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June 1967 Arab-Israeli Six-Day War: Vol. 1

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L to r: Mexican Jay, Phil, Russ, Chris. French Marc, Sam (Pat missing), and Umpire Dave W (red shirt). Photo by Dave M.

Battle of Puebla: Cinco El Shako

by Russ Lockwood

From Wikipedia: May 5, 1862 battle fought at Puebla, Mexico, between the army of the liberal government headed by Benito Juárez and the French forces sent by Napoleon III to establish a French satellite state in Mexico. The battle is celebrated in the national calendar of Mexican holidays as Cinco de Mayo (5th of May).

The Mariachi band: The Four Amigos. With prodding, Umpire Dave played mariachi music during the game. Ole!

Technically, we fought this on May 3, just shy of the 162nd anniversary of the battle. We all knew about the outcome of the battle, although only GM Dave and Mexican player Jay were conversant with the tactical aspects of the battle. We would see whether the tabletop version using modified *Shako* would mimic or change history.

By random die roll, we were assigned sides. I was on the Mexican side and held the far left position with a fort as anchor and half the troops in the trenches stretching to the other fort.

A cannon passing the French command.



Chris commanded those troops. Phil and Jay held the center woods and the right flank. I'm not sure who was in overall command. Chris and I thought it was Jay, but Phil outlined the plan. They both set to arguing. Since Napoleon's time, better to have one bad general in command than two good co-generals, so we elected General Jose Jalapeño (on a steeck) as overall commander.

Marc and Dave were French and most opposite me. Pat and Sam were the French center and left.

The rules were essentially *Shako* with some minor variations.



Mexican Position

The forts issued a big -2 terrain modifier for shooting and meleeing. The trenches in between were -1 die modifier for shooting and as they were at the top of a hill, a -2 die modifier for meleeing.

The table: Mexicans hold the buildings (forts) and connecting trenchline and extend into the woods and beyond. French start at the church (upper left). Photo by Dave M.

It was as strong a defensive position as you could ask for, so Chris and I did almost no maneuvering.

As per the scenario, each fort only held one unit, even though in tabletop scale they could hold far more. Indeed, I even tried to move a second unit into the fort during the game, only to be told I could not.

The victory condition for the French, who were on their way to Mexico City, was to grab both forts.

The two forts and trench. Photo by Dave M.

As for Phil in the center, he outlined an idea of swinging some units from the center towards our left flank while Jay also pushed units left, but with some wiggle room on the right to threaten flanks in case the French over-committed against the forts.

Chris and I never paid any attention. We polished our awful Mexican accents and enjoyed the sounds of a mariachi band. We entreated two lovely señoritas to dance the Jarabe Tapatío -- also known as the Mexican hat dance. Ole!

What the French faced.



Si, amigos, our bad accents would only get worse as the night rolled along.

My troops and cannon in the fort on the left flank view the French forming up for the attack.

French Attack

Let me tell you, Marc and Dave were also dueling -- with each other -- out there in the approach to the forts. They went into column. They went out of column. They debated whether to head against the trenches or the forts. It was a Gallic whirlwind of order, counter-order, and disorder. For the French, it was bad.

How bad was it?

It was so bad, Montezuma's revenge struck their tongues instead of their bowels.

It was so bad, they flailed away at the fort like trying to bust a piñata with a pool noodle.

It was so bad, even The Force couldn't calm them down. Yeah, I know. Technically, Star Wars Day was the next day: May the 4th...

It was so bad, someone put Mexican Jumping Beans in their crepes suzette.

It was so bad, when they dropped the chilupa, they banged heads picking it up.

On the right flank, Jay's troops await the French (coming from the right of photo) in the open while Phil's troops hug the edge of the woods.

Needless to say, Chris and I were delighted at the rippling French discord. It even allowed our two señoritas to bar the gate to the fort. Surely, the French would not shoot at women?

Turn 2: The French advance. French Sam and Pat (hat) head towards Mexican Jay and Phil as Umpire Dave W (red shirt) answers questions.

Slowly They Came, Step By Step

The Marc and Dave show sorted themselves out enough to finally aim for the fort, even as Marc diverted his cannon and a unit to fire at the Mexicans in the trenches.

What they did not know is those trench units were mostly two-hit wonders -- two hits and away they would flee.

Our tough four-hit wonders were in the fort.



The big French advantage was their rifles that fired out to 18 inches, while our cut-rate muskets only ranged to six inches.

Fortunately, we had placed a cannon (36-inch range) in the fort. I drilled several shots into Marc's infantry. Unfortunately, on 50-50 bounce-through die rolls, I usually rolled horribly. You can't spend turn after turn rolling three dice per turn for 50-50 and fail to hit even one unit. Those French had the luck of the Irish. My musket boys made up for it, staggering the French time and time again, which disrupted his return fire.

Turn 3: The French tide rolls forward.

Center and Right

Meanwhile, French Sam marched onwards in the center, aiming at the other fort. Mexican Phil had anticipated this from the start and his units headed towards that imaginary interception point. Phil was able to flank a Sam unit and obliterate it, only to be flanked himself. Back and forth. Back and forth. It was quite the day of the dead in the center as Sam advanced what was left of his troops against Chris' fort.

On the Mexican right, Jay and Pat danced to keep the flank secure, with fierce cavalry charges and counter-charges. More units fled the carnage of a close-fought action.

Turn 5: Closer they come to exchange fire with my troops. White caps indicate hits.

Trenches and Frenches

Despite the trench advantage, Marc finally put enough shot and bullets into the left-most unit manning the trench. It took a while, but when I saw the second hit go in, the unit broke and all efforts to hold them failed. That horde of two-hit wonders fled faster than a unit of six million peso men.

I believe the lightbulb went on over the collective French head that two hits on units in a trench line is easier to attain than four hits on a unit in a fort. Granted, the forts are the victory conditions.

Marc's troops are shot up as Dave M's Zouaves crowd forward. Red counter indicates disordered.

El Kabong!

Marc finally close assaulted my fort. But who should appear atop the walls? El Kabong! Brandishing his guitar to the left and right and ultimately top to bottom, he squashed the French as they poked their heads above the battlements.



But the real heroines were the two senioritas -- el matadoritas -- guarding the gate. They waved their red aprons at the French, whose bayonets struck only air as the ladies twirled away and drove swords into French têtes.

Two French units were obliterated and the attack melted away.

The Mexicans remained defiant, but were battered and disordered.

On the Mexican right flank, French Pat charges into Jay's troops as Sam's troops skirts the stream to advance on Chris' fort (bottom right corner).



In the Center

In the center, Mexican Phil and French Sam traded outflanking charges to a virtual mutual annihilation. Phil's sacrifice ultimately saved Chris' fort from much grief as a severely depleted Sam barely even knocked on the gate with fire and never with melee.

Phil disrupts Sam's attack using bold charges with inferior troops.



The Zouaves

Advancing over the corpses of the first wave, Dave M's Zouaves charged the fort. The Mexican cannon loaded canister -- only on a 1 would they fail to do anything.

With Marc's sacrificial troops obliterated, Dave's Zouaves charge the fort. Marc did his job well -- my troops had a hit and were disordered.

I rolled the fateful shooting die: Uno! The elite Zouaves were untouched. I rolled for the musketry: Another miss! Dios Mio!

No worries, it was still an almost even fight with the French having only a slight advantage.

I rolled the fateful melee die: Uno! Dave rolled a 6.

The French bayoneted the senioritas against the gate, forced it



open, and stormed the fort.

Night Falls

Umpire Dave W. called the game then as we had run through three hours of gaming. It was a minor Mexican win as the French did not take both forts and losses were severe. Indeed, they were severe on both sides.

Thanks for hosting, French Dave. Thanks for running the game, Umpire Dave. Thanks all for an interesting close-run battle!

If ever 6-1 rolls turned the tide, this was a great time for Dave M to roll a 6 and a bad time for me to roll a 1. Dave's Zouaves storm the fort.



Eye candy: Dave M's church. Photo by Dave.



*Dave W. explains the history of the battle.
Hint: The Mexicans won.*





The 1942 battlefield. Australians in upper right corner at the RR station. Tel el Eisa (this side of the tracks) is occupied by an Italian infantry company with another coming from the left. The German radio truck is upper middle left of the photo.

Tel Me More: CD Tel El Eisa 1942

by Russ Lockwood

G'Day, mate. The sun shone brightly on the railroad station at Tel El Eisa in Egypt, near El Alamein. It was a lovely morning for a *Command Decision* (CD) donnybrook over a hill (tel) occupied by a dug-in Italian infantry company.

Benito's best dug in atop the tel.

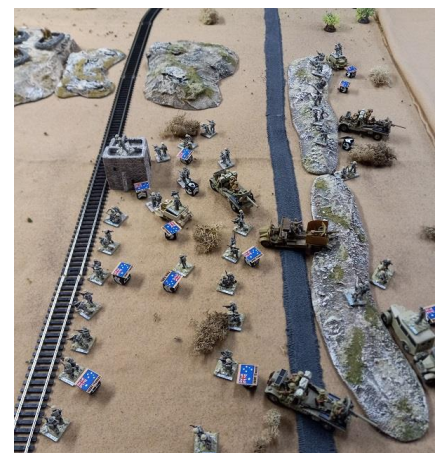
Two Australian infantry battalions, one of which was mine and the other Pat's, stood ready to cross the railroad tracks and take the hill. The Italians had another infantry company hoofing it across the sand, but we were closer. A German forward observer lurked across the ground along with an Italian FO, so you knew something else was going to be coming.

Now, each Australian battalion had two attached Portee AT gun-trucks plus a Universal Carrier platoon with LMGs (Brens). It looked simple enough. Pound the hill with artillery and smoke, hoof it forward, overrun what's left of the Italian infantry, and shoot up whatever's coming.

Australian start.

Portee Plan

I sent one portee and the carrier wide to the left to go around the tel and cover the flank, with an idea of screaming across the sand to attack the FOs.



The other portee moved up to support the infantry attack of three companies. My fourth company I kept in reserve.

The first couple turns went as predicted. I dropped smoke across the front of the tel and moved my infantry up behind it. The arty bounced the sand a bit.

Jake (left) and Garrett (center) move out on Turn 1 as Umpire Marc (right) hands over more Axis troops.

Can't complain too loudly about ruinous die rolls -- Jake and the Germans had horrendous rolls, too. And Garrett and the Italians would have worse, but I got ahead of myself.

Smoke Mechanic

Smoke is like any other artillery: you have to call it in. The twist is that if it lands, you need to roll for wind direction and make allowances for smoke drift. This is a fiddly CD mechanic because of course we're going to adjust for wind drift to place the smoke where you want it. Smoke only lasts for one turn, so why bother with wind drift if you can plot its drop location and it only lasts for one turn? Maybe there's another die roll for scatter, but not in this game. Silly drift.

Pat's infantry advance over the hill while I drop smoke to shield my portee and my advancing infantry off photo at bottom.

The Other Battalion

Pat's battalion came in over the other part of the tel. German and Italian artillery pounded his platoons senseless. The hill had a -1 die modifier if the unit remained stationary and no die modifier if a unit moved over it.

I did not catch the significance of this until after the game was over and driving home.

Normally, a Cautious Advance allows the moving unit to gain the benefit of a terrain die modifier. A Full Advance allows the unit to move faster (12 inches instead of a Cautious Advance 6 inches in the case of infantry) but it loses any terrain modifier. Makes sense.

Pat (left) watches incoming Axis arty.



From a getting hit perspective, it's a choice of moving slower and getting more shots fired at you but gaining a die modifier advantage versus running Full and get fired at fewer times while losing the terrain modifier advantage. The other reason for a Cautious Advance is firing normally while a Full Advance penalizes the moving unit with a -2 die modifier for firing.

In addition, the clear terrain of sand somehow gave a -1 die modifier benefit to get hit if a unit was stationary, but none if it was moving. That was different from previous games' clear terrain. Another thing to pay attention to. I'm not sure either side took that -1 consistently. It might have been a scenario rule.

Garrett coordinates the Italian advance down the RR tracks.



Italian Flanking

I had just put down my Full Advance order for my Carrier to charge the German FO when the Italian Stallion Battalion flanked me on Turn 3. Fortunately, Daniel placed it on the other side of a line of sight blocking dune. How did I not see them approach? Unfortunately, they now sat in my direct path.

Daniel's Italian Stallion Battalion deploys before I can scoot my Universal Carrier off the top edge of the photo towards the German Forward Observer. It turns out the Germans had an off-table 210mm arty battery.

My portee was on a Cautious Advance. I thought about just leaving it where it was, but figured I needed some wiggle room in case the Italians left the tel.

The battle was longer than expected -- both of our engaged platoons lasted the turn because Daniel and I rolled misses.

On the next turn, I did nothing while Daniel destroyed the portee and Bren boys and captured the carrier.

Go Tel It On The Mountain

Pat's infantry assault ran into a meat grinder of artillery fire and MG fire. He made progress, but was often "pinned" due to failed morale rolls.

The savage battle on the tel between Pat and Jake. My supporting portee burns.



My flanking attack was held up, a failed morale test (a 10 on a d10 when you want low) sent a perfectly intact Company C screaming for Cairo.

Ultimately, my B company made it onto the tel and into the slit trenches to firefight it out with the remaining Italians and the relieving Italians that had hoofed it across the desert since turn 1.

The end of Turn 3. Pat's clearing out the tel, but he is also losing troops on the hill (upper right corner) from Axis arty.



I diverted A company to the flank to form at least some sort of line to hold up Daniel's flanking Italians.

I shouldn't have bothered. Artillery and Italian small arms fire blasted two of the three platoons and sent the survivor scurrying back to the train station.

Turn 4: A company of PzIIIs and others with supporting infantry arrive on the flank to join the Italian force commanded by Daniel (hat). My A company of infantry feel very isolated and my portee and Carrier are not long for the battle.

15th Panzer

Next to the flanking Italians came a company of Pz IIIs, a captured portee platoon, a captured Stuart platoon, and a company of panzergrenadiers.

Jake pushed them up and held as Pat committed a company of Valentine tanks to my care. A fusillade of shots rained down on my Valentines, but all the shells bounced like an enraged 'roo.

However, one of Daniel's Italian 47mm AT guns, at extreme range, managed a series of great die rolls to pot one of my Valentines and force a platoon to fall back. That AT gun crew received Italian Gold Medals for valor.

Charge of the Cruiser Tanks

Pat launched a suicidal tank charge down the road at Garrett's Italians with his pair of Crusader tanks and a pair of Carriers.

There was a method to his madness. One of our minor objectives was to capture the German Signals truck that had advanced just a bit too far. Pat had sent a Carrier and succeeded, but he needed to get the truck back to our lines.

It took a few turns as he kept failing morale and "pinned" with the truck. Eventually, after the Crusaders charged past, he was able to finally roll decent and zipped the radio truck back to Monty.



Alas, Garrett's incoming M14 company caught them all at close range and smoke and flames erupted from the eliminated platoons. Our only break was that Garrett's rolling was so bad, his tanks managed to destroy everything in front of him, take no losses, fail morale, and flee off table. Go figure.

It was the last turn of the game, so no harm done. We called it.

Turn 5: A company of Valentines advance to hold the left flank as my B company occupies the foxholes on the tel. Pat's Crusaders charge down the road as he shepherds the German radio truck back to our lines.

Tel It Like It Is

My company held the tel, but little was around it to hold off the Italians and Germans. Pat had lost just about all his troops to death, dismemberment, or failed morale. I imagine my B company would be sacrificed as a rearguard to allow the other bits and pieces of the Australian force to retreat.

Garrett's M14 tanks arrive. In the firefight, all the Crusaders and supports were obliterated.

As A Scenario

This scenario had a lot of artillery. The Australian predicament would have been worse if Jake rolled anything close to average.

Final positions of the 15th Panzer.

CD does have an odd sort of ebb and flow to it -- it's a game of 1s and 10s, especially for morale. A unit that's intact but only average can start running away with a roll of a 10 -- and you need a commander order to calm them from shaken to pin and another turn to rally fully. Assuming you don't roll another 10. Dice are dice, but this has happened in an awful lot of games.

That said, on the plus side, it was a close-run scenario for a while. In the hands of better Australian commanders, it might have been even closer. And it was nice to head back into the desert.

Thanks for hosting and umpiring, Marc. And thanks for the game, all.



Picking Pachyderms: *LADG*

by Russ Lockwood

Peter Popper picked a peck of pickled pachyderms.
A peck of pickled pachyderms, Peter Popper
picked.

If Peter Popper picked a peck of pickled
pachyderms,

Where's the peck of pickled pachyderms that Peter
Popper picked?

They're on the tabletop.

Dennis sets up.

Dennis needed a tune-up game for a future
elephant-heavy *La Arte de la Guerre* tournament, so I
volunteered. It's been a while since I played the rules, but
we gave my rusty brain cells a shove.

In the tournament, the army lists mandate a certain
number of elephants. Dennis fielded his own fine-tuned
army and handed me another fine-tuned army. It occurred
to me halfway through the game that I had an elephant-envy
problem: Dennis fielded five elephants. I had
two. Hold peppered pachyderms, Batman, I'm
in a pickle.

Hmmm. My guess is that this extreme
was some sort of wiggle ground for the number of
elephants allowed in a tournament army.
Dunno. We picked terrain and I set out my
three forces.

I kept my left in the clear for my
cavalry. I kept the far right closed off with a
coast. The hills and fields were scatted in the
center right -- terrain placement is based off of
random die rolls.

Turn 1: Arrow fire. Green counters mark hits.

Into Action Quick

I dutifully shoved my light cavalry
forward as fast as I could and got into shooting
range on my left. My elephants and foot
advanced steadily in the center. I lagged my weak
right flank. The idea was skirmish on the left,
delay on the right, and smash the middle.

*Turn 2: Dennis charges. My lights evade behind my
line and we melee.*

On Turn 2, yes, 2, Dennis charged in the
center. Hey! That's my move! Alas, he pre-
empted me. My light bowmen and javelinmen
evaded behind my lines. Now it was a scrum.

On Turn 3, my left cavalry were heavily



engaged and a little bit outmatched by Dennis' foot bow, but I needed time to grind the middle. I sent an elite heavy cavalry into the teeth of his force. It held a bit, but was crushed. By Turn 4, my light cavalry evaded towards my baseline.

On the right, I played for time, and was able to eliminate a light horse unit with bowfire. I could not quite turn the flank in the center, but positioned myself to do so the next turn.

End of Turn 2: Vicious melee. Red counters indicate destroyed units.

Center Crunch

By Turn 4, I had smashed Dennis' center command -- literally, only a skirmisher was left. That was the good news.

The bad news was that my left was reforming and I had an open center left flank. Dennis turned it faster than I could turn his on the center right flank.

End of Turn 3: I obliterate Dennis' center, but my left evades far, far away.

In addition, my die rolls suddenly turn ugly. Four '2's in a row as Dennis found the 5 and 6 sides of his die. My troops melted away.

Even worse, one of my elephant units went on the rampage and put more hits on my troops.

