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Books I've Read:

The Battle of Rocroi: 1643 (Cent Soldier # 94)

Men of Armor: US B Co, 756 Tank Bttn - Vol. 2

Alpini: Italian Mountain Troops 1872-Present

Battle of Leyte Gulf: Largest Sea Battle

The Shogun's Soldiers: Vol. 2 (Cent Soldier 99)

HMS Formidable: Arthur Flint's War (WWII)

Armies of the Italian Risorgimento: 1848-1870

The Hundred Years War: 1337-1453 (Ess Hist)

Italian Campaign 1941-1945: Images of War

Brit Frigates and Escort DDs 1939-45 (NV319)

Confronting Napoleon: Vol. 1 Pultask to Eylau

US Marine Corps 1775-1859 (Elite 251)

Tanks in Operation Bagration 1944 (NV 318)

The Redcoats of Wellington's Light Division

Hydaspes 326BC: Campaign 389

Battle of Gettysburg 1863 (2): Campaign 391

The Spy From Place Saint-Sulpice (novel)

Skyfarer: The Drifting Lands 1 (fantasy novel)

Into Deepest Space (sci-fi novel)

Operation Rype: WWII OSS Mission Norway

Captain Empirical (sci-fi novel)

The Philadelphia Campaign: 1777

Such a Clash of Arms: Maryland Campaign 1862

Men and Machines (sci-fi short stories)

Military Low-Level Flying: From F-4 to F-35

8th SS Cavalry Division Geyer: Images of War

Stalingrad: Death of an Army - BattleCraft

The Historical Atlas of the British Isles



Brittany Hill 103: *Command Decision* 1944

by Russ Lockwood

"Well, this is a most un-American situation I've been in since North Africa," complained Lt. Col. Russ.

"How so?" asked Lt. Col. Pat.

Hill 103: US at right in the bocage. Germans on hill (center) and in village (top middle).

"We're attacking Germans on a hill and yes, we have no bananas, artillery, or air support."

"Seriously?"

"Yes. We are bananaless."

"I mean the part about no artillery or air support."

"None of those, either."

"Well, at least we have overwhelming numbers."

Russ hemmed and hawed. "If you believe that, you're bananas."

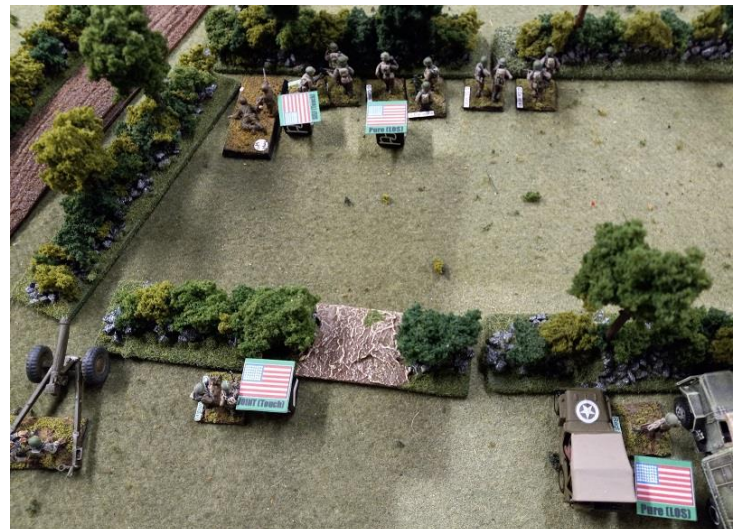
Germans dug in behind barbed wire on Hill 103.

Brittany 1944

With Patton racing eastward across the top of the Brittany peninsula, it was left to the 103rd 'Jiminy Cricket' Regiment to scoot southward to capture the port of Brest.

Sitting squarely in the way was Hill 103, the largest hill in the area and one crawling with Germans. Worse, they had ringed the hill with trenches behind barbed wire. A small village at the edge of the bocage was also infested with a company of Germans behind stone walls. All totaled: five German companies with some assorted heavy weapon platoons for stiffening. It was even worse: the troops were veteran Fallschirmjagers.

