughout the book. The overview of angles, widths, heights, and so on showcases the measurements for those interested in such details -- a help when scratchbuilding your own fort.

A calculation caught my eye: one man can dig 14.1 cubic meters of soil per day (p85), although presumably that's soil with minimal roots and rocks. Further, 20 men could create 12 meters of completed breastworks as per the calculations above in a day and a few hundred men could surround a town with fieldworks in a week. I'll





guess that means enough shovels were available to go around.

According to the [English] *Civil War Register*, of the 1,104 places that were fortified, 675 (61%) saw 'action' of one sort or another (p99). One feature of ECW forts is the addition of a bastion to the walls to bring enfilading fire (p132).

The book contains 59 black and white illustrations and 49 black and white photos of a variety of forts.

One typo: "fortification consist" (p175) should either be "fortifications consist" or "fortification consists" to make the verb agree with the noun.

This book provides an overview of 95 fortified locations, or just 8.6% of the total number (p216), but that's plenty to get you started on learning about British fortifications and perhaps offering inspiration for building your own.

Enjoyed it.

**Fairchild A-10 A/C Thunderbolt II: Duke Hawkins 30.** by N. Deboeck with Peter Anthoni. Softcover (horizontal 9.4x9.5 inches). 178 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Flying in the United States Air Force*

Modelers and aircraft buffs with an interest in the A-10 will be thrilled by the usual Duke Hawkins photo extravaganza that peers into all the nooks and crannies of the plane. Fuselage, cockpit, wings, undercarriage, and more are covered. Those with an eye for markings details will find plenty to choose from.

It also includes the flight simulator (p78-79).

One typo: "designed to safe the life" (p10) should be "save the life."

The book contains 428 color photographs, including a multitude of close-up shots.

My favorite photo is a desert camouflage version (p162).

If the A-10 is on your painting table, here's a good reference book. Enjoyed it.



**TS-11 Iskra: Polish Wings 36.** by Dariusz Karnas and Artur Juszczak. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 112 pages. 2023.

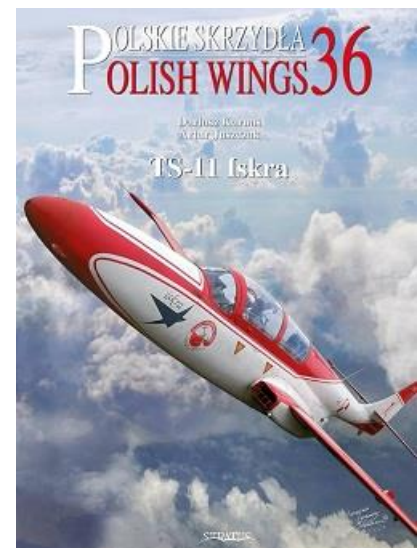
The 36th book of the well-illustrated series examines the TS-11 Iskra, a two-seat trainer aircraft of the Cold War that was also used by the Polish Air Acrobatics Team -- and as of 2109, nine planes were still in operation.

Only 419 were produced between 1960 and 1987 (p10-11), of which 50 went to India (p13). They were flown as late as 2004 (p16) and retired.

The book contains 212 color photos, 15 black and white photos, 68 color camouflage profiles (some top and bottom), and 33 color unit emblems. In a special section are 51 color photos of the emblems on fuselages, with some duplication of the 33 in the main text.

For modelers interested in this plane, this is an excellent reference guide to colors, systems, subsystems, and markings.

Enjoyed it.

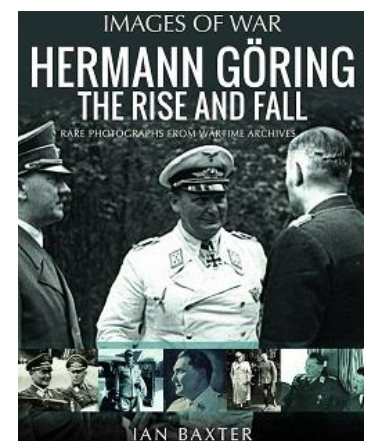


**Hermann Goring: Rise and Fall (Images of War).** by Ian Baxter. Softcover (7.4x9.7 inches). 123 pages. 2024.

WWI ace Hermann Goring turned Nazi early to help redress the Versailles Treaty. Wounded in the gut during the Munich Putsch, he survived to rise to the number two spot behind Hitler.

The book doesn't contain much that a fairly well-read WWII buff will find new -- this series is all about the photos and Goring had a personal photographer. Indeed, his personal train included a darkroom car when needed.