Elephant rampage! The unit with the red counter routs. Green counters with numbers indicate the number of hits on the unit.

In the end, I had exactly 24 losses (2 points for an eliminated unit and 1 point for a damaged unit still on the table) out of the 24 I was allowed. Dennis lost 19 of his 24, giving him the win.

I will say that this is the closest I've ever come in VPs. I didn't think I made too many mistakes, although I mostly keep forgetting about the "slide" move to the left or right before a forward move.

Dennis won the KozCon tournament, so I guess my game play offered a sort of beneficial randomness all its own. When I make Dennis pause and think about a move, I've done my job.

End of Turn 4 and end of game with a rather vacant field of battle.



HMGS NextGen: Events

by John Spiess

*John was kind enough to forward these photos and captions. He notes he's been running events almost weekly.
-- RL*

Siege of Harfleur: Dec. 28, 2023

We held a castle siege game at the Greenwich, CT, Library. It was a really nice group of kids. They were mostly middle school with two high school kids.

Castle siege game photos. BTW, John is in the green shirt.



Monmouth: Feb. 1, 2024

We held a Battle of Monmouth game in the Greenwich, CT, Library and a battle of Ridgefield game in Westport, CT, Library.

One funny note about Westport is that the library is not far from Compo Beach (where the British landed for the raid on Danbury). So you could literally look out the window to see the road they marched on.

Also, one of the mothers present also knew her history pretty well. I guess they used to live in that area since she pointed out that I had the Keeler Tavern on the wrong side of the street for my game. She was right, so yes, I moved it.

It also turned out that her son is an AWI reenactor.



Ridgefield: Jan. 27, 2024

We ran a Battle of Ridgefield game at the Westport, CT, Library.

The guy in the photo is HMGS member Tom Cusa who happens to live in Westport. He just dropped by unannounced and gave a nice summary of some of the key parts of the battle and all the movements by both sides before and after.



Princeton: 2024



WWI Dogfight: Apr. 25, 2024

We hosted the always popular WWI aerial battle game *Wings of War* at the Greenwich, CT Library.





Back in space (l to r): Keith, GM Sean, Ed, Chris. Later, Caius, Fred, and Dan joined us.

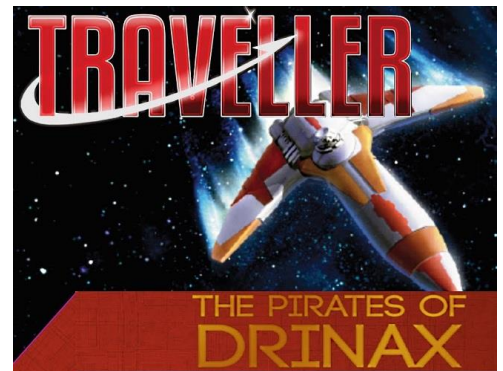
Brax Avoids Death: *Traveller* Continues

by Russ Lockwood

Well, it's been a long time since I exercised Brax on the *Traveller* RPG tabletop. So long that Umpire Sean asked me to pull all my AARs together so co-gamers could be reminded of our history -- or at least as much as Brax participated in on weekends. Brax slept through a number of adventures, including the last one. Still, it's better than nothing. Even Brax needed the refresher reading.

As Sean waved time forward to the 144th "adventure week" after we began playing, we all could increase our characters by two skill levels.

Brax also got a sidekick, Captain Hastings. He's a pilot extraordinaire and quite the ship savant, but useless in a fight. That's OK by me.



Starting Summary:

- * The Fifth Frontier War has begun. The "Fleet" Gaines said was looking for you, has been recalled back to Tuba
- * Hroal Irontooth the pirate is still out to get the Travellers for stealing his prize, the Treasure Ship (even though it was never in his possession).
- * Rumor is that the Aslan are building up forces to prepare an assault on the Trojan Reach (where we are) while the Imperium is preoccupied.
- * Petyr Vallus, a pirate operating from Noricum to Delta Theta, famous for his raids against the Aslan, has sent a diplomat to Drinax, seeking an alliance with Drinax and the Travellers.
- * Admiral Darokyn's pirates have been surprisingly quiet
- * One Imperial Patrol is still within the Trojan Reach searching for Pirates. It is commanded by Fletcher Pratt and Blaster St. John-Smythe
- * A worker rebellion on Acrid has been brutally crushed by the Proactive Recycling Corporation (PRQ) with assistance from the Imperium
- * Karlsbad, Wendell, and Dr. Sparks has installed a friendly government on Paal. Paal a Tech Level 6 World is currently funding the construction of the National Paal Science Academy, which will be overseen by Dr. Sparks. The goal is to train Paal scientists at a higher tech level and increase the overall tech level of the planet. Dr. Sparks has overseen the search committee for faculty from all across the Trojan Reach.
- * Karlsbad, Wendell, and Dr. Sparks has formed a private military on Paal. The mercenary group is Company sized consisting of four platoons at TL 12.

Prepping Time

Last we left Brax, the Crimson Permanent Assurance Company (CPAC) had grabbed a treasure ship from the Empire out from under the nose of Pirate Irontooth somebody or another. Then CPAC sold it for an astounding 263+ million credits -- minus the 10% tithe to King Obladee-Obladah of Drinax. So, CPAC was sitting on about 250 million credits not too long after 250,000 credits was an unheard sum for us.

The Crimson Permanent Assurance Company's main area of operations.

Better yet, our free trading expedition of two merchant spaceships and a corsair were paying for themselves in maintenance as well as returning a tidy little profit in relatively safe space. I say relatively because the cat-people Aslans could come screaming over the border at any time.

Up galactic north ways in the Spinward Marches, off the end of the map, the Fifth Frontier War began between the Imperium and the Eradani. I have no idea if Sean was playing that out with an old GDW game called *The Fifth Frontier War*, but it might give the Aslan ideas with the Imperium busy elsewhere.

We've steadily been increasing political points among the frontier systems with Drinax. This also gave us a number of safe havens near the border should we need a quick fix after a space battle. We only had two ships, but we like to keep them airtight and functioning.

Paale In Our Pocket

The CPAC's private military company achieved a velvet glove takeover with a low level of bloodshed save for a few recalcitrant warlord tyrants who were only convinced in their afterlife. Our friends the Deryni occupy all important posts in the planetary-wide government and remain popular among the four million inhabitants after overthrowing oppression and foiling an Aslan plot.

Population is about four million, the friendly government is constructing the National Paale Science Academy for Dr. Sparks, and all nuclear weaponry is now under the control of the planetary government. A Git'erDone company starport orbits the main planet. CPAC even has a high-tech (TL 12 vs government TL 7) mercenary company all our own. Neatly done by Karlsbad, Wendell, and Dr. Sparks.

Hari Seldon's Vault

If you remember, we had opened a vault that contained a hologram of a futurist we called Hari Seldon who outlined some plans within plans for the survival of the humans on the frontier. The Drinax network was all about buying time, even if the King had delusions of grandeur of re-creating the Drinax empire.



The second part is a bit odd. We need to ensure Drinax falls when, and ol' Hari said when, the Aslans come screaming over the border. Guess we'll find out.

Credit Lane

Brax Ruttlles, pulled up a screen showing the CPAC finances. "Niiiiice," he whispered, eyeing the 237 million or so credits in the bank account from the Treasure Ship transaction, plus another 10 million from trading operations. As is his wont, he started humming a tune as he scrolled the news feeds.

In Credit Lane,
There is a banker showing savings plans.
Of every stock and bond and treasure to grow.
And all the laundering on the go,
If you're in the know.

On the corner is a pirate with a motorcar.
In a uniform with medals fronts and backs.
And the pirate shouts his name is Brax.
Between cul-de-sacs,
Burnin' tracks.

Credit Lane,
Is paying off,
I'm overjoyed.
Skill,
And lucky hacks,
In stellar void.

Credit Lane.

Rumor Mill: The Alley Cat

On Tyokh, a patron nicknamed The Alley Cat is offering access to the black market of Rea'a Hrillkhir for the capture of a dustspice freighter.

If CPAC wants to carry out pirate attacks in Aslan space, they will need allies. Investigations using Streetwise checks reveal the Alley Cat wants dustspice, a spice popular in many Aslan cuisines. While synthetic dustspice is widely available, true connoisseurs prefer natural spice imported from the Imperium. The Alley Cat intends to poison a shipment of natural spice with an undetectable slow-acting poison, then blackmail wealthy Aslan who eat it.

If the Travellers can capture a shipment of dustspice, the Alley Cat will give them access to her black markets. Dustspice is imported by an Aslan megacorporation called Tyeyo Fteahrao Yolr. They use fast, well-armed freighters to swiftly cross the Trojan Reach before heading towards the jump-5 route across the Great Rift and the hungry markets of the core Hierate worlds. Access to the black markets means the Travellers can fence stolen goods -- minus a 20% cut to the Cat -- at any Aslan port.

Rumor Mill: Lando Nierr

Lando Nierr dangles a way for the CPACers to become Pirate Lords on Theev if they make an example of the Salif System, which fought off pirate attacks. Theev is secretly backed by the Git'erDone company, who want to boost piracy to encourage systems to rely on Git'erDone protection. Funny, that's exactly the same idea of the Drinax emperor. Exactly how to make an example isn't specified, but Lando will probably tell us.

Rumor Mill: Trade Brawl

Thona Zorn of the Umemii system seeks a team to disable the starport at Tanith, Acrid, or Cordan in order to drive more trade to Umemii. In return, Umemii becomes a haven for CPAC.

Fifth Frontier War

The Imperium fleet that the now retired Gaines warned us about was pulled back to Tuba and presumably will be sent up to the Spinward March to deal with Eradani.

One Imperial Patrol is still within the Trojan Reach searching for Pirates. It was commanded by new CPACer Fletcher Pratt and, and, and ... Blaster St. John-Smythe (?!). That punter is out to get Brax, but not if Brax gets him first.

Irontooth's Revenge

That old Aslan pirate is out for revenge because CPAC stole "his" treasure ship. He never actually possessed the treasure ship except in his little fuzzy cat brain. CPAC did all the hard work, but ol' Ironbrain wants the cash. If he shows up, we'll defang him.

Aslan Build Up

Rumor is that the Aslan are building up forces to prepare an assault on the Trojan Reach while the Imperium is preoccupied. Hmmm.

The Admiral Is Out

Admiral Darokyn's pirates, last known to field 30 ships, have been surprisingly quiet.

Workers Crushed

A worker rebellion on Acrid was brutally crushed by the Proactive Recycling Corporation (PRQ) with assistance from the Imperium.

Back To Work

Brax shut down the feed. Some interesting items and some not. He'll have to ask Fletch about working with that coward Blaster. Irony that. The Universe has a sense of humor. Or karma. Or both.

Of course, with the tithe we paid from selling the treasure ship, we were pretty popular among the nobility of Drinax, especially King Oleb the no-longer-selling-his-treasures-in-the-attic. We had a lovely reception among the glitteri. Of course, Brax wore his Sindalian regalia that he had bought when Oleb was relic rich and credit poor.

Yep, ol' King Oblah-dee-Oblah-daa seemed in a good mood. He not only didn't try to repossess Brax's marshal uniform, complete with hat, scabbard, baton, medals, and sword, but he awarded Brax another shiny medal. Order of the Garderobe or some such.

Mind you, shiny bits of metal don't impress someone like Brax who clawed his way up from the wrong side of the sewer line, but the nobility made ooh-ing and aah-ing swoons when spying things last seen in a museum display. Of course Brax made the most of it, offering nobility princesses rides in his petro-burning sport car -- especially with the engine off.

A Professor Utah Smith introduced himself at the function and had an idea about finding a Sindal treasure vault.

"Not again," Brax moaned. "Last time we found such a place, it had rotting food and a broken 300-year-old Robbie the robot armed with a shotgun."

Yet we humored the old man, who had spent his life researching the long lost Sindal Empire. He had even heard of us, including our discovery of said vault, hence the meet and greet.

Skeptical, Brax let the old man recount his research. It impressed the others of the CPAC and Brax admitted that the homework seemed legit. Then ol' Utah pulled a globe from his pouch. It sure looked old.

Over to the Scholar's tower we went so they could open it with a secret Royal Family decoder ring. Apparently, the globe contained a 500-year-old message from Duke Alpo about a secret base and a set of old-school Sindelian coordinates. We quickly ran a current-day conversion.

Later, King Oleb pulled Brax aside and handed him a small hand-held gadget. "This contains Sindalian access codes. In case you actually find a treasure vault that requires code access, this will open it. Press this button."

Brax turned it over in his hand. "We'll give it a try."

"It will self-destruct in 90 days."

"Great."

"One other thing. If a treasure vault is indeed found, the professor doesn't breathe a word of it or he doesn't breathe."

Brax leveled a gaze at the king. "Oh, joy."

Recruitment of three new members for CPAC followed: Fletcher "Fletch" Pratt, an admin wizard, Igvar, an engineer extraordinaire, and Captain Horatio Hastings, starship pilot and tech genius. They had apparently done us a good turn, passed the initiation test, and were welcomed aboard our pair of ships. Brax wasn't quite sure why, but Fletch required a radiation-proof desk with a panic drawer in his cabin.

Get Pumped

We followed Utah Smith's lead to Borrite, a world whose ecosystem was just getting back to something a step above hell planet. Its tech level was so low, they still used animal transport and the "E-class" starport was on the planet surface, not in orbit. The starport motto: "The first 50 feet are paved."

Dan joins us at the Battle of Boot Hill via Zoom link. The yellow building is Hotel Cormac. The blue building is the bank.

Down we dropped. Fletch cleared the paper way and we found out the government, such as it was, needed help getting a high-tech pump to work again in one of the far-off towns. Brax shrugged. Engineering was not his department.

Ah, but the town was also at the mercy of an outlaw gang. Brax perked up. Clear out the bad guys and do a good deed that might gain us another, albeit rather low tech, system for the Drinax Empire? Brax was in.

Captain Hastings flew top cover in orbit as our pair of aircars brought us to the town of Boot Hill. I guess it manufactured footwear at one point.

Our aircars drop us off at the edge of Boot Hill. Wendell (Fred) and Igvar (Caius) descend into the silver pump station.



A lawman, Sheriff Benton, met us as we landed. "Howdy."

"Hello," we all replied.

"You seem a bit out of place here."

"Not if you need the pump fixed." Fletch hustled forward to present papers.

"Well, I'll be. Never thought anyone would be here to repair it," Benton said. He looked at Brax in his power armor toting a fusion gun. "You seem a bit over-prepared."

"We've heard about the outlaws," Fletch explained.

"They do terrorize us. If we don't pay the cost, we pay the price. They're tough."

"How bad can they be?" Brax mumbled, looking down the one main unpaved street of the town.

"Bad enough for us. Anyway, the pump's over there. Have at it."

Wendell and Igvar walked over to the blast doors, fiddled a bit at the lock, opened the doors, and entered the pump house elevator. Down they went out of sight to begin work.

Top Cover Calling

Comms crackled from Captain Hastings. "Scans show three scout-class ships 30km to the south, all powered up. Also one larger ship 80km to the west powering up."

"Roger that. Do we have any transponder info?" Cormac asked.

"That's three Imperium codes for the scouts and the other ship is not emitting a code at all."

"Keep an eye on it."

"Of course," Captain Hastings affirmed. "Oh, I say! Scans show four Infantry Fighting Vehicles heading your way, once from each direction of the compass."

Cormac interjected, "I've got a drone." He sent it skyward and monitored the feeds.

"Hastings. You got missiles. Take out the IFVs," Brax suggested.

"It's not that easy," Hastings noted. "They're converging on the town from four different directions."

"Give it a go."

Maneuvering proved easy, but targeting proved difficult. Hastings let fly with the first missile. Brax and company watched the fiery trail of re-entry that led to the ground and massive hit. A smoke pillar lifted skyward.

"One down," Hastings reported. "Now, another."

Once again, the trail dropped from the heavens, only this time closer to Boot Hill. Another strike sent another pillar of smoke upwards.

"Scratch two, but that's it. The pair of infantry fighting vehicles is too close to target. One south. One west."

"Well done, Captain Hastings. We got 'em," Brax noted. He looked around. He went into the bank and the tellers froze in fear, thinking the outlaws were back. "Relax, folks, I just need the stairs to the roof. Bandits incoming."

One of the young men pointed to a door at the back of the room. Brax took the stairs two at a time and found himself behind a facade of thin wooden planks overlooking the road south. He powered up the fusion gun and rested it on the top of the facade.

Never Send A Grenade To Do A Fusion Gun's Work

Wendell and Igvar took the pump house elevator up and appeared at the blast doors. The attack had rudely interrupted their work, but they didn't want to miss the fight. Wendell fitted a rifle grenade and let fly from ambush. The grenade hit the IFV, but only scratched the paint.

"Well, that was pointless," Wendell snorted. He and Igvar agreed to close and lock the blast doors. Discretion and valor, you understand.

Brax takes out the IFV. Photo by Sean.

The IFV was armed with a mini-gun that fired a few thousand rounds per second. The gunner ignored the grenade and was quicker off the mark than Brax.



For a guy in powered armor, Brax dodged away neatly from the facade as thousands of flechettes tore through the planking. Besides a ding here and there, Brax emerged unscathed.

Brax whistled an undulating few notes followed by "wah-wah-wah." He aimed the fusion gun and touched the firing stud. Pure plasma erupted from the barrel and headed down the street until it reached the IFV. The explosion tore the vehicle apart and the outlaws riding atop it.

"Whistle softly and carry a big stick," Brax joked. "Clean up in aisle two."

Hotel Cormac

Meanwhile, the remaining IFV, with more guts than brains, trundled down the main street of the town from the west. A horse-drawn wagon careened away, but the mini-gun shredded it and the driver.

Cormac had picked up a light anti-tank weapon back at Drinax. He was curious what the PanZerFaust Mk. MCMLXVI could do. Here was his chance.

Concealed on the second story of the hotel, he aimed out the window and pulled the trigger. The back blast created a whirlwind in the room, singing the bed, blackening the dresser, and curling the wallpaper.

The warhead flew true and burrowed through the armor before exploding. The mini-gun spun through the air and the IFV cracked open in a ball of flame. The quartet of riders on the outside turned into char-sicles. The crew ceased to exist.



*Cormac (Keith) takes out the other IFV.
Photo by Sean.*

The outlaws creeping towards the town froze the instant their IFVs exploded. They ran away towards the hills. Discretion and valor.

System Defense Boat

With the outlaws fried, engineer Igvar returned to the task of fixing the pump.

Meanwhile, Brax, Cormac, and Wendell hopped back in the air car and flew the 80km to the unknown ship. The crew had fled. Apparently, precise orbital bombardments unnerved them. Wendell noted that the ship -- a System Defense Boat -- was effectively a wreck, but could be repaired with enough time and parts. He piloted the SDB back to the starport. The Git'erDone Co could provide the services needed and the payments to the outlaws could go towards SDB repair. It wasn't much, but it would be a deterrent against pirates and raiders.