Some of the US troops at start. Regimental command (bottom right corner), Cannon Company (bottom left corner), G company (top middle) with attached HMG platoon (long stand)



The Americans brought two average infantry battalions of three companies, one HMG platoon, and one 81mm mortar platoon each. Attached, I had one 105mm Cannon Company while Pat had one 4.2-inch mortar company. Pat's side of the table was a little more open than mine, so he got the two Sherman tank platoons. Plus, he had a plan for the armor.

We used *Command Decision* rules and in its parlance, just about every stand is a platoon. The US had two patrol stands that might be just a squad. They don't fire, but they spot.

Of more import, the bocage provided a -1 type of cover, the stone buildings and trenches off the hill provided a -2 type of cover, and the trenches atop the hill provided a -3 type of cover. The barbed wire obstacles forced infantry to halt movement and stand out in the open. Jiminy Cricket, that would be a tough nut to crack!

My jump off against the German-held village. Single arrow on dice indicate "Cautious Advance" order. Infantry move is 6 inches, but crossing the hedgerow costs 2 inches.

Infiltration

Our US plan was the ol' squeeze play. We'd infiltrate through the bocage towards the narrow end of the hill, and then simultaneously launch an attack to storm the end and roll up the defense. Pat would flank the hill with the armor and I'd flank the other side -- although I'd have to clear the village first. Pat had some trepidation that German commander Richtenfuss would plant a surprise somewhere in the woods along his flank.

Judging by the complete lack of movement by Richtenfuss when he won the initiative on Turn 1, the German plan seemed to be stay put and stay hidden unless absolutely necessary.

G company (right) and F company (left) bring fire on the village and drive the two German stands backwards. Note the genius placement of my patrol stand on the road, blocking some of my own fire. A failed morale roll made the German company "pin."

One of the advantages of being on top of the hill was being able to spot all US movement across the entire board. As our platoons crossed the fields, the German artillery and mortars rained death upon us. It was a miracle we passed as many morale checks as we did in the early going. However, our once full-strength companies sported many a gap.

Next turn, my patrol stand goes in between the buildings as I occupy the front buildings. Ah, the 90-day wonders are getting smarter...

The Village People

My lads crept forward along the bocage to get on two sides of the village. Of course, the bocage was just outside spotting range. I sent a



patrol stand to do recon. With any luck, the German company would be a fake.

Nope.

German small-arms fire raked the bocage, sending my attached HMG platoon fleeing for the moment. But at least my patrol spotted the Germans.

Unfortunately, I had brilliantly placed the patrol stand directly in front of two of my infantry platoon stands, so those two couldn't fire. Sure, it's all low-odds chances to hit, but every shot counts. I really should have known better because I've interdicted my own fire in previous games. I'd say "Doh!" but this is dumber than a "Doh!"

The village Germans laughed and then pantomimed Yoke Mike Charlie Able for "You Missed, Clumsy Americanishers!"

Still, the heavy weapons platoons of both my companies chased the two German platoons from the front of the village to a house in the back. They passed morale, but I was on my way to clearing the village.

Germans flee the village back to the hill as my Patrol stand gives chase. G company occupies the village as F company breaks cover after taking a beating from German artillery (toppled over stands).



The next turn, I moved the patrol in between the houses in the back of the village, spotting the command stand of the company in the third house. Now all three platoons of the company were spotted and I brought the pain. One German stand was killed off and the company failed morale and fled back to the hill. I would have preferred to eliminate them all in the village instead of reinforcing the hill...

Base of the Hill

Meanwhile, Pat's 1st battalion crept through the bocage, aided by the laying of smoke at the narrow end of the hill. That shifted fire away from him and towards me. As Pat had the 4.2 'chemical' mortar platoon (chemical meaning 'smoke' not mustard gas like WWI), he flooded his end so that he grabbed the trenches at the bottom of the hill and prepared to assault the wire.

He initially kept the Sherman tanks off the board, but brought them on along the road. He attacked a Panzershrek platoon with 75mm HE, but with only a 1-in-10 chance of a hit, turn after turn he missed, mostly because of the distance. He feared the 'shrek, but he also feared there was a surprise lurking in the woods.

Lt. Col. Pat takes German artillery losses, but drops smoke (white puff balls) to cover his move into the foxholes (trenches). Shermans advance.



His next move found his troops along the wire, snipping it apart. Alas, the Germans fired with glee, driving him away, but unveiling their own positions. Artillery and small arms fire killed or forced the leading defenders to flee up the hill.