However, train names proved new to me. I knew Hitler named his personal train Amerika, but Goring's train was named Asien and Himmler's train was named Heinrich. The OKW train was named Atlas and the Luftwaffe train was named Robinson. It must have been one heckuva rail jam when they all arrived at the Wolf's Lair.





One other tidbit: Goring blamed Ernst Udet for Luftwaffe reverses in the Soviet Union -- so much so that Udet committed suicide while on the phone to his girlfriend. The Nazis claimed he was lost while flying a prototype aircraft (p71). I've read both demises in various histories, but Baxter's a good researcher, so suicide is more plausible than a top-ranking Luftwaffe commander performing test flights. Dunno. Maybe Udet did test flights?

The book contains 140 black and white photos, with just about all containing Goring and high-ranking Nazis and commanders. The exceptions include a dozen or so photos of meeting pilots and Fallschirmjagers during the war and in his cell after the war.

Goring committed suicide before the hangman could get him.

If you are looking for Goring photos and/or Nazi leadership photos, this is your book. For the tabletop crowd, not much.

**Armies of the Crusaders: 1096-1291.** by Gabriele Esposito. Hardback (7.2x10.0 inches). 160 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *History, Organization, Weapons & Equipment*

If you don't recognize the series and author's name, you should. He's done a number of the "Armies of the ..." uniform books that feature lots of photos of re-enactors in uniform. For a tabletop painter's perspective, these are marvelous reference books, made even better with the text that details TO&Es. You even get a decent overview of the history of the topic, but understand that this is a series primarily offering a cornucopia of uniform and weapon information.

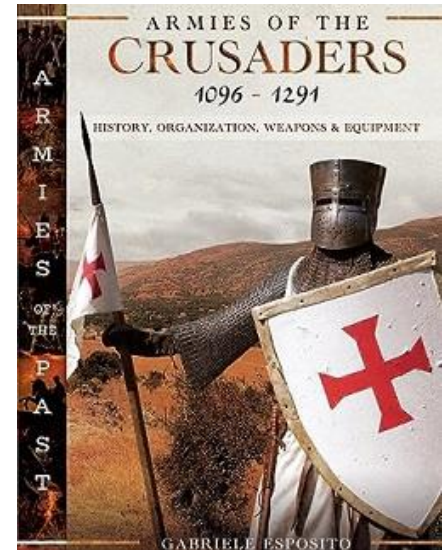
The book offers a general overview of the Mediterranean Sea movers and shakers at the time and then delves into Crusades one through nine. The book covers knights (landed warriors under a noble), sergeants (landed warriors under knights), and infantry (fiefdom men between the ages of 16 and 60 who were liable to be called up for 60 (later 40) days. Knights Templars and Hospitallers as well as "native" troops serving the crusaders are also included.

The book contains 100 color photos of re-enactors in their martial glory and also includes some Muslim warriors.

David Nicolle is my go-to author for the Crusades and I guess I shouldn't have been surprised when 10 of the 20 books listed in the bibliography are his -- nine of them Ospreys. Off that some of his other books are not listed as being used, but the emphasis is on uniforms, not general history. 15 of the 20 are Ospreys. You can add two Ian Heath books of WRG fame, too. Indeed

Another fine book and nicely printed on good glossy paper, too.

Enjoyed it.



**Carnation Revolution: Volume 2 (Europe at War 39).** by Jose Augusto Matos and Zelia Oliveira. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 64 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Coup in Portugal April 1974*

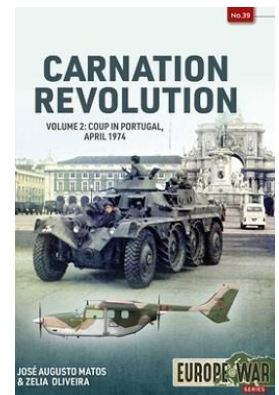
Coup is accurate, in the sense that the military overthrew the government, but it was almost bloodless. The only casualty occurred when the political police fired on a crowd marching in Lisbon (p52). The first aborted coup was in March and went nowhere. The one in April worked because the plotters were better prepared and organized.

In large part, the cause concerned the Portuguese colonies in Africa -- Angola, Mozambique, and others. Two generals, Gomes and Spínola opposed the continued drain on the military to keep the colonies, but the government maintained the country should retain the colonies. The government lost.

The book contains 94 black and white photos, four color photos, one color map, two black and white illustrations, one black and white map, and 15 color profiles (three aircraft, six vehicles, four uniforms, and two flags).

As fighting was virtually non-existent, the text concentrates on the political infighting and opposition in and among the various factions. Like any revolution, you might be able to bend the information to create a street fight for the capital -- assuming some of the government troops didn't join the rebels as they marched.