The aircar returned to Boot Hill, now with a functioning pump for whatever needed pumping. CPACers said goodbye to a rather pleased Sheriff Benton, and headed back to the starport and picked up another clue.

Radiation Reservoir

The clue took CPAC to nearby Noricum, another hell planet recovering from the Sindalian War, and over a radiation-infused reservoir. The dam looked worse for wear, but held back the water.

Another view of Boot Hill and Cormac's successful PzF attack. Part of Russ in upper left corner. Photo by Sean.



After overflying the area to measure the rads, one party of CPACers dropped down on the dam and the other flew towards a village. How any sentient beings existed in this wasteland was puzzling, but the radiation proved tolerable in protective suits.

Igvar the engineer braved the interior of the dam to open the sluice gates and relieve some pressure. As the water level slowly dropped, a circular tower appeared in the middle of the reservoir on an island dubbed Nuke Island. The party transferred over and discovered it was a hatch. After a moment or two, it yielded to brute strength and the party descended stairs that hugged the circular wall to a door on the only level.

The water was knee deep and the main passage led to a series of empty rooms and a dead end. A thorough scan showed up the faint outlines of a vault door. The professor was ecstatic. Here was the proof of his lifelong quest. The vault was locked and no amount of tampering or hacking could open the door.

"Let me try," Brax offered.

Skepticism greeted his words.

Brax intoned, "Abracadabra. Alakazzun. Reveal your secrets and open sesame seed bun."

The vault door remained shut until Brax surreptitiously pressed the button on his Sindalian code gadget. With a screech and a suction pop, the door opened.

Skepticism changed to wonder. Brax said, "I guess I'm part Sindalian."

They hustled into the room, water pouring across the threshold as fast as the party entered. The only item in the room was a Naval Particle Cannon. It seemed the same as the radiation gun as on the ship.

Wendell examined the gun. No, something was off. The power converters seemed different. "This is no ordinary particle cannon," Wendell noted.

The barrel of the gun pointed to a blank wall. "Now, that's odd," Cormac commented. "Artefacts usually point towards a door or away from a door. Instead, it points to a blank wall."

Scans found a small hidden panel. When opened, a switch was inside.

"Great, we found the light switch," Wendall joked.

"Who hides a light switch in the middle of the room?" Igvar asked.

"Someone who wants to hide something," Anton suggested. He flicked the switch.

From under the cannon, a beam of light projected two sets of numbers in the old Sindalian style on the wall. The party was smart enough to record it before the beam shut off. No amount of switch flicking made it reappear.

"One and done?" Brax queried.

Machinery noises came from the wall. The door shut and the room began to feel like it was rising.

Then all stopped and the roof opened. They were at the top of the tower.

Wendell chuckled. "Looks like we need to take this with us."

With muscle and smarts, the CPACers loaded the cannon and climbed aboard. Collecting the aircar and everyone else, the ship lifted into orbit.

Ace Is The Place

Running the Sindalian numbers through the computer and adjusting for time, the first set of numbers led to the Ace system, yet another hell planet lifting itself out of radiation saturation. Domed habitats dotted the planet.

Ignoring the local officials, the second set of numbers led to a point in the atmosphere.

"Floating vault?" Brax suggested.

"No. Stored information," Wendell interpreted. He glanced at the particle cannon that wasn't exactly a particle cannon. "They wouldn't..."

"What's that?"

"Brax. Help me muscle this thing into the cargo airlock. Igvar. If you can fix power leads to this, I think this might reveal something more."

A short time later, they fired a pulse of energy into the space listed by the coordinates. They were rewarded with a light show that proved to be a map that lit up the sky. The computer once again adjusted for time and found the light show pinpointed a spot far, far outside the Thebus system in the void.

Brax snorted. "No wonder the Sindals lost. Who hides treasure vault coordinates in a light show?"

"The whole planet just saw it," Cormac noted. "Assuming they saw it and can figure it out."

"We did," Brax retorted. "Let's get going and get there firstest with the mostest."

He started another Ruttlles tune...

Hustlers on the Prowl for Treasure

Picture yourself in a vault filled with riches,
Grab tangerine gems and higher grade tech.
Somebody shoots you, the danger still growing,
To steal e-ven what they can't wreck.

Explosive missiles of orange and red,
Flowering over your head.
Look for the merc with the greed in his eyes,
And he's gone.
Hustlers on the prow for treasure,
Hustlers on the prow for treasure,
Hustlers on the prow for treasure,
Ah...Ah.

Outpost 1918

The CPACers approached the space station at slow speed, finally tripping a message that basically said, enter codes or die. The counter wound down.

"Well, Brax," Wendell chided. "You got any more Sindalian surprises so we're not blown into subatomic particles?"

"Um. I do have a song," Brax replied.

Every member of the crew screamed "NO!" in unison. All started shouting at once. "Burn my ears out!" "I'd rather die!" "Where's the airlock?"

"Wow. Everyone's a critic." Brax pulled out the code gizmo and pressed the button.

The space station message immediately changed to a greeting and docking coordinate. The CPAC ship closed and the group discovered two additional Harriers just like theirs docked at the station. Alas, they've been stripped for parts.

But in the cargo bay: Jackpot! 24 nuclear torpedoes and 24 planetary bombardment plague torpedoes. As Brax observed: "Power!"

So began a spirited debate among the owners of CPAC whether or not to keep the torpedoes or rig them to explode.

Brax was firmly on the side of keeping them. "You never know when you'll need them. Suppose we run across a planet full of those mutated bugs?"

The opposition claimed CPAC was playing with fire to keep these Sindalian terror weapons intact. "The whole point is not to have them in the first place," said Cormac.

Back and forth the considerations flew until a vote was finally called. It was split down the middle with Anton casting the deciding vote: Keep 'em for a while and let's see if we need them.

CPAC rigged the space station to move and boosted it way far out into the void so only the group could find it. If they couldn't bring the Harriers to a spacedock, they needed to bring the spacedock to the Harriers. One big consideration was that while our Harrier carried 40 tons of fuel, the space station had 29,000+ tons of fuel. That's a heckuva gas station.

Let's see, a 1200-ton colonial cruiser cost about 863 million on the used market. Convert to having two spacedock bays...

Of more import, Professor Utah Smith just viewed 48 considerably important pieces of tech.

Before leaving Drinax, King Obladee-Obladah instructed Brax to make sure the professor never comes back if a treasure was found. Well, we found it, but Brax was never in the habit of murdering people in cold blood. We considered what we would do with the professor and ultimately tabled the decision as long as he was traveling with us. We cut his comms and confined him to quarters.

Petyr Pirate Picked...

Aside from more pickled pepper jokes, which also came out as pimpled peckers in one iteration, we found ourselves with a little time on our hands to negotiate with a pirate named Petyr Vallus, now nicknamed Petyr Vallus the Phallus. Yes, juvenile humor is *de rigueur*. Apparently, grabbing a treasure ship was enough of a coup that he wanted to ally with us. We debated what that would mean, as Petyr was as anti-Aslan as a human could be. I guess he was a Vargr person. Anyway, Petyr controlled 20 ships and some influence around the frontier.

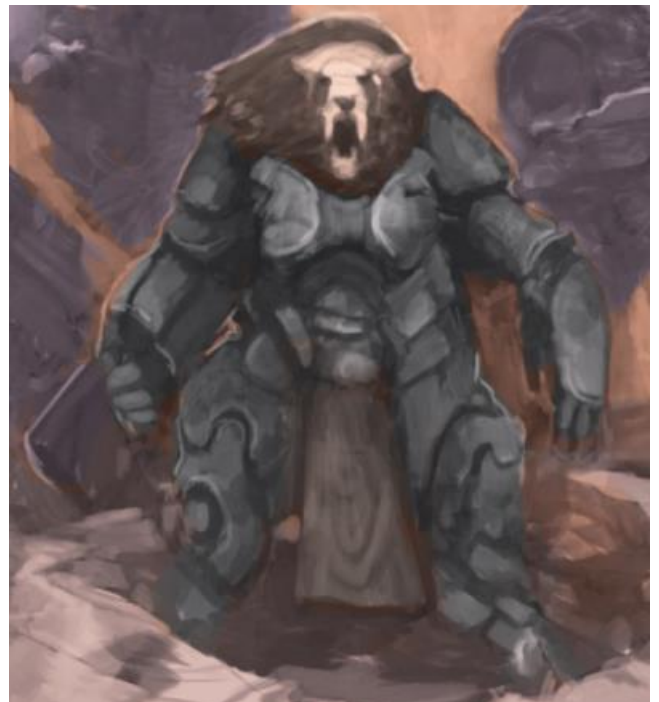
Ultimately, we decided to take him up on his offer, and another four systems (Pourne, Exe, Borite, and Theev) joined our growing network of safe havens.

Ogh-mahoma Where the Wind Freezes All Across the Plains

On the way to Oghma the Iceworld for refueling at a gas giant, we got jumped by the Pain in the As-lan pirate Irontooth. "I've got you now," he gloated as he boosted his fleet of 1200-ton cruiser, 100-ton scout, 300-ton salvage ship, and 200-ton trader ship towards CPAC. Meanwhile, the PRQ had a six-ship fleet refueling. They didn't like us helping the workers to revolt, so they turned and chased CPAC, too.

Using the drop tanks (Brax had forgotten about those), the crew refueled both ships and fled for an emergency jump to the next system. That was just inside missile range of ol' Irontooth. Missiles aplenty were launched at CPAC, but the ships disappeared into jump space before they got close. It looked like a jump to Marduk.

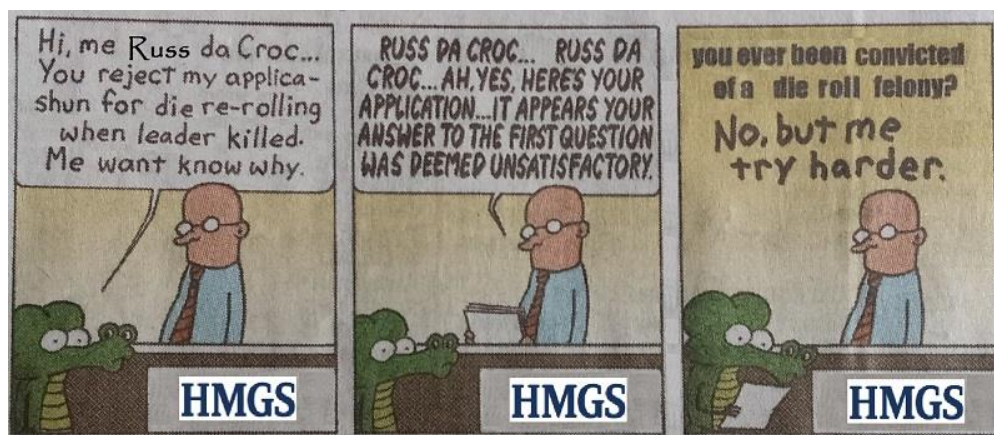
Suspected photo of Aslan pirate Irontooth. Image from web.



End Session

So ended another Crimson adventure based on the Pirates of Drinax module. I'm not sure how much comes from the module and how much comes from the fevered imagination of Sean, but it's a rollicking time. Every once in a while, spectacular rolls aid us. Likewise, bad rolls hinder us. So it is with dice in a RPG universe.

'Til next time. Stay tuned. Same Brax channel. Same Brax time.



NEWS

Modern Portugal: GHQ 6mm Vehicles

by Russ Lockwood

The book review (see 4/26/2024 AAR or up on hmgs.org) on the 1974 Carnation Revolution in Portugal elicited a few comments. Right afterwards, GHQ released a press release on it modern Portuguese military vehicles. Thought you might like to see the 6mm MicroArmor offerings.

From GHQ: "Portugal sided with the Allies in the First World War but took a neutral stance during the Second World War. Its domestic affairs were in turmoil and the economy weak. It did become a founding member of NATO and joined the United Nations in 1955, however, the country suffered no less than twelve coups and revolts between 1910 and 1975. The Estado Novo (New State) -- evolved from the 1926 Ditadura Nacional (National Dictatorship) -- remained in power from 1933 until it was overthrown during the "Carnation Revolution" coup on April 25th, 1974.

Portugal, as a member of NATO and the UN, has participated in peacekeeping and training missions all over the world. Here are a few examples of equipment the Portuguese have acquired and used in these missions during the past several decades."



New Wargame: 1985 Persian Gulf Tanker War

by Russ Lockwood

From the press release. -- RL

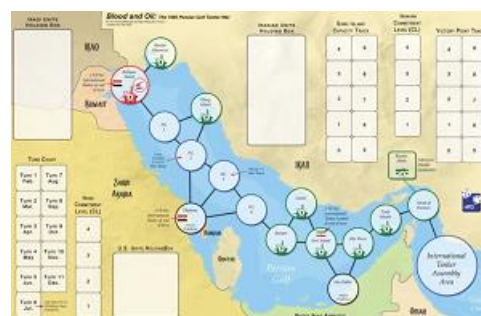
In *Blood and Oil: The 1985 Persian Gulf Tanker War*, players take on the roles of the leaders of the Iran and Iraq military forces fighting the 1985 war in a moderate complexity level wargame.

January 1985 marked over four years of bloody war between Iraq and Iran. The previous year Saddam Hussein, leader of Iraq, initiated a new campaign in the war with Iran by having his air force target the Iranian Kharg Island oil installations and any shipping caught loading there. Saddam realized that if Iran's ability to sell oil was successfully brought under attack, that nation's ability to wage war would be severely impacted.

In response, Iran constructed a floating terminal at Sirri Island that was beyond the range of Iraqi warplanes. Iranian tankers ferried oil from Kharg Island to Sirri where the Iranian oil could then be safely off-loaded. What ensued was an escalating war in the Persian Gulf in which Iraqi warplanes targeted any vessel suspected of heading for any of Iran's ports, and similar efforts by Iran's warplanes, ships and Pasdaran militia attack boats targeting ships they believed were heading for Iraq and ports in Arab nations sympathetic to their enemy. 1985 promised to be a year in which the violence of the growing "Tanker War" could spread throughout the region and threaten the economies of nations all over the globe.

Each copy of *Blood and Oil* is composed of the following: One 11x17-inch map sheet, one sheet of 120 unmounted, double-sided units, and 15 pages of rules, charts and tables.

Players will need at least one six-sided die and a standard deck of playing cards to play the game. Each turn represents one month of time. An oil tanker unit represents 2 or 3 vessels per point on the tanker unit. Air units



represent flights of 3 to 5 aircraft. Iranian naval units represent 1 warship or 10 to 12 Pasdaran missile boats. An inch on the map is approximately 55 miles. Blood and Oil is designed by Paul Rohrbaugh and features graphics by Tim Allen. The game sells for \$18.95 plus shipping.

Mounted counters can be had for an additional \$8.00. A custom card set for the game is also available for \$11.00 plus shipping. Info: <https://www.hfdgames.com/bao.html>



New Wargame: 1813 Battle of Chateauguay

by Russ Lockwood

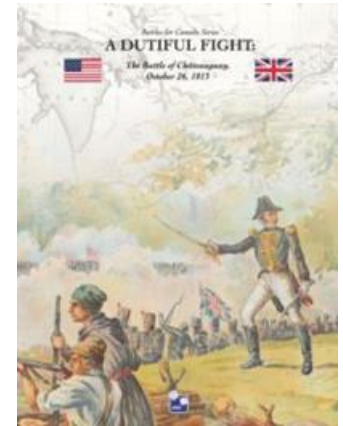
From the press release. – RL

A Dutiful Fight: The Battle of Chateauguay, October 26, 1813 covers the US invasion of Canada in 1813. The US mounted a double-pronged offensive from New York to take Canadian capital city of Montreal in the fall of 1813 planned by US Secretary of War, John Armstrong, Jr. However, the two US forces were commanded by Generals James Wilkenson, who had a particularly dubious and corrupt history, and Major General Wade Hampton, who loathed and despised Wilkenson. With little to no cooperation between the US forces, their British and Canadian opponents were able to deal with each US force separately.

With most of the British regular forces devoted to dealing with Wilkenson, it was left to Canadian militia and First Nation warriors, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Charles de Salaberry, to stop Hampton. The combined Canadian and First Nation force skirmished repeatedly with the Americans as soon as they crossed the St. Lawrence River, frustrating Hampton's hopes that he could beat his rival to Montreal. The weather and sparsely settled region meant that the few trails were muddy quagmires that frequently mired the American supply wagons and artillery caissons, slowing the American's advance even more.

Along the Chateauguay River Hampton learned that the enemy had built a substantial defensive position along the main route to Montreal, and he divided his force in two. One would pin the Canadians and First Nation warriors in place, while the other crossed the river to flank the enemy and capture fords that were to the rear of their defensive works. If successful, the enemy would be trapped and the way to Montreal open to the Americans. However, dividing one's force in the face of an undefeated and determined enemy is a very dangerous gambit in warfare.

Each copy of *A Dutiful Fight* is composed of the following: One 11x17-inch map with Turn Record Track, 90 un-mounted double-sided counters, and rules. Players will also need a standard deck of playing cards and a six-sided die to play the game. *A Dutiful Fight* is designed by Paul Rohrbaugh and features graphics by Ilya Kudriashov. Mounted counters can be had for an additional \$8.00 and a custom card set for \$11.00 plus shipping. Info: <https://www.hfdgames.com/ADF.html>



Obituary: Arthur Joseph Fossa: July 21, 1945 - May 2, 2024

I don't usually include obituaries in the AAR, but I always talked to Art at HMGS shows and bought a book or three from him over the decades. Sure, I was just a customer, but I always found our chats interesting. Condolences to his family. -- RL

Born in Danvers, MA, Art was the son of the late Dorothy Ann and Arthur F. Fossa. After graduating from Danvers High, he earned a BS in Civil Engineering from Merrimack College followed by a MS in Environmental Engineering from Tufts University.



He began his career working for the State of New York Department of Conservation (DEC) for 30 years and became the Director of the Division of Air Resources. Art then joined the private sector consulting for Spectra Engineering and taught Atmospheric Pollution at RPI.

Art had a love and passion for antiquarian military history books and is the proprietor of Aide De Camp Military Books and Prints. He was well established in repairing book bindings, and enjoyed painting military soldiers, and wargaming with his friends.

Art had an infectious laugh, had a passion for sports, loved to sing and dance, and hang out with his friends.

He is survived by his loving wife Nancy of 26 wonderful years. Art and Nancy combined have six children and eight grandkids. He was loved by many and will be missed.

Wargame Reprint: A Most Fearful Sacrifice (Gettysburg)

by Russ Lockwood

From the press release. – RL

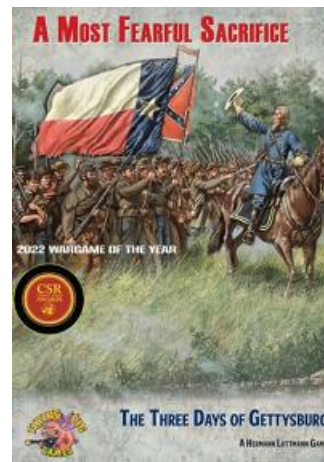
The second edition of *A Most Fearful Sacrifice* is close to shipping to Kickstarter backers. For non-backers, the game costs \$135.00 and is available from Flying Pig Games.