Pat was working his patrol along the woods on the flank of the hill to nose out any surprises, but he got only about halfway before moving the patrol up the hill, where it perished, but spotted a German platoon.

G company advances across the fields (right) while E company takes out German stands on the hill corner. Pat's company is in the trenches (left). My F company failed morale and fell back and pinned.



The Flank Beckons

After clearing the village, I really didn't have much of a choice if I wanted to get to the hill. I had to leave the bocage and stone building surroundings and support the other battalion. That meant heading across the open fields.

The fire came fast and furious on Fox company in the middle. If you include the earlier artillery fire, they decided they had enough and fled back into the bocage, shaken and trying to find a hole to hide on. Fortunately, I had the battalion command stand in their way. He halted the two panicked platoons.

E and F companies fail morale and flee back into the bocage. My officer (next to die with hand icon) says stop here men, and begins the rally process. The green cube indicates shaken status, which is like double secret pinned.



George company, which had cleared the village, floated across the fields and half reached a line of trenches at the bottom of the hill and the other half was in lesser terrain. So far, G company was intact.

Not for long. Second platoon in the open and the heavy weapons platoon in cover at the edge of a field didn't make it through the storm of German artillery and small arms fire. That left the two platoons in the trenches.

But that sacrifice allowed a virtually intact Easy company to sweep their side of the narrow part of the hill with concentrated fire. Germans fell or retreated. Along with Pat's troops, it was time to storm the hill.

Pat's company got to the wire and started snipping. My almost intact Easy company failed morale...big time. They dropped their weapons and fled in abject terror back into the bocage, ultimately falling in next to Fox company within the battalion commander's aura of serenity.

Alas, it would take multiple turns to settle a company from Shaken to Pin to Normal. I would try Easy company first, then Fox. Yet in the time that took, George company had been shot up and what was left was all by its lonesome at the base of the hill.

German Victory

Both US battalions were wracked and ruined. Pat and I ordered a retreat. Richtenfuss not only delayed the US advance on Brest, he painted the landscape red with red-blooded American blood.

(l to r): Umpire Marc, US Pat, and German Rich. Here, Pat recreates the moment when he realized that the panzershrebs only fire four inches while Sherman MGs fire 12 inches.



Umpire Answers and Questions

Umpire Marc explained this game was a 1.5 to 1 attack that is based on the historical attack of the 29th Division. He noted that the US artillery was far away supporting Patton's main attack. Our little sojourn to Hill 103 was essentially a sideshow at that moment in time. The actual US attack on Hill 103 took over five days. The first few days were all US repulses.

It's nice to know we can recreate history on the tabletop without knowing the history.

So, in analyzing the game, Umpire Marc asked me why I didn't use smoke. Well, I only had one round and was saving it for the big pinch when my lads were at the wire. Remember, US troops had to stop on the wire. The correct time to use it was when Easy company was just ready to attack up the hill. Alas, at that moment it failed morale and fled into the bocage. About the best I could do now was drop the smoke to cover George company's retreat.

Marc turned to Pat and asked why he kept the Sherman tanks so far back, beyond the 12-inch range of the tank MGs. Pat replied he feared the Panzershrek, which also fired 12 inches. Marc said that wasn't true -- the maximum range of the Panzershrek is actually 4 inches.

Doh!

Well, to be fair, I didn't know the range either, but I thought panzerfausts (included in every infantry stand) fired only 1 or 2 inches, so a 'shrek might be a bit better -- like out to 6 inches (rifle fire range). As I noted, *CD* range was four inches.

However, Pat was wise not to race down the road around the hill. Rich had a 75mm AT gun hidden in the woods at the far side of the hill, just waiting for a Sherman to wander into range.

Oh, and one of the German companies at the rear of the hill was a fake.

Once again, a scrappy little fight that posed a new challenge for me, in part on the tactical level, and in part on the rules level. I feel I am getting familiar with more of the nuances, historical and bizarre, of the rules. Nothin' new in wargaming, eh?

Thanks Marc for hosting.

I hummed a tune as I left the table:

I'm no fool,
No siree.
I'm going to flee Hill One-Oh-Three.
And next time use artillery,
'Cause I'm no fool.