Enjoyed it.





**South Pacific Air War.** by Richard L. Dunn. Hardback (7.3x10.3 inches). 608 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The Role of Air Power in the New Guinea and Solomon Island Campaigns January 1943 to February 1944*

This comprehensive examination of the air war in New Guinea and Solomon Islands provides a significantly higher level of detail than the usual campaign history. It seems like every mission, no matter how small or big, receives attention. Even sightings of single aircraft are covered.

Where possible, losses claimed by both sides are cross checked using US and Japanese records. Australian author Michael Claringbould is known for meticulous cross checking -- it's odd that the bibliography doesn't contain any of his books. Plenty of official histories populate the bibliography as well as secondary sources.

But the gem that propels this book is Dunn's Japanese records -- claiming to be one of the largest private collections of WWII translated Japanese captured documents and intercepted messages. I wonder if Claringbould is hip to this private reference source. Probably. Of note is Dunn's diligence in tracking combat losses versus "monograph" losses -- the latter used to order replacement aircraft (p110).

Starting with the Operation Ke-Go (Japanese evacuation of Guadalcanal), day by day, mission by mission, Dunn peels back the layers of the air war with painstakingly accurate, if a bit repetitious, accounts of aerial battles. First-person accounts infuse the text with action as his analysis provides a wider perspective of operations.

The Battle of the Lae convoy (p98-127) would make for a cracking good mini-campaign and the Second Lae Convoy (p168-194) would be just as interesting -- especially if using an umpire for a double blind game. I don't know whether the US player would get extra points or lose points for having *PT-143* and *PT-150* machine gun the Japanese survivors and depth charge the boats containing the survivors (p185).

The book contains 35 black and white photos and 24 black and white maps.

One typo: "killed by aerial staffing" is probably "strafing."

This massive compilation of a year in the South Pacific air war showcases the slow Allied wresting of air superiority over Japan. For air buffs who cannot get enough of aerial combats, tallies, and missions, this is just the book for you. Tabletop air gamers will be able to pull a cornucopia of scenarios from its pages.

Enjoyed it.

**UFO Movie Quiz.** by Jeff Rovin. Paperback (4.2 x 7.0 inches). 166 pages. 1978.

I picked this up in a discount bin for literally 10 cents. Why not? It breathlessly proclaims it contains "101 Far-Out Quizzes on a galaxy of fantastic films."

And it does.

Although it starts out with 25 quizzes of 10 questions each about *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the other 76 are mostly about the 1950s and 1960s B movies I never heard of along with some generic subjects such as actors and special effects and a few TV shows.

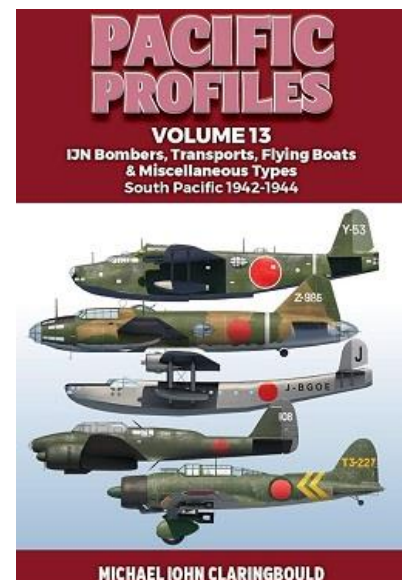
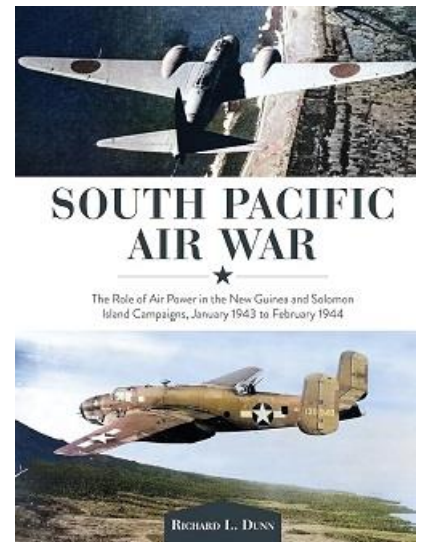
Let's see: *Battle in Outer Space* (1960), *Zombies of the Stratosphere* (1952), *Invasion of the Saucer Men* (1957), and so on. Granted, some I heard of: *Plan Nine From Outer Space*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *Twilight Zone*, *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, *Dr. Who*, and so on. So, more than just movies, but mostly movies.