What's different? There are two new scenarios, The Long Road and Summer Storm. There are numerous small changes to the rule and scenario books, including anything worthwhile brought up in forums and customer feedback. Additionally, the game contains larger PACs. Specifically the Combat Results Table, Terrain Effects Chart, Close Fight/Combat Event, and Sequence of Play have been enlarged and placed on a 11x17-inch cards.

This is a two-player wargame with over 15 square feet (*or, by my math, 3x5-feet in size--RL*) of playing area and 526 playing pieces depicting the fighting that occurred during all three days of this decisive clash.

The game utilizes a new ACW operating system called the Black Swan system, which is closely related to the popular Blind Swords game system first introduced in the game *The Devil's To Pay!* by Tiny Battle Publishing. Players will trigger activations by Corps instead of by lower-level formations but they still have tactical decision-making choices by needing to determine which Divisions get activation priority.

Components: Full color rulebook; Full color scenario Book with 13 scenarios (Nine use one of the two maps, four use both maps); 2 Game Maps; 4 Sheets of a total of 352 13/16-inch counters; 1 5/8-inch counter sheet (176 counters) for the admin markers; 90 Cards to activate corps, initiate planned events, trigger unplanned events and create fog of war; 1 Player Aid; 2 11x17-inch Command Displays, and 6 Dice (2 red, 2 black, 2 white).



The Egyptian Tomb: Gaming Goodness To Come

Dave showed us his upcoming project: An Egyptian tomb. I don't know what he has in mind, but once he paints and terrains it, I know it will look fantastic. It may just be eye candy on the table, or it may be used for a skirmish game. Dunno. Looking forward to finding out.

Who will play the mummy? Photo by Dave.



Titusville Tabletop Games: New Store

by Russ Lockwood

After passing the sign for Titusville Tabletop Games multiple times, my wife suggested that it was open. I phoned on Sunday Mother's Day and sure enough, the store had been open a week. I spoke to Robert for a few minutes. The next Friday, I had some time and dropped by.

As its name implies, it is indeed in Titusville, NJ, two minutes from where George Washington crossed the Delaware River before heading to Trenton, NJ.

It was indeed open and brand new. For those familiar with the area, it used to be a Kubota Tractor place. But Robert owned a construction company and revamped the entire property into a small strip mall just off Rte 29. Can't miss it. Parking is in the back.

The store has a main room with shelves lining the walls and tables in the middle -- including little kids tables. Robert's already been hosting gaming for small kids -- the small tables and chairs make them feel welcome. I've already put him in touch with John of HMGS NextGen.

As you might expect, it mostly contains eurogames and a number of *Star Wars* space battle games like *X-Wing*, but also has a historical game section. Apparently, *Heart of Oak* is a favorite and Robert's starting with the American Revolution miniatures rules *Live Free or Die*. I've already put him in touch with Rich of the Swann Foundation that runs the Museum in NJ's Washington Crossing Park that's three minutes down the road on Rte 546.

What I didn't expect was a room up a short flight of stairs containing the Games Library and a table that can hold six gamers. Nice touch, that.

Off that room was another room: The RPG room outfitted in "Victorian Gothic" style. It has a computer screen available via WiFi for those GMs who want to put up a map.

There is also a bathroom around the back corner -- with a clever light in the main room. When the bathroom door is open, the light is green. When the bathroom is being used and the door is closed, the light is red. Oooh. Shiny.

Also in the complex is a bakery and a "market."

As the store is 15 or so minutes from my house, and he does pre-orders, it is quite convenient for me. For others, if you plan it right, you can visit the Washington Crossing Park (NJ side) and its American Revolution museum with an entrance off County Rte 546 and then visit the game store a few minutes north on State Hwy 29. Nice job!

www.TitusvilleTabletopGames.com for more info.



Top to Bottom: Main Room, Up the stairs to the Game Library Room, and the RPG room. Hmmmm. Where does the GM sit?

Midway: Double Blind Again

by Bruce Potter

Using a modified version of Avalon Hill's *Midway*, I separated the two search boards. In the original game, the boards were together with a quaint 'no peek' screen erected between them for face to face play.

When putting the game together a primary consideration is 'time and space.' The Coral Sea (see the 4/26/2024 AAR) was 50nm per zone and four hours per turn. Air strikes took place all in one turn – out and back, then land.

The Japanese map. The US map is identical, but in blue. Photo by Bruce.



Scales and Contrails

For Midway, the scale is 25nm per zone and two hours per turn. As a result, aircraft can now remain aloft for multiple turns. This is why I went to an 'Airstrike Worksheet' where the player launches and assembles his strikes, then flies a strike on the map, moving it up to 14 zones per turn. If the target is a TF and more than 14 zones distant, the target may move the next turn, so maintaining search contact will be critical.

Following an attack, the strike must then be flown back to a base/carrier. Also, keep in mind the maximum movement of each type of aircraft per launch. For example, the SBD can move 14 zones per turn, but can only move 20 zones before it must land or ditch; therefore, the maximum strike range would be 11 zones -- launch and move 11 and attack one turn, then next turn return by moving 9 and landing on a carrier that had moved two zones closer to the target.

I also used the *Midway* game starting and arrivals schedule, as each player in the original game knew this. I added the historical destroyers, submarines, transports, seaplane tenders and Midway small craft to the OBs.

June 3, 1942

The evening of 17 April at Regency was dark and damp, but inside the clubhouse it was the mid-Pacific on June 3, 1942.

The Japanese Carrier Strike force. Photo by Bruce.



Dawn arrived warm and clear at 0500. An Imperial Japanese carrier strike force was approaching some 500 miles west of the American outpost at Midway Atoll. Meanwhile, from the east, the opposing US Pacific Fleet came on, having eluded the tardy Japanese submarine screen outside Pearl Harbor.

Air searches from Midway by PBYS and B-17s failed to locate the Japanese, who stealthily approached, all through the morning.

At 1300 US TFs 16 and 17 were sighted approximately 200- and 100-nm NW of Midway respectively by a snooper from the Strike Force and a long-range strike was formed and dispatched towards TF 17.

At 1500 Midway B-17s sighted the Japanese Strike Force 350nm WSW of Midway, and attacked, joined by B-26s from the Atoll. The CAP Zeros drove off the attacking Army aircraft, but Nagumo was finally located.

Meanwhile on TF-17's *USS Yorktown*, CAP was sent up and all other aircraft began to launch as a massive inbound strike of 72 fighters, 72 dive bombers, and 81 torpedo bombers approached. The strike from the veterans of Pearl Harbor and the Indian Ocean was deadly. The *Yorktown*, heavy cruisers *Astoria* and *Portland*, and destroyer

Gwin were sunk. Destroyers *Russell* and *Hughes* were crippled. The IJN lost 9 Val dive bombers and 9 Kate torpedo bombers. The *Yorktown*'s air group made it to Midway safely.

The rest of the day was marked by each side losing contact with the other. Night searches by Black Cat PBYS found nothing.

June 4, 1942

Dawn on the 4th came clear and bright, revealing to a Midway PBY the IJN Close Support TF with four heavy cruisers and two destroyers nearly 300 miles WNW of Midway. TF 16 launched a strike of 72 SBDs from *Hornet* and *Enterprise*. Diving through the AAA from 10,000 feet, the *Dauntless*' smothered heavy cruisers *Mogami* and *Suzuya*, sinking both, without loss. The Japanese knew the strike was from US carriers because Midway was too far away. However, the IJN could not find the US carriers.

US TF 16. Photo by Bruce.

At 0700, the IJN searches revealed nothing, but the USN maintained contact with the Close Support TF and hit it again, this time from Midway. A mixed strike of 54 SBDs, 18 SB2Cs, 6 TBFs and four B-26s (USN from *Yorktown* and Midway, USMC from Midway, and Army from Midway) sank the heavy cruisers *Kumano* and *Mikuma* for no losses.

At 0900 the US sub screen spotted the two surviving destroyers of the Close Support TF, but were unable to execute an attack, being outpaced. The IJN failed to find any US forces, but the US found the IJN Invasion Force about 400 miles WNW of Midway. TF 16 readied a strike.

At 1100, again the IJN again failed to find any US forces, but contact was maintained by Spruance with the Invasion Force and a strike of 72 SBDs, and 20 TBDs was launched. CAP Zeros from carrier *Zuiho* and seaplanes from *Kamikawa Maru* and *Chitose* failed to deter the dive bombers. Four troop transports and the destroyer *Oyashio* were sunk. The TBDs torpedoes missed.

The point total standing is now: USN has 127 Points, IJN has 58. The big difference is the loss of four cruisers for 76 Points.

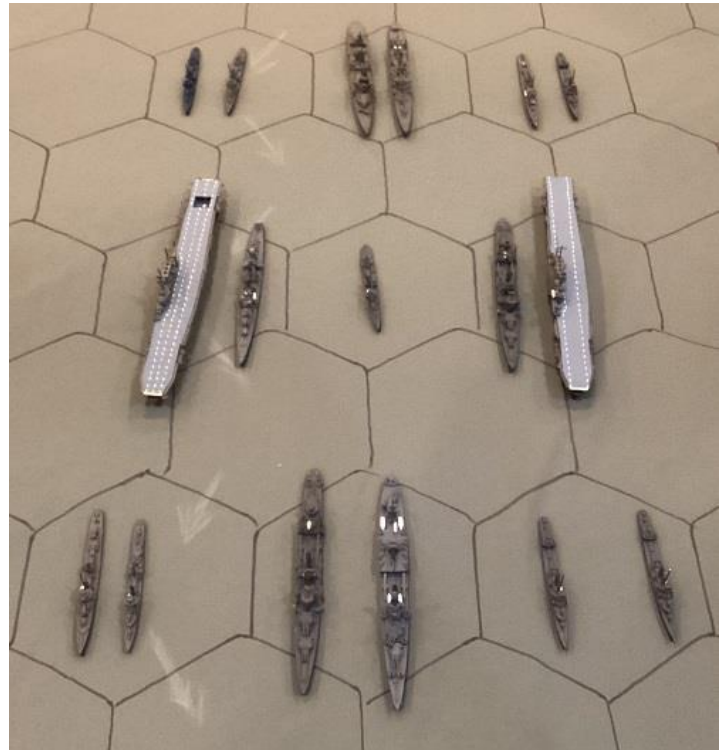
Fun was had by all. Lots of contacts and dice rolling. Thus ended the first session.

Losses after the first session. Photo by Bruce.

Second Session

The IJN information blackout continued into the afternoon of the 4th while the USN found the Japanese Carrier Strike Force and was able to maintain contact with the Invasion Force, having dodged 50nm to the SW. TF 16 was unable to launch a strike but was able to safely rearm from the previous attack on the transports.

At 1500 IJN snoopers were only able to spot the remnants of TF 17 with five destroyers at 100nm SW of Midway. USN search lost the IJN transports, but maintained contact with IJN Carriers which retreated to the SW but A maximum strike of 36 F4Fs and 72 SBDs was sent from TF 16 to the IJN carriers while reinforcements were staged in from Midway. The attack faced ferocious resistance from CAP Zeros and heavy AA. For the loss of 9 fighters and 9 SBDs, one hit was achieved on *Soryu*. Nine CAP Zeros were traded for US air losses. A further 27 F4Fs failed to return.



At 1700 IJN search came up blank, but US search revealed that the IJN carriers had moved further to the SW.

Soryu under attack. Photo by Bruce.

The Night

During the night, PBYs spotted numerous IJN DDs screening 350nm to the west of Midway. Also, in this vicinity was spotted a massive force of IJN battleships, reported as "more than a handful."

June 5, 1942

Dawn brought confirmation of the questionable nighttime report. The DD screen and the IJN Battlefleet, of seven battleships, including the Yamato behemoth, was now 50nm closer to Midway. Obviously the IJN had reorganized overnight. The carriers and transports could not be found by the US. Once again, the IJN searches were unfruitful.

At 0700, the IJN finally located TF 16 for the first time since 3 June. Side note: at one point on the 4th both opposing carrier TFs were separated but a mere 75nm!

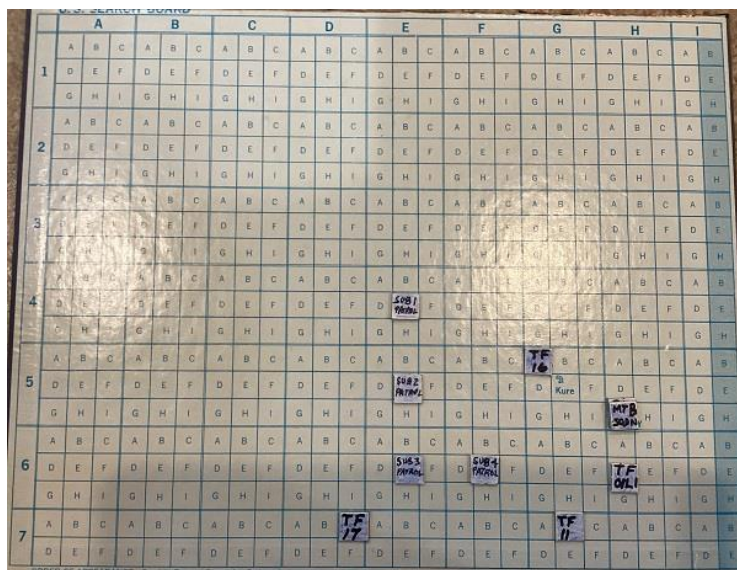
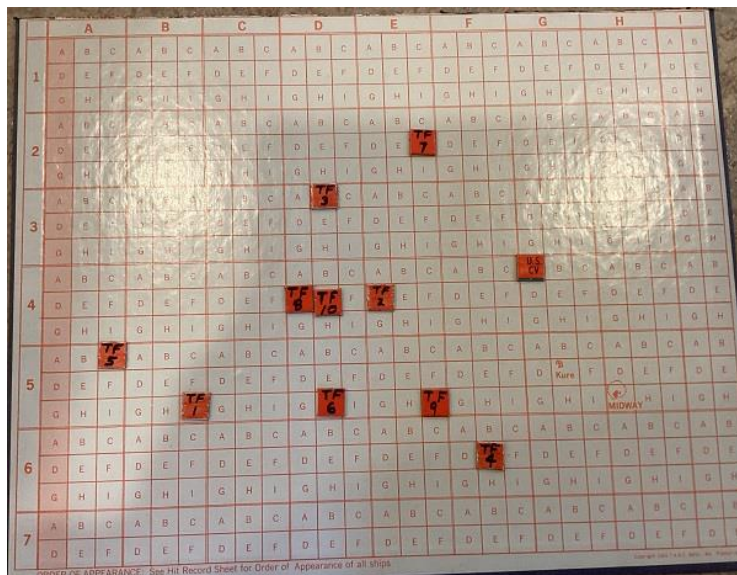
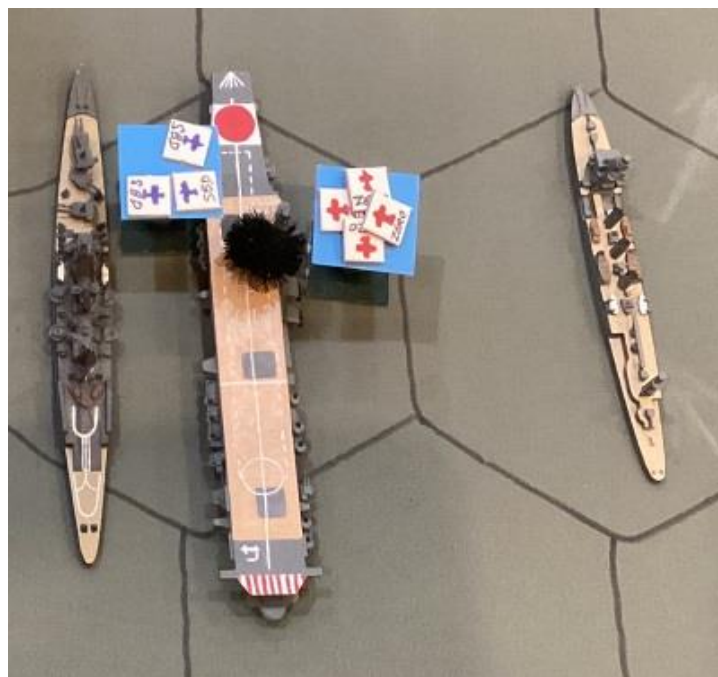
The USN maintained contact with the IJN battleline. Both sides launched simultaneous airstrikes. A maximum effort was sent by Nagumo to the US carriers: 72 Zeros, 81 Kates, 63 Vals, 9 Judys and more than two dozen Rufe seaplanes bore down on TF 16. While a limited F4F CAP of 18 put up resistance, it was the AA that saved US fortunes. The first wave inflicted two hits on the *Enterprise*, but subsequent attacks were nullified by the volume of steel from the carrier and the CLAA *Atlanta*.

Top: Japanese board markers at 1100 on June 5.
Bottom: US board markers at 1100 on June 5.
Photos by Bruce.

The strike focus then shifted to Hornet and inflicted two hits on her. As the dive and torpedo bombers departed, the Zeros then pounced upon the DD screen, sinking the *Balch* and the *Conyngham*. The IJN lost half the Rufes, 9 Kates and 18 Vals. The US commanders sighed in relief, realizing that they got off easy and both sides awarded *USS Atlanta* a MVP honor.

Each of the US carriers sustained two hits from the Val dive bombers -- but the IJN Needs three hits to cripple a VC and four hits to sink one. Any one torpedo hit, (Kates roll 3 D6s with a "6" hitting), would have sunk each one.

Meanwhile the TF 16 strike hit the IJN



battleline with 90 Dauntlesses, 27 Devastators, and 6 Avengers (a surprise USN squadron staged from Midway the day before). At first the strike tried to go for the biggest floating object in the Pacific Ocean, the *Yamato*. Failing to achieve any success with that approach, Lt. Cmdr. McClusky subsequently settled for sinking the battleship/battle cruiser *Kongo* and crippling the seaplane carrier *Kamikawa Maru*.

At 0900 the IJN maintained contact with TF 16 which had moved 50nm SE toward Midway. Nagumo recovered his strike and Yamamoto continued his progress toward the prize while detaching the crippled *Kamikawa Maru* with a DD. A Midway strike on the IJN Battleline, now a little over 200nm away, by 27 SBDs and 18 Marine SB2C Vindicators failed to achieve any hits while four B26s aborted their attack on the crippled seaplane carrier now limping west.

The points earned for this session were: USN – 104 Points, IJN – 57 Points. The point total standing is now: USN has 231 Points, IJN has 115.

The players decided that there would be enough game left for another session. The first two sessions' actions were reported as "tense."

Midway Atoll?