Medieval Germans vs SubSaharan Malians: ADLG

by Russ Lockwood

Dennis wanted a tune-up game before heading to the *Art de l'Guerre (ADLG)* tournament at Kozcon and needed a highly skilled sparring partner. Alas, all he had was me. He'd have a better game against a ChatBot. Then again, it might very well make up rules -- early artificial intelligence programs often fail to distinguish fact from fiction.

Nonetheless, we set up a game and he gave me Medieval Germans: lots of knights, pike, and spear. He took an army from Mali: lots of camels, shooty light horse, and some more archers.

Accessing Database...

My brain went beep, boop, blaaaaah. A blue screen of death washed over me. I have faced his camel armies before and they are killers. Think not? A camel vs knight is an even-up roll. That's right, armor-clad knights are worth 3 in melee combat and loincloth lads on camels are worth 2, but subtract 1 from enemy mounted for horse panic. Ergo: 2 vs 2. Add in brush and/or sand dunes offset knight armor.

Now, before you start forming square like at Arsuf or Victorian British colonial armies, understand he had 11 shooty stands to my three.

So, to recap. He has superior mobility and firepower and even up staying power. Uh-huh. But don't give up hope...Allan used this army to grind Dennis to a draw. A draw?



Terrain

Terrain is purposely picked but randomly placed. I wanted to pick clear areas, but Dennis said that wasn't an option. The closest I could get was a gentle hill. It showed up on his side of the battlefield -- he put an ambush marker on it, which meant a free move for a number of his units to the middle of the board.

My spear charge uphill against the ambush archers. The camels (upper right corner) await their charge.



I was able to abracadabra poof away one of his brush, but the sand dunes were front and center on my left. A "plantation" was between the dune and the board edge. His remaining brush was to my right.

Line 'Em Up

I stuck the pike between my camp and the sand dunes. I placed the knights in the center. I put the spear on the right.

Dennis placed his light horse and heavy horse against my knights. His (ambush) archers and his camels against my spear.

A word on the "spear" stands. Yes, Dennis did say they were spear. However, the actual front rank of figures on the stand were halberdiers and the back rank longbowmen. I figured he just misspoke. I also figured the longbow could outrange the enemy bow.

Silly me. Both ranks were spear -- Dennis didn't have spear figures and used what he had. I learned that nuance the first time I tried to shoot. An AI-controlled German army would use the figures provided. Alas, I couldn't.

It Didn't Take Long

It was predictable. My pike did little except get punctured by arrows, which I was able to shrug off about half the time. My knights charged, but the shooty light horse (which hit nothing) evaded multiple times. My spear attempted to secure the flank of the knights and attacked the ambush archers uphill, which held out long enough for the camels to swing around my flank and roll it up.

Game over 21 (my break point) to 6.

The almost end of the game. The end saw all my units in this photo eliminated.



ADLG Nuances

When a unit charges a light unit, as his camel charged my skirmisher, the light unit evaded. However, unlike most rules sets, in *ADLG* if that charging unit "contacts" a corner of an adjacent light, that light must evade too (or accept melee). Boop. Beep. Parameters exceed memory status.

Even better, if a unit turns 90 degrees to hit an enemy flank, as long as the end position of the stand fits on the flank, all's well. It doesn't wheel. It just turns 90 degrees so that the long side of the stand instantly replaces the short side of the stand, ignoring how front corners actually would get to places. Boop. Beep. DLL access denied.

If You Only Learned More...

I know. Plenty of gamers play *ADLG*. I always stop by the tournament area at the conventions to see what's going on. I always read Phil's photo-heavy recap, which always contains some amusing events as the Tree of Woe gets watered with fallen lead.

But *ADLG* has too many "nuances" for me. The best I can hope for is to cause Dennis to think a little about some rule or another. Every once in a while, I can offer up a conundrum and perhaps do something out of the box because I don't fully understand all the rules.

I am quite good at realizing the point at which my army's royally screwed. If I was in a tournament, it was about turn 2 when I learned my spear had no longbows and my pike was isolated. My best option at that point was to say "I'm thinking" and not move a stand for the next 2.5 hours. There's a draw. And that's better than a blow-out loss. You'd go up in the international standings.