Oddly enough, not a single *Star Trek* or *Star Wars* quiz. Seriously? Probably too popular. Doubly oddly, the introduction is by Robert Wise, who directed the movie *Star Trek*.

You gotta be a real movie geek to answer most of the questions. Or at least have seen the movies.

**Pacific Profiles: Volume 13.** by Michael John Claringbould. Softcover (6.9x9.8 inches). 132 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *IJN Bombers, Transports, Flying Boats & Miscellaneous Types South Pacific 1942-1944*





If I had been a little smarter, or was an AI review, I should have written something generic about all the magnificent color profiles and markings, along with a capsule history of individual airframes of squadron after squadron, in the series and just change the subtitle and say “ditto” as each new volume comes out. Any modeler or wargamer who paints up aircraft for WWII South Pacific will enjoy every volume in the series. A sampling is on each cover.

This volume covers the Betty, Val, Nell, Emily, Mavis, Dinah, Judy, Irving, Babs, and Claude.

A couple interesting tidbits: IJN legacy kanji is not read by modern Japanese (p130). Makes Claringbould books doubly important as reference sources. I didn't know the language had changed, but I also profess complete ignorance of reading Japanese and of spoken Japanese except for a couple phrases from *Shogun* and a “Domo Arigato, Mr. Roboto” from Styx. Hmmm.

Also: On January 20, 1943, an H8K1 Emily dropped 60kg bombs over USN repair and oil installations on Espirito Santo in New Hebrides. It did little damage, but killed a cow (p109). It also must have scared Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, who was visiting Espirito Santo that night.

The booklet contains 69 black and white photos, three color photos, two color maps, 116 color aircraft profiles, and nine color illustrations.

I can't tell what will happen first: I run out of superlatives for these reference volumes or Claringbould runs out of aircraft types.

Enjoyed it.

**Pacific Profiles: Volume 14.** by Michael John Claringbould. Softcover (6.9x9.8 inches). 136 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Allied Bombers: B-25 Mitchell Series Australia, New Guinea and the Solomons 1942-1945*

Ummmm. Ditto.

The booklet contains 59 black and white photos, 13 color photos, two color maps, 111 color aircraft profiles, 34 color unit emblem illustrations, and five other color illustrations.

Now, now, be of stout heart. Of course I read it.

How else would I know that the National Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola, FL, has the incorrect markings for K-104 (Profile 100 - p127).

Or that Mortimer (p133) had its first mission over Gasmata on Apr 6, 1942 and by June had 62 missions under its belt (20 bombing and the rest “armed recon”). By November 1943 it was the oldest B-25 in service in 3rd Bomb Group and turned into a transport and was finally retired in mid to late 1944.

Or that Our Gal II was also known as Calendar Girl because it had multiple pin ups along the fuselage as well as on the nose wheel (p55).

By the way, you'll find all sorts of nose art: dragons, wolves, ducks, beavers, panthers, falcons, tigers, text, and pin-ups.

So, it's another fine volume in the series.

Enjoyed it.

**Gebirgsjäger: German Mountain Troops 1935-45.** by Jean-Denis LaPage. Hardback (7.0x10.0 inches). 175 pages. 2023.

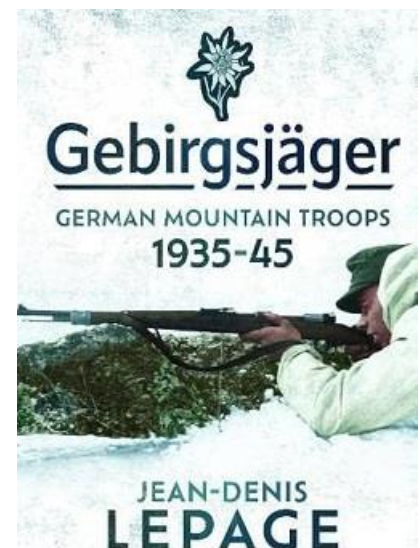
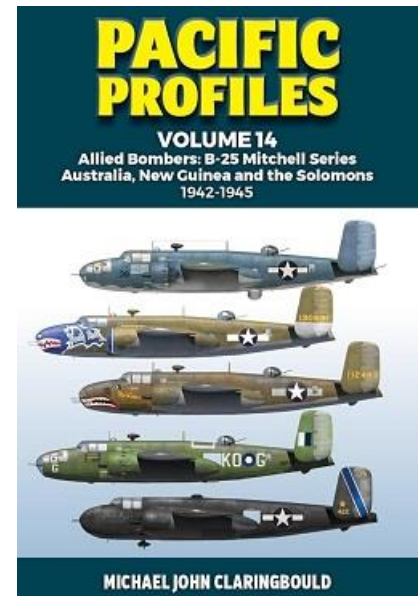
This overview of organization, missions, and tactics follows the specialty troops from initial formation through the end of the war. Germany raised 11 divisions, but some were more paper than reality.