At this point we decided to pack up and continue in two weeks' time. There was discussion about carrier qualifications of Midway-based Navy and Marine Corps aircraft and rules for Midway bombardment. Reference to the original AH *Midway* game will guide us.

Midway Island. Photo by Bruce.

The rules allow free transfer between Midway and carriers and vice-versa. Barring any specific historical knowledge, we will go with that. Atoll bombardment will follow *War At Sea* surface action rules, for example IJN *Yamato*, *Mutsu* class, and *Kongo* class can fire Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary attacks. Any hits on the Atoll will randomly destroy aircraft units on the ground in 1-1 ratio. The Atoll will be able to generate smoke.

Third Session

The IJN was maintaining contact with the damaged US carriers while converging upon Midway. Yamamoto kept his carriers, TF 1, and transports, TF 5, back while his battleships, TF 2, bee-lined for Midway. The US kept a screen of submarine patrols in front of Midway while withdrawing the carriers, TF 16, towards Midway and sending DDs to preclude surprise from the southwest.

Haruna and Murakumo sunk. Photo by Bruce.

At 1100, the US sent a strike from TF 16 to the IJN BB TF while Nagumo recovered/rearmed his earlier strike. The 90 Dauntlesses and 27 Devastators sank the BB *Haruna* and DD *Murakumo* as well as got two hits on the BB *Hiei* for the loss of 9 TBDs. Spruance decided to split his returning strike between the carriers and Midway, knowing that Nagumo would probably hit him next turn.

At 1300, Nagumo did indeed strike TF 16 with 72 Zeros, 72 Kates, 45 Vals, and 9 Judys. The first wave fought through 27 F4Fs on CAP and AA, but achieved no hits for the loss of 9 Kates. The second wave was also unsuccessful, fighting through 9 F4Fs on CAP and AA, while losing 18 Vals. The third wave succeeded in sinking



Enterprise and *Hornet* and hitting the heavy cruiser *New Orleans*. Along with the two carriers, an air complement of 36 F4Fs, 36 SBDs, 18 TBDs and 6 TBFs went down.

USN TF 16 under attack. Photo by Bruce.

Meanwhile an attack from Midway hit the IJN BB TF -- 18 Brewster Buffaloes escorted 27 SBDs, 18 SB2Cs and 4 B-26s. While the F2As shot down the seaplane CAP, all the dive bombers faced heavy AA and aborted, and the B-26 torpedo attack achieved no hits.

At 1500, the US finally located Nagumo, 275nm west of the Atoll. The IJN had formed an "Armada" combining Nagumo's carriers and Tanaka's transports -- in all six carriers, eight transports, two seaplane transports carrying midget subs, six heavy cruisers, four light cruisers, and 25 destroyers. The range was too great for a US strike on the invasion fleet, so another Midway strike of 54 SBDs hit the IJN BB TF, now a mere 75nm from Midway. The seaplane carrier *Chitose* was sunk in this action.

At 1700, the final day turn, the last air strike of the day shuttled over the horizon to the BB TF from Midway. 27 SBDs, 18 SB2Cs and 4 B-26s achieved three hits on the BB *Kirishima* for no losses.

Simultaneously a surface action took place when the remnants of TF 16 ran into the IJN DD screen. DDs *Natsugumo* and *Isokaze* were spotted 50nm SE of Midway and attempted to escape to the west. TF 16 gave chase and the IJN DDs ran into US DDs *Hughes* and *Russell*, crippled but still patrolling. In the action the two US DDs were sunk but were avenged by TF 16 in sinking *Natsugumo* and *Isokaze*. The heavy cruiser *Vincennes* went down after being hit by a Long Lance torpedo, breaking her back.

Surface Battle

As the skies darkened, radar operators on Midway picked up multiple targets approaching from north. Meanwhile, Spruance, originally a 'Cruiser Man,' approached with his cruisers and destroyers from the south, joining the PTs and PCs of MTB Squadron #1, and three submarines on station.

The USN arrives. Photo by Bruce.

Both fleets approached each other to within night gunfire range, two hexes, (10,000 yards).

What happened over the next eight tactical turns of 12 minutes each was total mayhem of large, medium, and small caliber projectiles crisscrossing across the water in the darkness. Submarines and destroyers launched torpedoes while PT boats darted in and out of smoke screens to launch their fish.

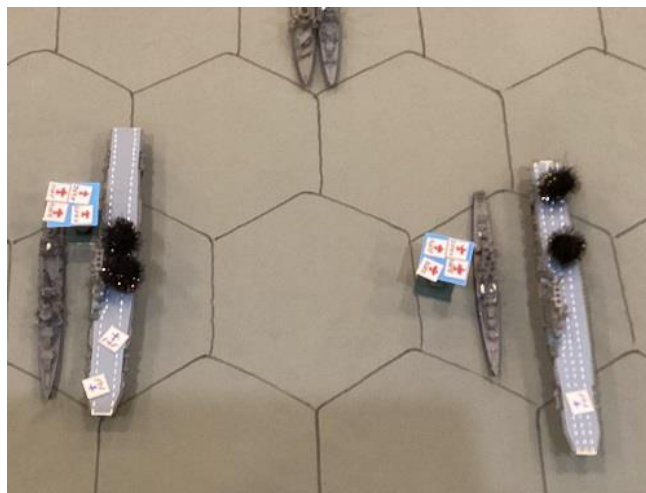
Yamamoto met his objective of launching 18.1-inch HE projectiles at Midway. Two hits on Midway destroyed 9 SBDs and a dozen B-17s on the ground.

BB *Kirishima* was sunk by torpedo from a submarine. BB *Hiei* was sunk by torpedo from PT boats after suffering a hit from Midway Shore Batteries. Four IJN destroyers, *Hatsuyuki*, *Isonami*, *Ayanami*, and *Fubuki*, went down from cruiser/destroyer gunfire, while two others were crippled.

On the US side, losses were equally severe. Seven destroyers were sunk -- *Phelps*, *Worden*, *Aylwin*, *Monaghan*, *Maury*, *Ellet*, and *Benham* -- and the heavy cruiser *Pensacola*. Eight out of ten PT boats were destroyed.

After the eight turns, the opponents facing each other were three US heavy cruisers (one damaged) and a light AA cruiser against the IJN BBs *Yamato*, *Nagato* (1 hit), and *Mutsu*. It was near closing time, so the game was called on time and player exhaustion. Everyone agreed that Spruance was going to lose his cruisers and might damage the BBs, but not sink them or stop them from blasting Midway during the rest of the night.

The point standings after the third session USN - 486 Points, IJN - 414 Points. A Pyrrhic victory for USN.



But Wait, There's More

After all the packing up I retreated to my cave to tally up the losses and wondered, "What would be the points if the surface battle concluded, and Yamamoto then pounded the Atoll?" I call this activity the 'After-Party.'

The Umpire played out the projections and predictions of the players. I finished the surface action and completed the bombardment of the Atoll.

As the players agreed, the four US cruisers could not escape the IJN battleships, probably would take one tactical turn. I rolled for each of the cruisers, and they made two hits, one each on *Nagato* and *Mutsu*. The IJN then got 58 Points for sinking the four cruisers.

Next, the IJN BBs took two turns to get back within range of Midway and recommence the bombardment.

The bombardment consisted of each of the BBs firing Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary battery salvos with the Atoll rolling for 'smoke saves' as the generators were producing heavy volumes of smoke to mask the target. The shore batteries of 5- and 7-inch guns also returned fire.

After six turns, an hour and 12 minutes, hammering the Atoll, all aircraft on the ground were destroyed by taking 18 more hits. The shore batteries inflicted one hit each *Nagato* and *Mutsu*. The IJN got 40 Points for the Atoll and 157 Points for the aircraft.

Sitting off a shattered Midway in a cordon as the sun rose on June 6, 1942 were BBs *Yamato*, *Nagato* (3 Hits), and *Mutsu* (2 Hits). They were joined by the far-flung DD screen, bringing the total to eight, to await the arrival of the carrier/invasion armada later that morning.

So, including the 255 points from the After-party, the IJN pulled off a victory. Final Score: IJN 669 Points and USN 486 Points.

Once again, thanks to the players for indulging my desire to conclude the campaign. If this was fun for you, please join us for, "Operation Pedestal, the Santa Maria Convoy that Saved Malta" which will kick off some time after Historicon.

A Battle Well Done

by Phil

For this one (Midway), and the last one (Coral Sea), Bruce put out an extraordinary amount of work. First there were models of every ship down to the destroyers. Then they were organized into their respective task forces -- seven in total.

Then there were convenient cheat sheets provided for all the side bar details, like where each carriers planes were. On Deck, on Strike, Returning from strike. Then Bruce himself is the adjudicator, not a player and arrived at the room about two hours early for set up.

Some Thoughts

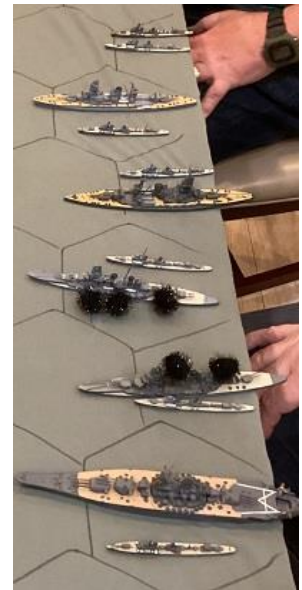
by Bruce

A discussion about *War at Sea* aircraft point values intrigued me. I agree that the point values seem high compared to the ships, so I thought awhile and then went back to the basic rules. In the original A&A WAS rules, the aircraft units are full squadrons, whereas we usually run either flights of six or half-squadrons of eight to 10 aircraft.

For example, in WAS the aircraft capacity of a Yorktown-class or any of the six IJN Pearl Harbor carriers is "3 Squadrons." We have been running eight air units for *Yorktowns*, *Akagi*, *Kaga*, *Zuikaku* and *Shokaku* and six air units for *Hiryu* and *Soryu*. I still feel that the air combat results, (air/air, air/surface, surface/air), seem realistic, even though the number of aircraft per unit is reduced.

A decade ago, when I first started using these rules, with original squadron strength air units, we felt that the aircraft units did not seem to be able to accomplish anything, which drove me to double the number of units. So, long story short, air unit point values are halved from what is on the data card, rounded up, for Midway 2024.

I wish to thank the players for their perseverance in that a Midway game rarely, if ever, gets to this point, as one side usually call it quits when its carriers are sunk. We all wanted to see what happens when the Imperial Japanese Fleet appears over the horizon.



Books I've Read

By Russ Lockwood

Tanks & Yanks Revisited: The Late War 1917-1918. by Phil Viverito.
Softcover (8.0x10.0 inches). 172 pages. 2024.

In full disclosure, Phil and I have been friends and gamers since I first participated in a *Knight Hack* medieval wargame back in 1994 at a HMGS Historicon convention. It also helped that he lived 15 minutes away from my far-away in-laws, so a visit to the in-laws meant an evening of gaming at his home. Ergo, we've had a few decades of wargame philosophy sessions, commentary about his terrain creations, and playtesting his rules -- that includes *Tanks & Yanks*, his WWI rules -- and duly noted in the rules' Acknowledgement.

Originally a single volume, then split into a rules volume and historical volume, this new volume is an introductory historical notebook of sorts, although I'd also label it 'historical considerations if designing WWI rules.' But then again, I've played his rules.

It offers a short overview of the war and US entry and then offers a longer take on major weapon systems: tanks, artillery, MGs, and so on. Then it goes into offensive and defensive tactics, supplemented by illustrations from various Army manuals.

The whole is supplemented with a wide variety of photos, maps, and illustrations from *Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* and other sources.

This is a history-only book and does not contain any wargame rules. It is not meant to be *The Guns of August*, but is meant as an introduction to WWI, specifically late war.

Enjoyed it.

Betting Against America: The Axis Powers' Views of the United States. by Harry Yeide. Hardback (7.8x10.0 inches). 491 pages. 2024.

In general, the more notes I take on a book, the better I enjoy it. I took a lot of notes with this one. Japan and Germany are the focus, but Italy factors in here, too. The other minor Axis countries such as Hungary and Romania do not.

Japan was inspired by German victories and powered by a cultural bias that represented a drive for totalitarian government, with Japan entitled to about one-third of the globe. They figured to grab all of Southeast Asia and most of the Pacific Ocean for raw materials that will power their military and to cut off aid to China -- which they had been fighting since 1937 (p89).

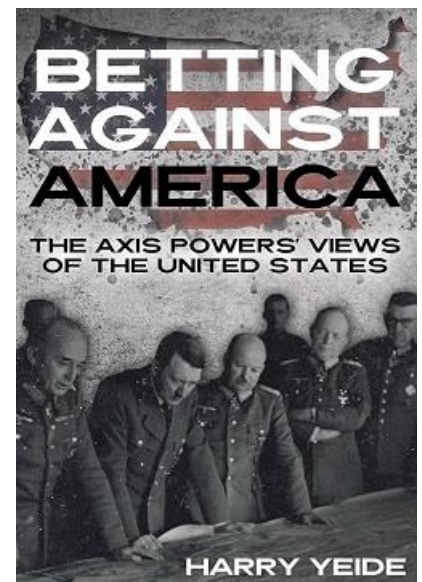
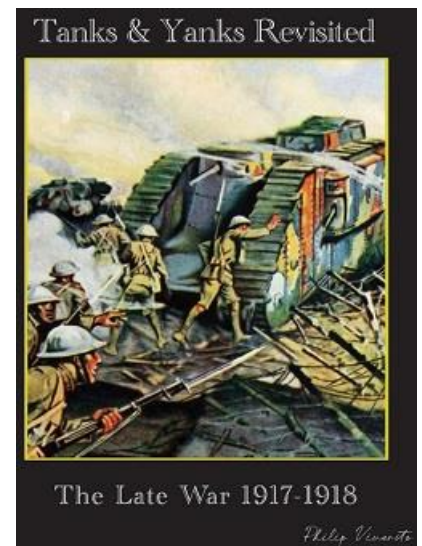
They knew demanding French Indochina and Netherlands East Indies from defeated European countries would trigger US sanctions and planned accordingly, but they were still surprised in 1940 when the US slapped oil sanctions on them for doing a "Joint Defense" deal with Vichy France. Japan was further outraged when the US also immediately granted a \$25 million loan to China (p93).

The sanctions eventually bit, but did not dissuade the Japanese from continuing their war in China, even though the political think tank understood it was impossible to conquer all of China and found peace feelers rebuffed. As other countries refused to supply oil (among other commodities) to Japan, the Japanese found themselves with two years of peacetime oil reserves and 1.5 years of wartime reserves (p149).

Then the US moved its main Pacific base from California to Hawaii as a deterrent. The Japanese saw the rebasing as a direct threat.

Germany, and this means Hitler, expected to defeat Britain in spring of 1941 and Japanese influence in the Pacific would counter US policy and keep the US out of the war (p126). He figured, wrongly, that US military aid to Britain would not be appreciable until 1942 at the earliest. By that time, the USSR would be defeated and the US isolated from European allies.

Oddly enough, a Sep 6, 1941 meeting in Japan found that Admiral Nagano expected the US to be rearmed and a threat by late 1942 (p152). Evil minds must think alike. Nagano also reported that Japanese stocks of liquid fuels would run out by June or July of 1942 (p153). Admiral Yamamoto predicted that the Japanese Navy would last



one year and be defeated in a year and a half due to difficulties replacing warships and ordnance (p157). And if all this wasn't enough, the Japanese Total War Research Institute released a study on August 27, 1941 that concluded Japan would lose a war to the US.

That left Mussolini and Italy. He originally counseled that war should not be launched until 1943 or 1944 because the Italian military would not be ready until then. Ignored, he suggested in January 1940 that Germany should make peace with the West, but heady German victories cured his caution and in June 1940, ready or not, Italy declared war on Britain and France.

Mussolini counseled waiting, but jumped in anyway. Image from web.

The book covers pre-war opinions, spying, assumptions, arrogance, and calculations. Lots of numbers support the well-written text. Then it transitions to the war years and how opinions changed about US potential and actualities. As for peace feelers, when the Allies demanded unconditional surrender, diplomatic maneuverings seemed unlikely to produce any compromises. In Hitler's case, he seemed to gravitate to a death wish for Germany.

Odd factoid: Imperial Japanese Army estimated that one US Battleship produced firepower equivalent to five infantry divisions or 1,250 light bombers (p304).

The book contains 29 black and white photos and 16 black and white maps. Appendices include a variety of production numbers for all the major participants (source is WWII: A Statistical Survey).

It is well written and presents the information in a nice, chronological fashion. My only complaint is that excerpts from official documents and such are in a tiny font, which is a real pain in the ... eye ... to read. This is a bad trend. Grognards like myself need larger fonts to read easily and tiny fonts interfere with smooth reading. Pity, since the excerpts are well used -- not overdone, but sprinkled throughout to emphasize a point.

The short version is that the Axis leaders knew what they were doing, but that they goofed by underestimating US production, culture, and willpower. The long version is contained in this fascinating book. Well done.

Enjoyed it.

Commanding Old Ironsides: Life of Capt. Silas Talbot. by William M. Fowler. Softcover (5.8x8.9 inches). 231 pages. 2024 reprint of 1995 book.

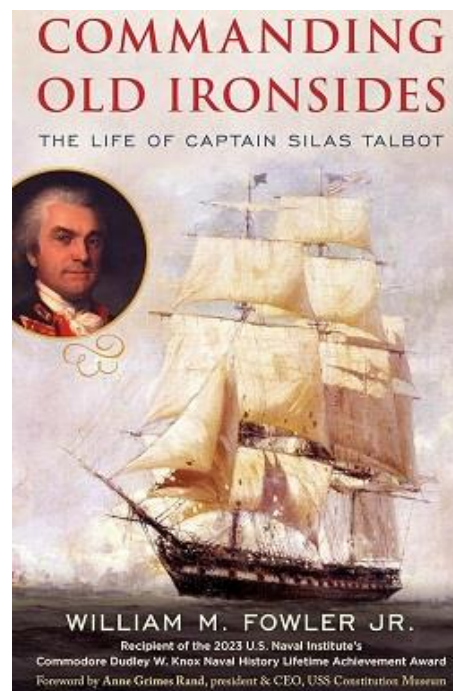
This well-written bio of Captain Silas Talbot covers his life from humble origins to Revolutionary War hero to almost bankrupt merchant and land speculator and back to competent and dependable commodore on the USS Constitution in the West Indies during the War of 1812. Whew.

He started in the Continental Army with the likes of General Washington, but transferred to the Navy -- although some sort of paperwork snafu about being named Captain dogged him throughout his career. Nonetheless, despite seniority and back pay issues, he had friends in high places after the Revolution who saved him on the government end as posts seemingly came just in the nick of time.

His family life was a disaster, with mostly indolent sons, a daughter out of wedlock, money troubles starting in Providence, RI, and a wife with a taste for high society. He tried the life of a country squire and farmer in upstate New York, but the life was not for him. He went back to the sea in the later years of his life, although not without some struggles to become a Captain once again.

The book contains 17 black and white illustrations and two black and white photos.