What, you say? That is unacceptable on the tabletop fields? A cad's way out? Downright dishonorable? Nonsense! All's fair in love and tabletop tournaments. I don't see no chess clock.*

Didn't you learn anything about no-win situations from the Kobayashi Maru simulation?

Boop. Beep.

* Actually, tournament rules require at least 7 turns. The umpire can order 5-minute turns if necessary to speed things up.

Steve's Game Day: *Space Base* and *Quacks of Quedlinburg*

By Daniel Burkley

Steve hosts a “Game Day” annually, although it may not always been in the same month as the year before. A Game Day is usually an event where those that come bring one or more games they would like to play. One or more game sessions can start at any time among those in attendance with no set schedule and grabbing refreshments or dinner as is convenient.

I arrived a little after the 10:30 am start time, and there were already five players that arrived ahead of me. I brought five games with me: *Escape from Colditz*, *Guerra Civil Española*, *M.U.L.E.*, *Nations*, *The Lord of the Rings* (cooperative game with all players on the same side). It was raining, so I only brought snacks inside, figuring I could go out later to bring in a game – but it turned out I didn't have to. All the games I played or witnessed were new to me. I especially enjoy the first time I play a good game because I like to play intuitively and see how that plays out.

Space Base: AEG 2018

This clever game was introduced in 2018 by AEG and has several expansions for it. Each player controls a fleet of 12 ships to try and exploit space exploration and trade better than your opponents. Players roll 2d6 (similar to *Catan*) and collect Credits, Income, or Victory Points (VPs).

Eight turns into Space Base. Early turns move fast, but options expand quite a bit later on. I just purchased a Colony (yellow card). Steve, the hostest with the mostest, is at right. Photo by Dan.

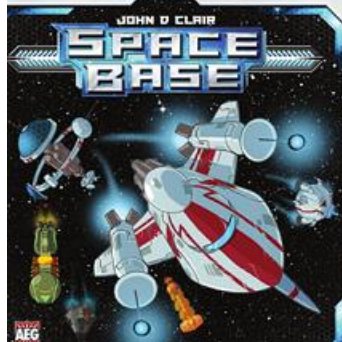
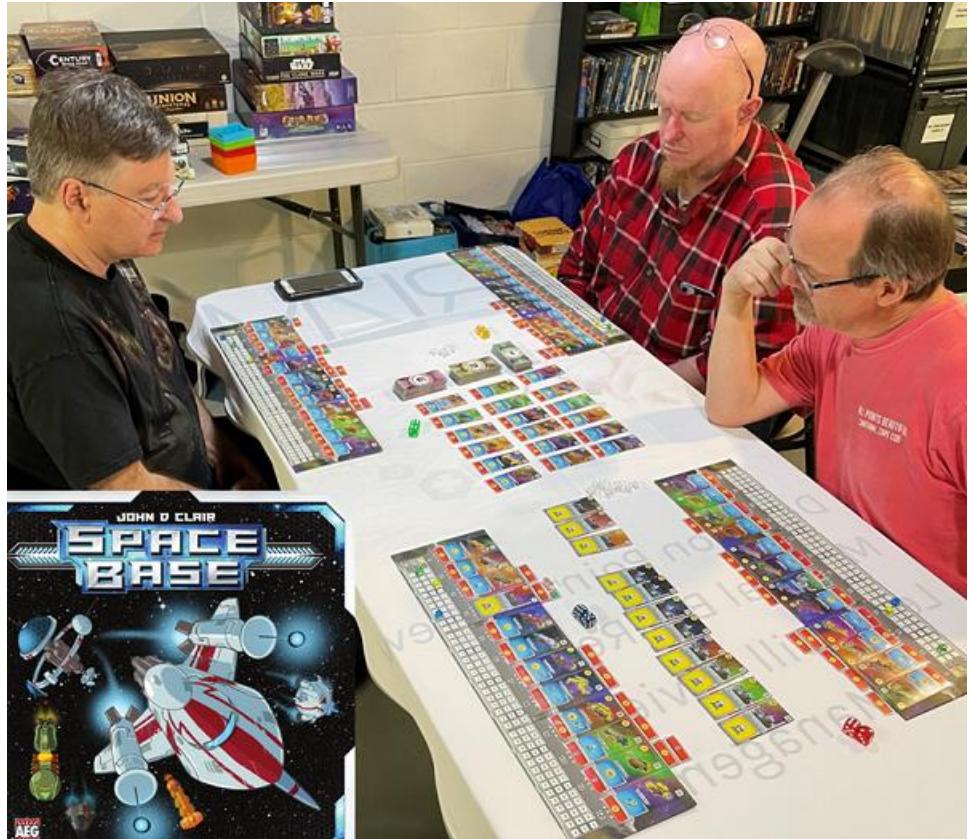
A display board is provided to allow all 12 ships to be displayed in slots from 1 to 12.