This covers the recruitment, training, uniforms, and weaponry in detail and is quite well illustrated, including alternate uniform pieces, patches, and other regalia. Includes Waffen SS and “foreign” units.

The book contains 198 black and white illustrations (no photos).

The history is rather skimpy and the prose proves uninspiring, but the illustrations are quite informative.

Enjoyed it.



**Hospitaller Knights of St. John at Rhodes 1306-1522.** by Gordon Ellyson Abercrombie. Hardback (6.4x9.9 inches). 449 pages. 2024.

After the Crusaders were kicked out of Jerusalem and the surrounding area, after about a decade, the Hospitaller order ended up rebuilding on the island of Rhodes.

An interesting tidbit was that the Pope transferred Templar order assets to the Hospitallers -- or at least those assets not confiscated by monarchs or buried on Oak Island. Ba dum bum.

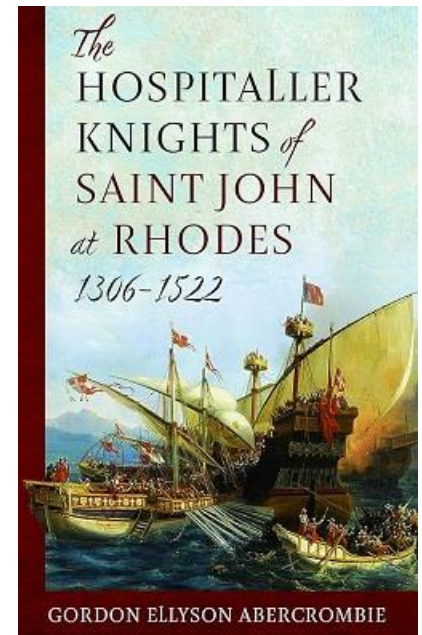
Each chapter generally follows the years of one Grand Master after another until the fall of Rhodes to the Turks. The text is filled with interactions between the Order and popes, Ottoman leaders, and a plethora of political, military, and pirate leaders across the Mediterranean Sea. It examines the initial rebuilding of the Order through the expansion of its power base, a variety of crises, and the internecine wars between Christian factions, notably between Genoa and Venice.

This is not a well-written book. It's hard to parse through the prose, but it is thorough. The cast of characters within its pages contains those great and in passing, which is part of the problem and part of its appeal. It is based on an official history written by Giacomo Bosio, who died in 1627. This is the first volume of a four-volume series.

The book contains seven black and white illustrations. What it also needs is a map of the various small islands in the Aegean Sea to help us understand the military movements and attacks.

You can pull generic naval battles from the pages. I can't say I read every word, but I did read the passages pertaining to the Ottoman sieges of "Rhodestown" in 1444, 1480, and 1522. Of the three, the 1522 siege is the most detailed.

Ties go to the author.  
Enjoyed it.



**Dunkirk: Nine Days That Saved an Army.** by John Grehan. Softcover (6.2x9.2 inches). 338 pages. 2023 reprint of 2018 book.

Subtitle: *A Day-by-Day Account of the Greatest Evacuation*

Dunkirk books abound and the topic received a renewal in interest due to the 2017 movie -- and methinks, this 2018 book (reviewed here in its 2023 softcover reprint version).

One key to the success of the evacuation resides in the tenacious British defense at the ports of Boulogne and Calais. Without such determined resistance, German troops would have arrived in the Dunkirk area quicker than their historical timing and come upon a less-organized defensive line.

The evacuation is mostly the result of Royal Navy efforts, although the small craft did play an important role. First-person accounts make up a considerable portion of the book. While these are interesting to an extent, they blur with repetition after a while. The flip side is the extensive research continued within the pages.

Of note is a highlighted anecdote: Archery enthusiast and amateur competitor Captain 'Mad' Jack Campbell brought his longbow to France. During the defense, he nocked an arrow and shot -- it hit a German in the chest -- the only WWII British soldier to hit an enemy with an arrow (p59). It sort of begs the question about any other archery shots in WWII...

The book contains 16 black and white photos.  
Enjoyed it.

FYI: If you want more photos, consider *Dunkirk Evacuation Operation Dynamo: Nine Days That Saved an Army* (Images of War series) by the same author. You can find the review in the 6/26/2020 AAR or up on hmgs.org