Enjoyed it.



John Nettles' Jersey: Heroines, Heroes & Villains. by John Nettles. Hardback (7.8x10.0 inches). 240 pages. 1992.

Subtitle: *A Personal History of the People & Places*

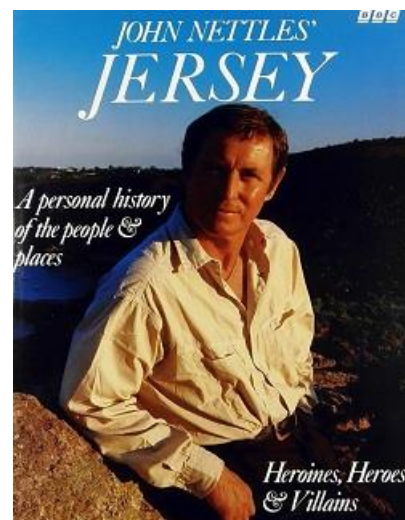
On this side of the pond, actor John Nettles is best known, at least to me, as Detective Chief Inspector Barnaby in the TV show *Midsomer Murders*. He also played Detective Sgt -- later Private Eye -- Bergerac in the TV show of the same name that was set on this 9x5-mile island. Apparently, he became quite enamored of Jersey's history -- so much so that he wrote a book about it.

It's a pleasant read, being part travelogue and part examination of the some of the personalities. Starting with Sir George Carteret, the Bailiff of Jersey and a staunch supporter of King Charles I, it includes the WWII German occupation and the massive concrete defense works that transformed the island and are still around today.

The book contains 36 black and white photos, 20 color photos, 21 black and white illustrations, 12 color illustrations, and two color maps.

Being in New Jersey, I've wondered what 'old' Jersey would be like. Now I have a better idea.

Enjoyed it.



Victory to Defeat: The British Army 1918-1940. by Richard Dannatt and Robert Lyman. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 370 pages. 2023.

Well-written prose analyzes the British loss of military prowess after WWI and the beginning days of WWII. The lessons learned about combined arms and mobility were utterly lost as economic limitations pared back the military and more funds were shunted to the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy than the Army.

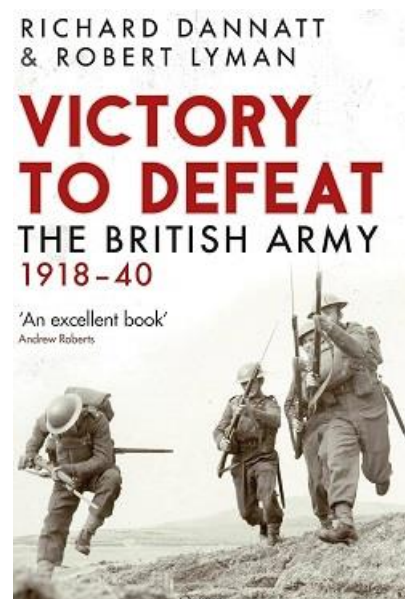
The Army retreated to its role of providing global garrisons with a focus on countering strikes, limiting unrest, and performing counter-insurgency operations. Preparing for peer-on-peer battles across the Channel was way down on the priority list. Couple this with political blindness that WWI, in popular parlance being the War to End All Wars, and British complacency dismissed the notion of another European continental war.

For all the current uproar over European defense spending reaching 2% of GDP, a chart (p235) comparing UK and Germany military spending 1932-1940 shows the British spending 3% of GDP from 1932 to 1935 as the Germans went from 1% to 8%. The next three years saw the British increase military spending to 4%, 6%, and 7%, while the Germans 13%, 13%, and 17%. As WWII started, UK spending went to 18% in 1939 and 46% in 1940 while the Germans went to 23% and 38%. Thus, even in the Depression, UK military spending was 3% of GDP and they it had to ratchet up spending to play catch up as the Germans remilitarized the Rhineland, anshlussed Austria, and conquered Czechoslovakia. Lessons, anyone?

The book contains 31 black and white photos and two black and white illustrations.

The upshot of the UK's martial decline is summarized in 12 Failures (p318-319). The explanation how that came to be in the first 300 pages is covered in detail.

Enjoyed it.

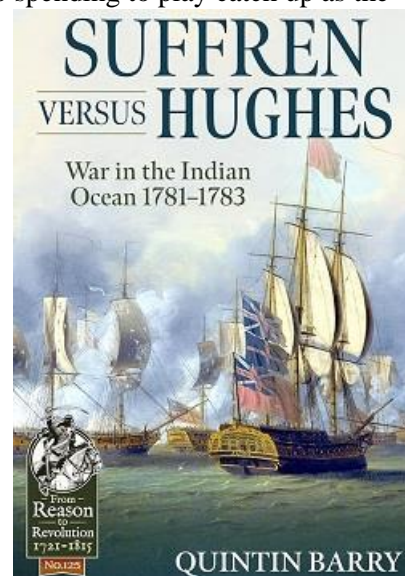


Suffren Versus Hughes: War in the Indian Ocean 1781-1783. by Quintin Barry. Softcover (6.2x9.3 inches). 221 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *From Reason to Revolution 1721-1815 No. 125*

While the American Revolution played out in North America, half a world away off the coast of India, French and British naval warfare complemented land warfare to determine the fate of India.

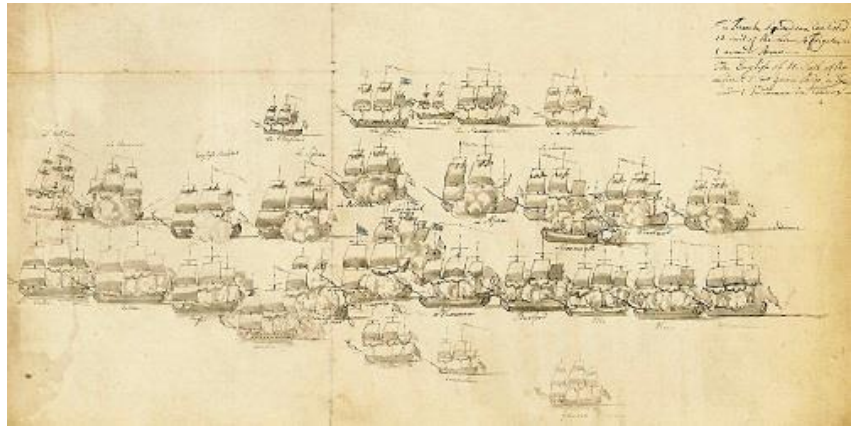
Pierre Andre de Suffren led a French fleet that was generally on par with the British fleet under Sir Edward Hughes. For two years, they sailed and battled



in multiple engagements while suffering from crew scurvy, inclement weather, limited supplies, and other challenges. Each thought highly of the other as they battled, repaired, and battled anew.

The main battles were: Sadras, Providedien, Negapatam, Trimcomali, and Cuddalore. Each receives an excellent background description, analysis of the battle, and the impact of the result. You can also add Suffren's hit-and-run attack against George Johnstone's fleet at anchorage in the Battle of Porto Praya.

Providien 1782 Map. Image from web.



The book contains 11 black and white illustrations and 16 black and white maps.

Well written, well researched, and well done. Any one of the Suffren vs. Hughes battles would make for a good tabletop naval battle.

Enjoyed it.

Also recommended: Barry's *Far Distant Ships: Reason to Revolution* 86 (see the 1/21/2023 AAR or up on hmgs.org) and *Crisis at the Chesapeake: The Royal Navy and the Struggle for America 1775-1783* (see the 7/28/2021 AAR or up on hmgs.org).

Mussolini: Mustard Gas and the Fascist Way of War. by Charles Stephenson. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 271 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Ethiopia 1935-1936*

The new Roman Empire of Mussolini certainly had its work cut out for it to conquer a poorly-armed Ethiopia. Had Il Duce appreciated the difficulties more, he might have decided against invading Greece and entering WWII. The Italian military certainly didn't use mustard gas against the Greeks or Allies like it did against the Ethiopians.

Chemical weapons and airpower factored into the Italian way of war, even if practical matters overruled its widespread implementation. Yet these two key components plus a lot of machine guns were enough to overpower the Ethiopian military and conquer the country.

Of note, Ethiopia was a member of the League of Nations, asked for military assistance, and received absolutely nothing. There's a modern lesson here about responding to totalitarian governments' invasions. Even blocking the Suez Canal to Italian shipping would have doomed the invasion to logistics oblivion.

Indeed, Britain and France offered Italy two-thirds of Ethiopia if Mussolini would stop the invasion (p78). Italy declined, om [part because its cryptographers had broken the French and British diplomatic codes and knew those two countries would do nothing substantive to help, even after Red Cross hospitals were bombed.

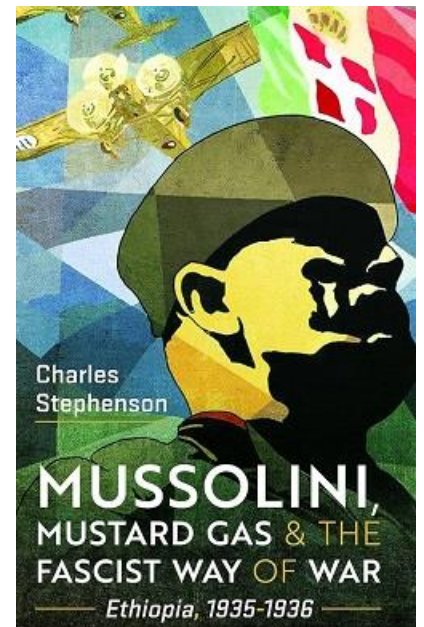
Oddly enough, tanks provided minimal offensive and defensive support. It was the Italian infantry, well equipped with machine guns and aided by artillery, that broke the back of Ethiopian attacks. Trucks and a considerable influx of road-building manpower kept the offensive moving into the interior, supplemented by air-dropped supplies.

One typo: "ninrety-five" (p7) is likely "ninety-five."

The book contains 52 black and white photos, seven black and white illustrations, and 20 black and white maps.

This book provides far more detail about the Italian invasion than the brief accounts I've read. A few pitched battles might make for tabletop battles, but MGs, artillery, and airpower on the defense versus essentially light infantry wave attacks might be a foregone conclusion.

Enjoyed it.



American Eagles: A History of the United States Air Force 2nd Edition. by Dan Patterson and Clinton Terry. Hardback (8.8x11.2 inches). 336 pages. 2023 updated version of 1997 book.

The first edition was 464 pages, so this represents a retreat of sorts. The introduction notes this shortened book contains new illustrations, so my guess is that the text was cut to make this more of a coffee table book.

The book covers the Wright brothers on, with considerable emphasis on the collection at the National Museum of the USAF in Dayton, OH. I visited the museum years ago and it is well worth the trip, even for those without much of an interest in airplanes and spaceflight. The museum is huge, think about four or five hangers' worth of aircraft all interconnected with museum buildings.

FYI: We also visited the original Wright Brothers bicycle shop and museum in downtown Dayton run by the National Park Service. Another worthwhile stop.

Anyway, the mix of period photos and illustrations, collection photos, and exhibit photos presents a nice encapsulation of the USAF as well as what you can expect to find at the museum. I find some of the photos too artsy -- many aircraft noses appearing out of a dark background. Ummm. OK. The front cover is indicative.

The text offers an overview and that's OK, too for a general history. I admit I skipped most of the text in between pages 125 and 300 and looked at the photos because the info is well-worn territory.

Yet, I noticed a mention in the Preface (p13) of a "very ambitious timeline." It shows. The text has a number of typos -- including two in the Preface -- ":a" needs a space and "and and" is a double word. The caption (p25) has "1924.fBuilt" with an unnecessary "f"; The Luftwaffe began the Battle of Britain in "July 1941" (p110) instead of the actual 1940; The caption (p124) identifying veterans Travis Hoover and Tom Griffin makes no sense about which person in the photo is which; B-17G Shoo Shoo Baby is identified as "Shoo Shoo Bay" (p314); and so on.

Pages 113, 117, and 121 contains some off-color speckling not found on any other page. Page 120 contains a vertical black line that extends through three photos.

The book contains "over 460 color photos and over 150 archival photos." I'll take their word for it.

My guess is that the chop and paste text job was done under some sort of deadline pressure and no editor seemed to have closely read the result. I'm just reading and found these. That shouldn't happen in a \$75 professionally published book. To be fair, typos are an increasing problem in book publishing as editorial staffs are pared or gutted. Look at any of my AARs. Typos, but then again, I'm my own editor. On the other hand, I'm not charging for it. Just saying.

As this is a coffee table book, the text errors are less important to me than the photos and images. This does have an amazing collection of photos, even if I'm not fond of the artsy mood lighting. The text highlights the collection in context of the artifact's time period. Ties got to the authors.

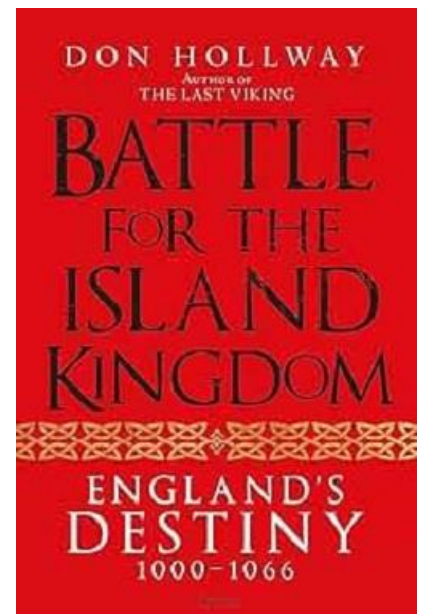
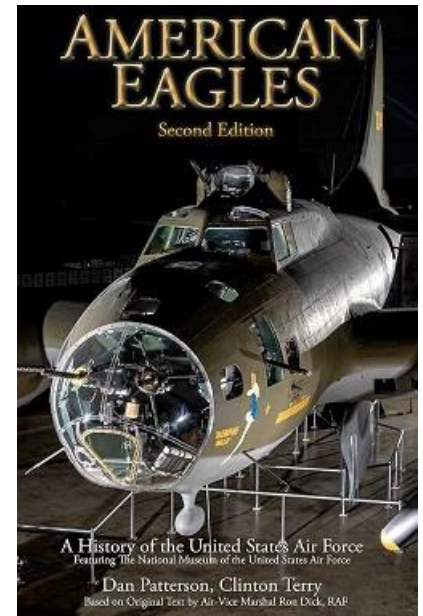
Enjoyed it.

Battle for an Island Kingdom: England's Destiny 1000-1066. by Don Hollway. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 440 pages. 2023.

While the 1066 invasion of England by William of Normandy (the Conqueror) receives ample coverage, the half-century of events leading up to the Battle of Hastings is less well known -- at least to me. The turn of the millennium starts with a multitude of Viking attacks and revenge raids into England. The operational movements and brief descriptions of battles receive ample coverage, although I really would like a detailed map so I could figure out the location of all these mentioned places.

Meanwhile, King Edmund Ironside gathered power until he was assassinated in a booby-trapped latrine. When he sat down, a cocked bow released and the arrow "struck him in the fundament and up into his lungs. Not even the fletching showed" (p112-113). Ouch!

Of import that when an Earl died, the king did not appoint a successor, although he recommended one to the conference of earls who actually did. Apparently, this system seemed to encourage Machiavellian machinations and outright murders that often led to internecine wars among the nobility.



William, by the way, led an interesting life -- often avoiding assassination attempts by fleeing into the night. Meanwhile, he used aggression and battlefield competence to hold onto and enlarge his Normandy dukedom. While nominally a vassal of the King of France, he fought off three invasions by the French king. Finally secure in his dukedom, he used the time to invade England. This biographical part is one of the highlights of the book for me -- well-written, well-researched, and well-plotted.

The rest is fairly well known, although by this time, Hollway's prose is rolling along, drawing you onward to Hastings.

The book contains two black and white illustrations, one color map stretching from Scotland to Burgundy, nine color illustrations, and two color photos.

Enjoyed it.

Hitler's Panzers: The Complete History 1933-1945. by Anthony Tucker-Jones. Softcover (6.2x9.2 inches). 253 pages. 2024 reprint of 2020 book.

Retelling the development and production story of WWII German panzers and their subsequent deployment is well-worn territory. Some books are overviews with specs. Some are detailed looks at a single version. This book falls somewhere in between.

As usual, ATJ's prose runs smooth and sweet as he covers the main tanks and the numerous variants. I found his analysis of how tanks were proposed, developed, and produced interesting. The tractor to Panzer I story is quite well done in a minimum amount of text. While I knew about German-USSR cooperation, I did not realize Sweden came into play as well. The nuggets continue throughout, punching up what could have been ordinary text.

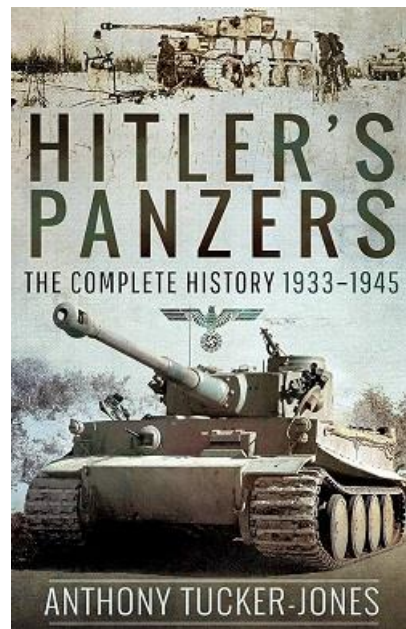
At the Battle of Kursk, the USSR built 3,100 miles of trenches that stretched back 110 miles from the front line. Never mind the multitude of anti-tank guns, the line was covered by 2,700 anti-personnel mines AND 2,400 anti-tank miles per mile (p110). Most of the Panther tank losses occurred from flanking fire, often by T-34s (p113). Of the Panthers used in one unit, 10 remained operational, 25 were destroyed (two by internal fires before the battle and 23 from enemy fire), and 100 needed repair (56 from hits and mines and 44 from mechanical breakdown (p113).

The book also covers STuGs and Jagd variations as well as an interesting chapter on "Wasted Opportunities." This speculates on Maus (photo right) and E-100 development and wastage from JagdTiger and Elefant production, plus opines on Tiger I and II during a time when Allied production was increasing and German production faced material and transportation challenges. A lack of standardization also hurt. His argues that the Pz IV was the tank to concentrate on that had the requisite capabilities balanced by production operations.

The book contains 56 black and white photos.

I found two typos: "what they did known in any great detail" (p14) should be "know" and "the engine was positioned in the ear" (p36) is most likely "rear" -- unless it was the Elefant. Ba-dum-bum.

Enjoyed it.



The Pirate Menace: Uncovering the Golden Age of Piracy. by Angus Konstam. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 391 pages. 2024.

In this book, the 'Golden Age' refers to the early to mid 1700s instead of the 1600s in and around the Caribbean Sea. It covers all the major pirates such as Blackbeard, Bellamy, and Bonnet as well as a host of lesser-known (to me) pirates.