A player can purchase a new ship to replace an existing one, but instead of discarding the ship being replaced, it is inverted and tucked under your play mat so its red strip at the bottom is displayed, which then provides a resource during other players' turns if that slot's number is rolled and activated.

Each ship has a number it activates on (upper right), but the blue section of the ship only activates for the player rolling the dice. For other players, the section in red activates (but only if the ship had been “replaced” and inverted, with the red section displayed on top).

A player starts his turn rolling 2d6, announcing each number rolled on each d6. **All** players decide how they want to use the roll: either as two individual numbers are the combined total number.

Your starting fleet of 12 ships. Photo by Dan.



After all players have decided how to use the roll and collected their resources, the active player decides if he wants to purchase anything (usually a new ship or a colony) from what is available.

A display of 18 new ships in three tiers (reminding me of *Splendor*) is displayed for all players, with Tier one being the least expensive and Tier three the most expensive. The active player is allowed **one** purchase and any unspent credits are lost (with certain ships permitting exceptions to the rule), but the player collects new income at the end of his turn.

While collecting VPs is the ultimate goal, each player has to decide how he will invest in his fleet to increase his ability to expand and garner more resources that gets him to his goal the fastest. The VP lead can (and will) shift back and forth. Rounds will start to take longer as player's gain greater amounts of credits and try to figure out how to spend them among the 18 ships and 12 Colonies available for purchase. Some will be too expensive to purchase, but the bigger the "purse" the more "window shopping" there is.

The game ends when a player reaches a specific victory point total, but the round is completed before assessing final victory. My selection of ships didn't reward me enough among the dice rolled during the game, coming in third. Acquiring ships at slots 1 through 6 is a bit of a guarantee that you'll collect something every roll – but some of those higher numbered ships offer some very tempting rewards.

The Quacks of Quedlinburg: Northstar Games 2018

When I first sat down and Steve placed the play mat in front of me, I thought it was a game about making a casserole! Then it dawned on me that I *had* heard of this game, but never played it.

Hmmm. Maybe BGG? Or perhaps because I wrote up a game recap of this last year. See the 06/29/2022 AAR. – RL

This is a game that offers a lot of visual effects ("eye candy" I believe they call it), especially if you pick up all the customized pieces offered to "pimp up" your game.

Magician Steve (left) considers what happens if their potions go boom. Photo by Dan.



The game is 9 turns long. Players attempt to make "potions" from "ingredients" they start with and purchase during the game, placing all the "ingredients" in a bag.

The customized ingredients are plastic disc-shaped pieces in a variety of colors. Each "ingredient" has its own game effects (explained by "Recipe books" or "Alchemy books").

The recipe books. Photo by Dan.

Play is simultaneous with each player pulling an "ingredient" out one at a time and placing on the display mat, starting from where the droplet marker starts. The white ingredients are the key triggers when a player **MUST** stop, but each



player may decide to stop before this trigger event happens: If the white ingredients placed on the mat ever exceed 7 points, you have an Explosion and *must stop* placing any more ingredients.

Cauldron of points. Photo by Dan.

After all players have stopped adding ingredients to their “potion,” each announces their progress, which is the first uncovered space beyond where their last ingredient was placed. The larger number represents the points you can spend on buying new ingredients and the smaller number in the box represents Victory Points (VPs). If you had an explosion, you can claim only one of these values. Those players that stopped voluntarily gain both values.

The player having the furthest progress rolls a Reward die and gains either an ingredient, ruby, VP, or advances the droplet one space (allowing that player to start further ahead on the track in following turns).