The ship-to-ship actions come fast and furious, albeit not the way Hollywood portrays Captain Blood et al -- although there was a deal with a pirate named Lavasseur. You could create any number of scenarios from this book.

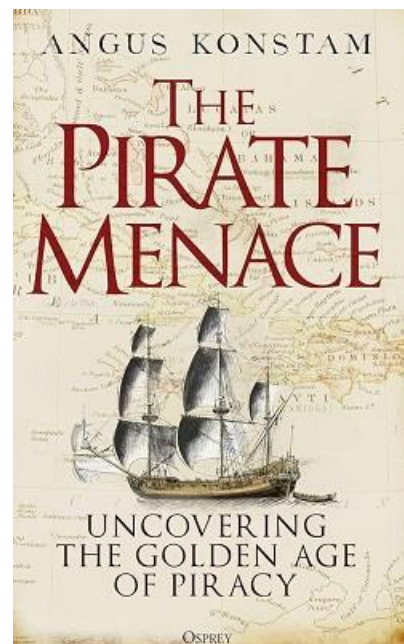
If I have one concern, it's that these pirates interact often, so you will read about the same event multiple times due to multiple viewpoints. No matter how well written, that gets a little tedious at times.

One new aspect for me concerned pirates capturing a ship and then eliminating the foredeck and quarterdeck so the pirate version of the ship had one level main deck. The idea was to improve mobility of the crew during a cannon and boarding battle (p158).

The book contains 19 black and white images, five black and white maps, eight color photos, and eight color illustrations.

One typo: a hurricane sank the 1715 Spanish treasure fleet "miles to the west of mainland Florida" (p51). The map shows the location as east of the Florida mainland, which makes more sense if the fleet was tapping into the Gulf Stream to head towards Spain.

The prose cruises the Caribbean with competence and style to explain the story of 18th century piracy. Enjoyed it.



Derricks' Bridgehead: The 587th Field Artillery Battalion, 92nd Division. by Major Clark. Hardback (6.3x9.2 inches). 252 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *And the Leadership Legacy of Colonel Wendell T. Derricks*

The 587th was an all-black combat unit manned by black enlisted men and led by black officers in WWII. The US Army was more segregation than integration during the war, but Col. Derricks persevered and preserved the all-black status of the unit despite efforts to disband it or insert white officers.

In this autobiography based on his diary and supplemented with official reports and personal interviews, Major Clark (his first name is "Major") started out as Private Major Clark when he enlisted in 1940. Being a smart lad, he was promoted through the ranks to Technical Sergeant. Despite considerable racism, Clark managed to enter Officer Candidate School with five other black officers to be -- out of a class of 600.

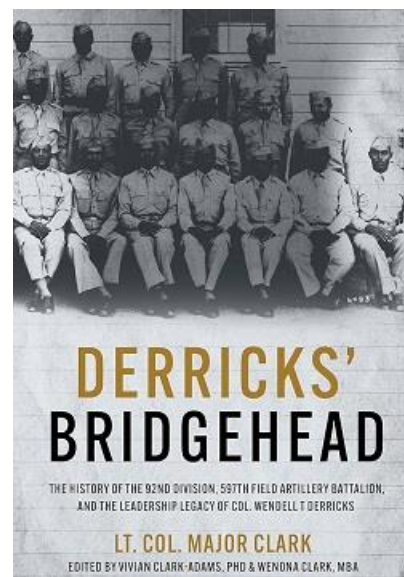
Most, but not all, white officers used their authority to impact promotions, descriptions, ratings, social contacts, and assignments based on race, not merit. One of the usual torments was a white officer giving an order for a black officer to be in a location at a certain time, and then minutes before that time, another white officer orders the black officer to be in a different location at the same time -- and then either one would jam the black officer for not being at one of the locations. Clark quoted army regs to explain his inability to be in two places at once.

The 587th left Arizona for the east coast on Sep. 5, 1944, boarding a troop ship on Sep 19, passed Gibraltar on Oct 1, arrived at Naples on Oct 4, and disembarked at Livorno (Italy) on Oct. 6, 1944. They drove the 2.5 ton trucks towing 105mm howitzers the rest of the way to the front line. The battalion deployed on Nov. 15, 1944 and was in continuous action through the end of the war.

During the war, Clark was promoted to Captain and extolls the virtues and patience of Col. Derricks. Clark stayed in the Army and attained the rank of Lt. Col, ending his service working at the Pentagon.

One typo: "156" (p56) should be "155" as it refers to a 155mm artillery gun.

The book contains 35 black and white photos, one black and white illustration, and five black and white maps.



Reading between the lines, black officers' frustration, including the author's, meant working twice as hard to attain half as much recognition. This detailed examination of a battalion in training and action describes the successes and setbacks of the unit and sharpens the perception of what it meant to help lead the desegregation of the US Army.

Enjoyed it.

Custer: From the Civil War's Boy General to the Battle of the Little Bighorn. by Ted Behnecke and Gary Bloomfield. Softcover (6.3x9.2 inches). 243 pages. 2024 reprint of 2020 book.

This biography captures the nuances of a precocious childhood through headstrong general who flaunted authority even as he demanded obedience. In a general way, Custer is more famous for his defeat in 1876 than his victories in the American Civil War. Had he not died on Last Stand Hill, he had a shot at entering national politics.

Almost two decades ago, I visited the battlefield of Little Bighorn. I only had a couple hours before the Park closed, but I toured the museum, watched the movie, and drove along the ridge to stop at various points, including Last Stand Hill. At that time, it was all rolling grasslands and spotty woods as if it was 1876.

Yet the most interesting ACW factoid to me was that Custer ascended in a hot air balloon on May 5, 1862 as part of his reconnaissance mission. He went up several times.

The most interesting post-ACW factoid was his court martial that sent him packing for a year -- where he honed his writing and PR skills about his Indian expeditions.

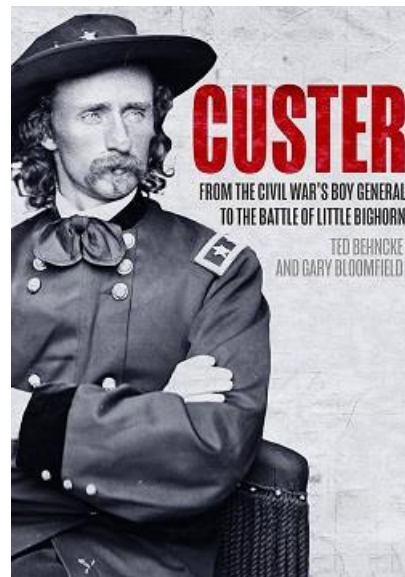
He squeaked by West Point, walking off demerits just as fast as he accumulated them. Early graduation due to the outbreak of the ACW helped him -- he always seemed to be one demerit away from expulsion.

In the Peninsula campaign, he scoured a battlefield for wounded and found his old West Point classmate Lea among the barely living. He carried the Confederate officer to the hospital and checked in often in Williamsburg to see about his recovery. Amazingly, as the Union Army pulled away, Custer attended Lea's wedding as a groomsman before returning to the Union Army (p36-37).

By dint of courageous scouting and good public relations, he was promoted to Brigadier General (US Vol) of the Michigan cavalry brigade. He tended to throw his units into action at the first opportunity and proved lucky enough not to get killed while those around him died.

His post-ACW years as Lt. Col. of the 7th Cavalry were filled with just as much action and defying authority as his ACW years. He was saved by often enough by his long-time friends and former commanders. Lucky, indeed, spiked with bravado and battlefield accomplishments until Little Bighorn.

*Fanciful Last Stand 1885 painting.
Image from web.*



The book contains 31 black and white photos, 38 black and white illustrations, and 13 black and white maps.

My one complaint is that the excerpts come far too often between pages 75 and 103 and all of them are in such a small font, I was squinting more than reading. They also interrupt the flow of the quality prose. If you're cutting and pasting more than writing, you're on the wrong track. I skipped through those 30 or so pages.

That said, I rather enjoyed this biography of Custer. I know far more about his character -- good and bad -- than I did before and that's exactly what a good biography should do.

Enjoyed it.

Clan Battles: Warfare in the Scottish Highlands in the Late Middle Ages. by Chris Peers. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 192 pages. 2023.

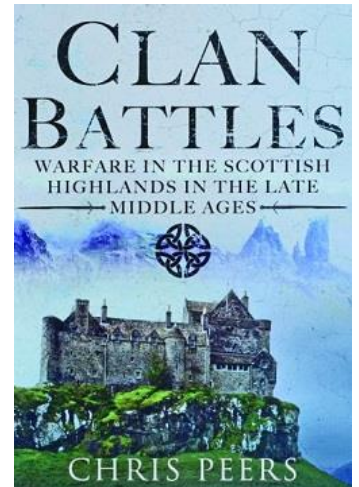
This overview describes clan warfare, mostly raiding and counter-raiding but with some pitched battles too, with reasonable detail. General tribal organization, armor, and weaponry start out the book, followed by obscure places, names, and battles. It's a good thing there's a general map of Scotland with the battles marked -- otherwise, I wouldn't know where any of them are located.

The key to clan psychology appears to be a never-ending series of revenge murders. Sometimes, it's amazing enough Scots survived to make it into the 16th century.

The book contains 1 black and white map, 29 black and white photos, and one black and white illustration.

Given the sources, or lack thereof, most of the battles lack OOBs save for a few general numbers. Obviously, some are better detailed than others. You probably can gin up a scenario of three from the various chapters, but they'll be more speculative than definitive. Ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.



The King and His Fortresses: Reason to Revolution No 127. By Grzegorz Podruczny. Softcover (6.7x9.7 inches). 384 pages. 2024 updated reprint of 2013 book.

Subtitle: *Frederick the Great and Prussian Permanent Fortifications 1740-1786*

The evolution of Vauban and Coehoorn fortification designs continues into Frederick the Great's time as the Prussian king expanded defensive works across his empire. He took an active interest in the design and placement of individual works in individual cities, often times refining his engineers' recommendations. Part of that has to do with funding as he often cut amounts before approving any work.

In general, each of the fortifications covered, from small blockhouse-style fortlets to massive city walls, receives an extensive and detailed examination of construction, including what was improved or rebuilt, cost in thalers, past influences and new designs, and types of defensive architecture.

It's all supplemented with period plans and modern drawings and maps scattered throughout. Due to the size of the book format, you will have to squint at some period maps. Indeed, it is often hard to read the scale. The 3D illustrations are quite nice.

One criticism: The plans usually have numbers or letters on a variety of areas, but no key to explain what they mean.

The sieges receive overview-style descriptions as this is more an examination of the fortification than the military defense and attacks against them. Still, you can pick up some info about various sieges' lengths of time and distances of parallels and battery locations.

Incidentally, Frederick the Great had a couple siege maneuvers performed as military field exercises. One included test firings against a fort and the other included experiments in blowing mines. Other than that, engineers mostly learned about siege warfare through actual sieges.

The book contains 108 black and white maps and overhead drawing of forts, eight black and white photos, and three black and white illustrations.

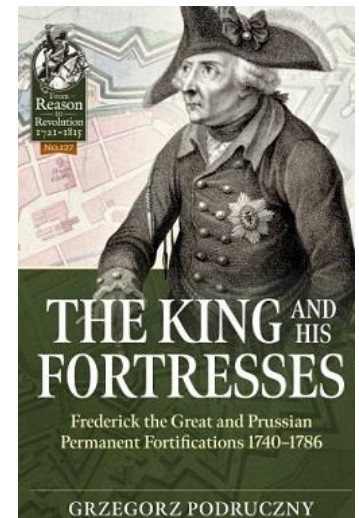
One typo: "reparation of two old towers" is likely "repair" (p145).

As this is a very engineering-centric discussion, I will say that I started skipping the text about halfway through as it starts to read the same. After all, one city's fortification expansion is pretty much the same as another. Don't get me wrong. It's brilliant research, but there are only so many ways to describe the same construction techniques, costs, and rationales.

I did find Chapter 8 an excellent summary of all things fortifications through a series of biographies of principle engineers. Nicely done, that.

If Seven Year War-era fortifications are interesting to you, especially if you want an exhaustive description of aspects, angles, and costs, this is your book.

Enjoyed it.



The Spray and Pray Squadron. by Margaret Mills Kincannon.
Hardback (7.3x10.3 inches). 511 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *3rd Bomb Squadron, 1st Bomb Group, Chinese-American Composite Wing in World War II*

The exhaustively researched unit history covers a B-25 squadron in exquisite detail using a mix of official documents and personal interviews. The author's father served with the squadron in China, which was activated on October 1, 1943.

Besides covering just about every mission, the book contains plenty of personal anecdotes that didn't make it into official history. Base ops, lousy weather, interactions with locals, and more receive extensive attention.

In one action, a B-25H had one engine on fire that couldn't be extinguished. Then the other engine quit. Pilot Simpson dropped flaps to reduce air speed to about 160mph, but that was too fast to land. He then remembered something he saw in a movie. He flew between two trees, knocking the wings off the plane and dropping the speed to about 100mph for a successful belly landing. All crew were unhurt (p84).

Another extended anecdote followed a B-25 crew that got lost in rotten weather, ran out of gas, and bailed out. What follows is an interesting tale, ultimately successful, at wandering around a country seeking help from local villagers when the sum total of common language is a printed booklet in the back country with minimal literacy (p216-220).

The book contains hundreds of photos (I didn't count them) from personal and official sources. One appendix lists every B-25 flown by the squadron and another appendix offers 120 service records of various personnel.

On the plus side, let's give Schiffer Publishing a hearty "Bravo!" for using regular font sizes for excerpts instead of the trend of inserting teeny-tiny type fonts. So... Bravo!

And no typos that I could find. A double Bravo!

On the down side, covering every mission by every plane gets a bit repetitive after a few hundred pages. But comprehensive? Yes. Give Kincannon credit for discovering a multitude of ways to write about the same type of bombing missions.

While lengthy for casual readers, air war buffs will find this a thorough and fascinating account of a far-off theater that lacks the coverage of Europe or even other areas of the Pacific.

Enjoyed it.

The June 1967 Arab-Israeli Six-Day War: Volume 1. by Tom Cooper.
Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 90 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Prequel and Opening Moves of the Air War*

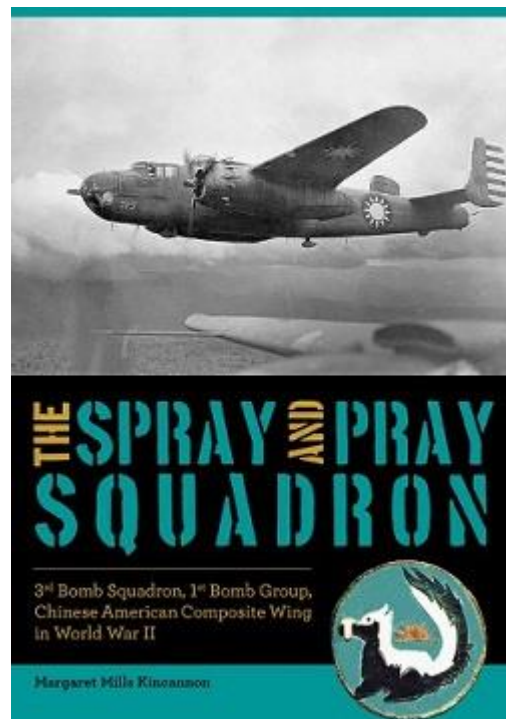
Subtitle: *Middle East @ War No. 61*

This starts with the formation of Israel after WWII and concludes with the initial air strikes against Egypt in June 1967 (p64-72). In between is the author's usual excellence at researching and explaining the composition, doctrine, and relative competence of the Israeli, Egyptian, Iraqi, and Jordanian air forces.

As this is the Middle East, the political and military are strongly linked. The decades-long "Water Wars" conflicts over diverting the Jordan River receive nice succinct coverage and the miscalculation of the USSR of feeding Egypt with knowingly false intel goes a long way to explaining the May 1967 Egyptian mobilization and the blockade of Strait of Tiran (p34).

As the June 1967 war draws from 20 years of Arab-Israeli interactions, how political events and options affected the military, from terrorist attacks to coups to invasions, pepper the text. You'll need to find other books to examine all these causes, effects, charges, and counter-charges in more detail.

The book contains 96 black and white photos, 10 black and white maps, 27 color aircraft profiles, and one color map.



My guess is that this will be another multi-volume examination that will extend the @ War series. If you don't want to wait, plenty of books are available, but if you don't mind the installment plan approach supported by a multitude of photos, here's the start of what promises to be another expert examinations.

Enjoyed it.

A German Soldier on the Eastern Front. by Franz Taut. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 216 pages. 2024 English translation of 2015 book.

Subtitle: *A First Hand Account of the Beginnings of Operation Barbarossa*

The subtitle seems to indicate this is a memoir, but the press release uses the words "based on" and the prose within reads like a novel. The other clue is that the book is written by Taut, but follows Lt. Hohberg and his artillery unit during the heady days of advance into the USSR in 1941. At no point does Taut appear in the book. So, barring any new info, I'm going to label this Historical Fiction. The author has a previous novel published.

It is possible that much of the events were recorded somewhere and formed the inspiration for the book. An odd aspect is the close cooperation of bicycle troops that lead the way for the artillery battery as well as the AT guns that also help to protect the battery. Lots of motorcycle messengers bop along with orders. The book ends in November 1941 with the coming of snow.

It does not contain an Introduction, Preface, Table of Contents, Index, Bibliography, or any other aspect of a memoir. It does contain a possible typo: "For the first time since July 22, the day on which the general staff referred to as Operation Barbarossa had begun..." (p109) -- the date should be June 22, unless the general staff has some sort of other date. The book contains six black and white photos, with none of the subjects identified as Hohberg or Taut.

It's a pleasant enough read about a four-gun battery in the USSR, and I enjoyed it, but I am not impressed with the "is it a novel or not" attempt at subterfuge.

NATO and Warsaw Pact Armoured Fighting Vehicles of the Cold War. by Michael Green. Hardback (7.2x9.9 inches). 245 pages. 2023.

Just to be clear, there are no tanks within the pages of this book – for that, Green released the book *NATO and Warsaw Pact Tanks of the Cold War* in 2022. In this book, you'll find descriptions, tech specs, and photos of armored Infantry Fighting Vehicles, Recon vehicles, Air-Defense vehicles, self-propelled artillery, and anti-aircraft vehicles.

Each chapter offers short descriptions of each vehicle followed by a photo section with extended captions. Text includes technical issues and modifications, although the author does not include armor millimeter thickness because just about all direct-fire shells would puncture the thin armor.

The book contains 32 black and white photos, eight black and white illustrations, 161 color photos, and four color illustrations.

I find the text repetitive and after a while tended to skip around, but treadheads just starting out in the Cold War period will find this a useful reference. Ties go to the author.

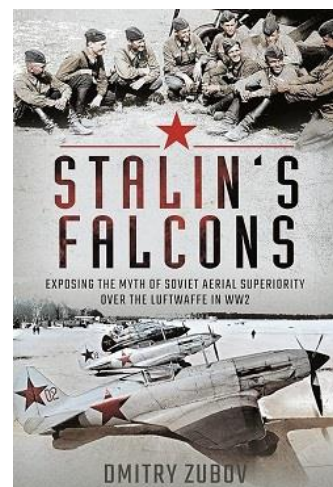
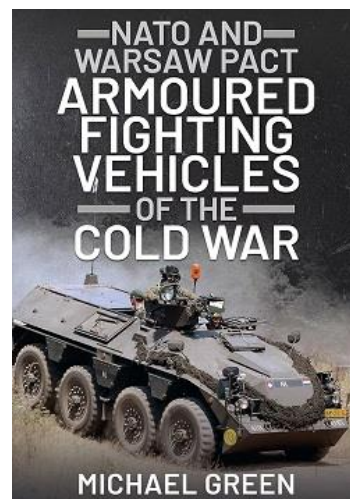
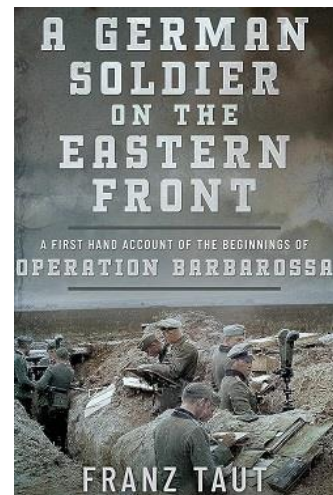
Enjoyed it.

Stalin's Falcons. by Dmitry Zubov. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 275 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Exposing the Myth of Soviet Aerial Superiority Over the Luftwaffe in WW2*

The prose carries odd syntax and metaphors (such as I-16 designer Polikarpov as a "devoted Nazgul" (p74) -- one of many Lord of the Rings asides) at times, but the examination of the design, development, and production of the I-16, LAGG-3, YAK-1, and MiG-3 provides in-depth evaluations of the faults on these fighters.

All new aircraft go through teething problems, often crashing and killing test pilots, but the aircraft designers had the additional onus of an impatient Stalin who executed them when things went awry -- whether from a design problem, one of the seemingly endless modifications, or the inept production that focused on number of



planes, not whether or not they were airworthy.

The book contains 163 black and white photos and four black and white illustrations.

The book covers a select number of pre-war designs. I'm not sure there is any myth about the Red Air Force in the early years of WWII and the book ends before the later years. Ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.

U-2 'Dragon Lady' Units: 1955-90 (Combat Air 152). by Peter E. Davies.

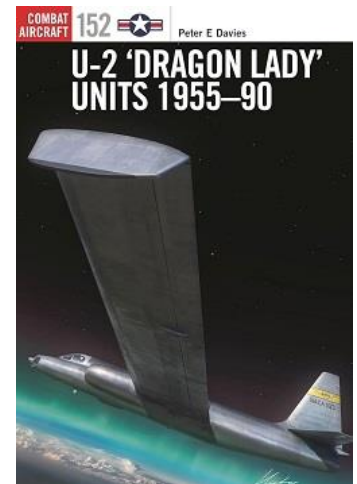
Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2024.

Bigger fonts, please. I don't know what it is about Osprey air books, but my grognard eyes complain each time I pick up one. Granted, the info within this booklet is a marvelous encapsulation of the design, development, and deployment of U-2s, but it is difficult for me to read. I suppose if you have an electronic version you can boost the font to whatever you want, but for the printed version, my eyes cannot be the only one that would appreciate a larger font.

You can pull out some Cold War USSR, Cuba, China, and Vietnam missions that might serve as background for a wargame campaign or scenario. Or at least some sort of table for successful recon.

The booklet contains 20 black and white photos, 31 color photos, and 22 color aircraft profiles.

Enjoyed it.



Hamburg 1940-45: Air Campaign 44. by Richard Worrall. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The Long War Against Germany's Great Port City*

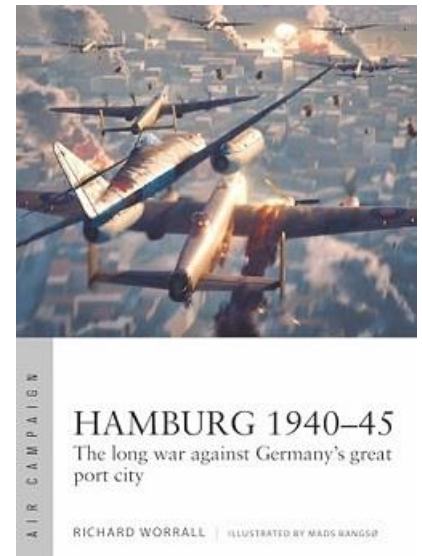
Ah. Another *Air Campaign* series book. Great info? Check. Informative illustrations? Check. Eyestrain? Check and Mate.

Yep, when my grognard eyes meet small fonts, I read until my eyes water and then put down the booklet and switch to a book with normal font sizes. And yes, I already wear glasses. And yes, the point (size) is probably moot.

Anyway, the RAF and later USAAF bombing of Hamburg (Germany) receives an excellent encapsulation about industries, production, and impact of bombing. Hamburg was far more important to the German war effort than just U-boats. It included oil refineries, ship building, and other factories. The Allies bombed it continuously during the war as the Germans proved themselves masters of restarting damaged production lines.

The booklet contains 59 black and white photos, four color photos, five color maps, two color illustrations, three color two-page action illustrations, and two color two-page raid diagrams.

Enjoyed it.



German Tanks in France 1940: New Vanguard 327. by Steven J. Zaloga. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Armor in the Wehrmacht's Greatest Blitzkrieg Victory*

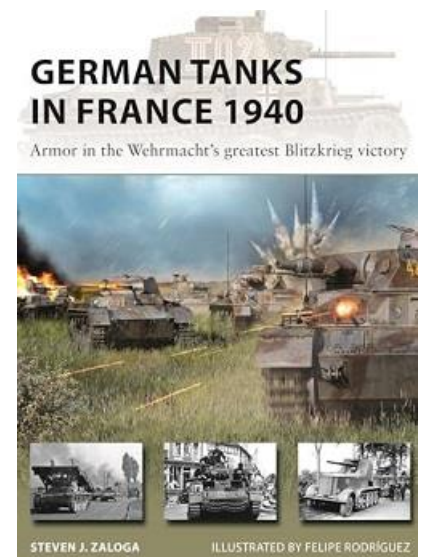
The usual Zaloga excellence at summarizing tanks used, including the variety of panzers and plenty of tabular data. For grognards, there's nothing particularly new about any of the technical details, but for those just starting out, Ospreys like this one are the perfect introduction.

The booklet also covers Czech tanks, command tanks, and specialty AT armored vehicles. Zaloga's analysis between Allied and German armor doctrine is succinct and insightful.

The booklet contains 39 black and white photos, one color two-page action illustration, and 12 color camouflage tank profiles.

Enjoyed it.

FYI: For a more extensive look at the 1940 German invasion, consider the excellent *Case Red* by Robert Forczyk.



Warships in the War of the Pacific 1879-83: New Vanguard 328. by Angus Konstam. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *South America's Ironclad Naval Campaign*

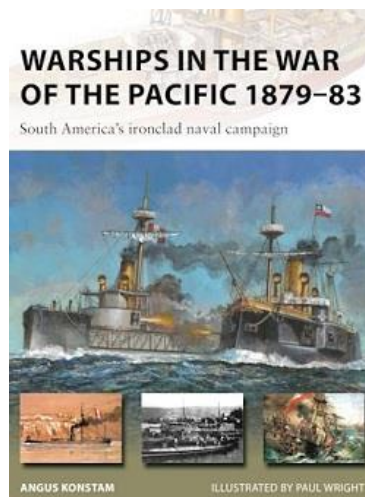
Although this war between Chile and Peru over natural resources is little known except to naval buffs, this New Vanguard does a fine job of bringing together the disparate elements that went into the naval war.

Maintenance and training proved to be Achilles heels of ironclad warships in the period as both sides set their naval strategies into motion. Peru's ironclad Huascar ran wild for a while, but Chilean numbers caught up.

The booklet contains 16 black and white photos, 18 black and white illustrations, one color map, two color one-page action illustrations, one color photo, four 12 color illustrations, eight color ship profiles, and one color cutaway two-page illustration of the Huascar.

Enjoyed it.

FYI: *Against the Odds* magazine brought out a *Sea Monsters* four-game special issue that included this particular war with a number of scenarios. I was staff developer for three of the four games, including *Iron and Fire* about the ironclad battles involving the *Huascar* and other ships.



The War Underground 1914-18: Elite 256. by Simon Jones. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 64 pages. 2024.

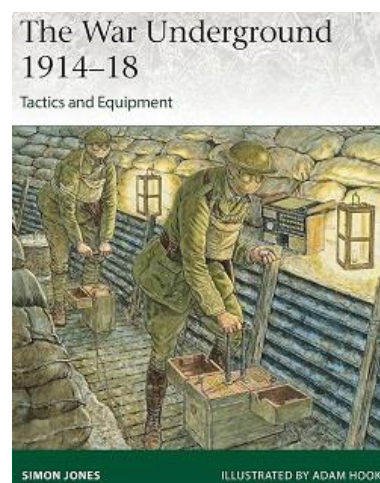
Subtitle: *Tactics and Equipment*

WWI saw extensive tunneling and mines during the early part of the war as Allies and Central Powers sought to break the deadlock of trench warfare. Although spectacular in technical execution, actual advances through a landscape cratered by a massive mine proved not the wonder weapon needed. New technologies like tanks and tactics like Stosstruppen eventually proved more effective.

Nonetheless, tunnels and counter-tunnels and the underground battles that went with them receive a nice overview. The Germans had the edge early, but by 1916, the British caught up and fielded 25 British, three Canadian, four Australian, and one New Zealander tunneling companies (p9-p10). The tunnels went deeper, the mines got bigger, and the hoped-for results rarely materialized. By mid to end of 1917, the French, Germans, and British abandoned mining as a breakthrough tactic (p29).

The book contains 39 black and white photos, two black and white illustrations, one black and white map, three color illustrations, eight color photos, and eight pages of color illustrations covering uniforms, equipment, and underground skirmishing.

Enjoyed it.



Union Army 1861-65 (2): Men At Arms 555. by Ron Field. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 56 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Eastern and New England States*

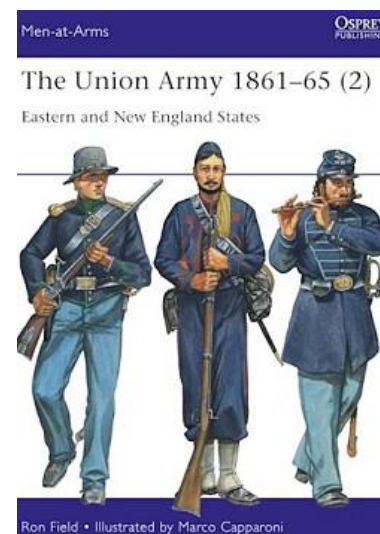
This sequel follows *The Union Army 1861-65 (1): Men At Arms 553* (see the review in the Feb 29, 2024 AAR or up on hmgs.org), which covered the Regular Army and the Territories.

The format is the same, on the content covers 11 states and DC. State by state, the text notes the number of regiments and companies created. The blue uniform was standardized in August 1861, in part due to the confusion of units on both sides wearing gray uniforms.

Some tidbits: NY state signed a contract with Brooks Brothers for uniforms (p4); the 79th NY State Militia wore tartan pants and had kilts for dress occasions (p9); the Pennsylvania 114 Regiment wore red fezzes (p14); the Massachusetts 11 Regiment wore a tricorn (p10); and the Massachusetts 2nd Battalion Riflemen wore Turkish Turbans (p18).

The book contains 35 black and white photos, 21 color photos, and eight central pages with 24 color uniform illustrations.

Enjoyed it.



Second Punic War Iberia 220-206 BC: Campaign 400. by Mir Bahmanyar. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *From Hannibal at the Tagus to the Battle of Ilipa*

Another fine *Campaign* volume covers a variety of battles in Spain that gradually saw Rome displace Carthage as master of Iberia. A trio have enough OOB and other information plus an accompanying map to prep a tabletop battle: Tagus (220BC), Baecula (208BC) and Ilipa (206BC).

Two sieges: Saguntum (219BC) and New Carthage (209BC) are also possible if you have appropriate siege rules and terrain.

That said, I found Dertosa (215BC) a most intriguing battle, but only two pages (p60-p61) touch on it.

The book contains four black and white photos, 14 black and white illustrations; 45 color photos, eight color illustrations, seven color maps, and three color two=page action illustrations.

Enjoyed it.

US Battle Tanks: 1917-1945. by Steven J. Zaloga. Hardback (7.9x9.8 inches). 277 pages. 2024.

This is a repackaged collection of Osprey *Campaign*, *Duel*, *New Vanguard*, and other booklets edited into a hardcover. Considering Zaloga wrote a ton of tank books, the expert edits himself down to one book.

I found US tank development during the interwar years the most interesting as the US Army did relatively little, but inventors like Christie did much. As WWII approached, the US Army got cracking and turned out acceptable and reliable tank designs that industry promptly mass produced. Zaloga's usual extensive tabular information peppers the text with tables.

Some of the late war designs, such as T28 and T30 might make for an interesting 'what if' battle against the German Maus and E-100.

The book contains 153 black and white photos, eight color photos, one black and white illustration, and 95 color illustrations (mostly camouflage profiles and action).

Those with a collection of Zaloga-penned Ospreys may not find much new, but if you're starting from scratch, here's a good compilation.

Enjoyed it.

Herman Goering: From Madrid to Warsaw and Beyond 1939. by Brian R. Johnson. Hardback (7.2x10.0 inches). 255 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Personal Photograph Albums of Hermann Goering*

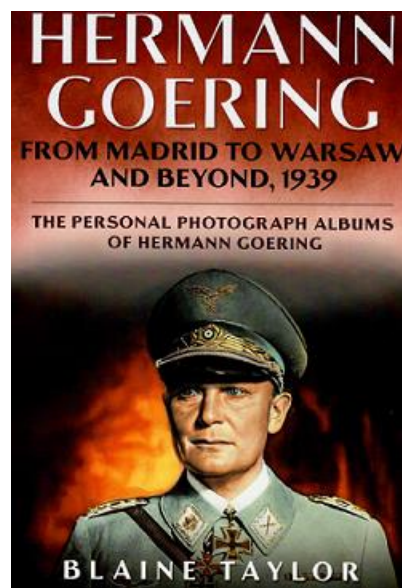
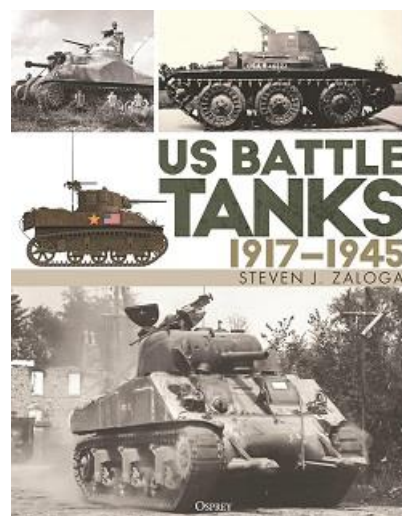
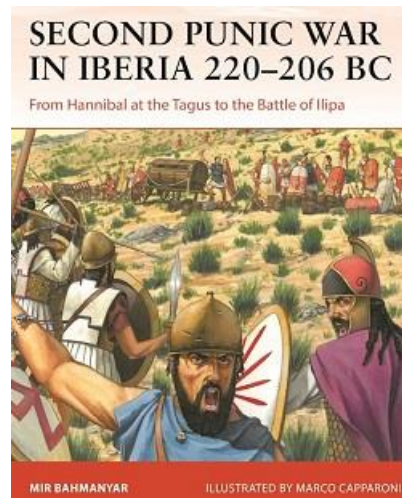
For Herman Goering, 1939 was an awfully good year. The Condor Legion came home in triumph from the Spanish Civil War. The Luftwaffe came home in triumph from the Polish campaign. Hitler made the Reichmarshal his successor.

On the flip side, his efforts to keep Britain out of the war failed and he had a sinking pre-war feeling that any war with the West would end in defeat.

The structure of this book is not a running narrative. Instead, chapters are topics filled with excerpts. It's a cut and paste special built around Herman Goering's personal photo album (residing in the US Library of Congress collections) and supplemented with photos from other sources.

It's like an *Images of War* volume but with far more text and concentrating on only one year. Indeed, if you want more Goering photos, the *Hermann Goring: Rise and Fall -- Images of War* (see the review in the 4/26/2024 AAR or up on hmgs.org) came out with 140 black and white photos, albeit throughout the war.

The book contains 222 black and white photos, nine black and white illustrations, and seven black and white maps.



A typo: The captions on pages 76 and 77 referring to a DO-17 seem incorrect. The DO-17 had twin vertical stabilizers for a tail, but the photo shows only one. The DO-17's wing is attached to the spine of the fuselage, but the photos show under fuselage attachment. My squinting of these Library of Congress photos seems to me to be HE-111s, not DO-17s.

The Rechlin chapter, in which Hitler mistakes all the experimental Luftwaffe planes and equipment meant to be ready in 1942 and 1943 for 1939 ready for mass production items, is especially interesting. Apparently, few thought to actively correct the Fuhrer's interpretation.

Enjoyed it.

Through Blood and Brotherhood: Comrades and Enemies in WWII

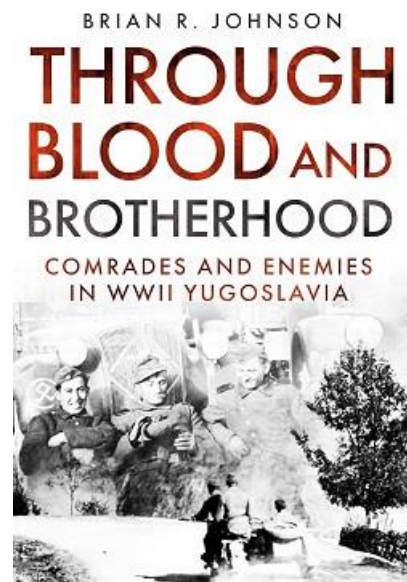
Yugoslavia. by Brian R. Johnson. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 266 pages. 2024.

The author's chance purchase of Gottfried Weber's WWII diaries, written in a 1930s German dialect started the research process that ended with a book about occupation duty in Yugoslavia for a Wehrmacht radioman soldier. As the years rolled by, the situation for garrisons of the Dalmatian Coast became deadlier until the Soviet offensive from the east prompted the Army to pull all garrisons back for the defense of Austria and Germany.

Although Weber is the central figure in the year-by-year explanation of his conscription into the German Work Service and then Army, other soldiers enter the tale. Some become friends, others are Allied enemies, and all add to the story of occupation in a partisan world.

The book contains 94 black and white photos and four black and white maps.

Enjoyed it.



Not too early to think...



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