When purchasing, a player may only buy a maximum of two new ingredients. Familiarity with what each ingredient does will give the player insight into what game strategy they want to pursue. Depending on what you have available to spend, this *can* be the most time-consuming part of the game. I started my strategy by purchasing one black ingredient and then a second on Turn 2. This allowed me to advance my droplet each turn and pick up a ruby -- rubies can be used to also advance the droplet. I purchased a violet ingredient on Turn 3 that also grants some bonus VPs if it gets played (and strangely enough, no one else ever purchased a violet ingredient).

I was able to figure out a winning strategy from the start, tying for the lead on Turn 1 and taking the lead and extending it each turn. I was fortunate during play, never reaching an explosion and always getting out at least one black and one violet ingredient to gain those bonuses each turn.

An interesting game-balancing effect is the “Rat-tail” segment: After scoring, players with lower scores than the VP leader count the number of Rat-tails between the leader and their position. The Rat-tail marker is then used to advance that number of spaces beyond the droplet, giving each non-leading player a temporary advantage the following turn.

Corner of the VP chart, rat-tails included. Photo by Dan.

Great Time

I had a great time trying out these games that were new to me and I would play each again (and might pick up *Space Base* for myself). Thank you for hosting, Steve! He ended up with about 12 players visiting by the time I left at 3:20 PM (11 whom I met for the first time), so that seemed like a well-attended event to me.

Steve ultimately had about 20 gamers over and sadly, a sequence of events negated my plans to attend. Sigh. -- RL



Frontier Rumble: *Song of Drums and Tomahawks*

By Russ Lockwood

This French and Indian War skirmish set of rules uses from one to three d6s to determine how many actions (Move, Load, Fire, etc.) a figure can perform. The player chooses how many to roll and each roll of 4+ generates an action.

L'Dennis advances into the woods.

The wrinkle is that if you roll two or more non-actions (i.e. 1 - 3), your turn is over and your opponent decides how many dice to roll.

Think about it. If you always roll 1d6, you will never roll two or more non-actions. Your figure will have a 50-50 chance of doing something, but you'll always be able to roll for the next figure in your command.

If you roll 2d6, and if my off-the-cuff math is right (shaky, that), you have about a 25% chance of rolling two non-actions, a 25% chance of rolling two actions, and a 50% chance of one action.

If you roll 3d6, well, my math skills don't trend that high to determine the percentages of rolling zero, one, two, or three actions (or non-actions).

The rest of the firing and melee rules are easy to understand, with opposing die rolls and the difference being the damage level. Movement depends on whether crawling, walking, or running.



British Rangers vs French

By die roll, I had the British Rangers while Dennis had the French. I rolled 3d6 for all of my first turn and was rewarded with just about all my half dozen figures getting two or more actions.

One lad rolled three 6s, which is a 1 in 216 chance (that much math I know). I said he deserved an extra action. And then I opined that three 1s should cause the figure to fall on his face or cause an accidental discharge of the musket. Dennis immediately growled that I should just play the rules before I change them.

The Doors

In any case, the objective was the house.

When one of my lads reached the door, I had to roll a 5 or 6 to open the door. Whaddaya mean I need to roll to open the door? It's a frontier door. Lift the latch and enter.

Nope, I need a 5 or 6, which I failed to roll. Obviously, my lad was a graduate of the Midvale School for the Gifted. He kept pushing down on the latch instead of lifting.

Not that Dennis did any better. He failed his latch lift roll, too. Obviously a graduate of the Ecole d'Gifted.

Wait a second! If both doors are locked, who locked 'em and how did he or she leave? Through the window?

Well, I finally got in, but the next lad rolled two non-actions, letting Dennis get in. We



tried the melee rules. Basically the same as the firing rules: roll 1d6, add modifiers, compare totals and determine effect. In this case, I was forced out.

Good thing I left the door open.

Firefight

Dennis typically rolled 2d6 for all but the last figure, which rolled 3d6. I started to see the odds in that as my 3d6 rolls soon misfired more than generated actions. The methodical French peppered my lads.

By that time, I was down two men and soon a third. I fled the area.

Actions vs Dice

On the one hand, rolling for actions violates Russ' Rule number 1. On the other hand, you can at least nudge the odds by determining how many dice to roll. You can't fail with 1d6, but you may not get an action. It's a 25% chance of nothin' doing and ending your turn with 2d6, but 75% odds say you'll get at least one action. And 3d6 is when you're getting a little desperate or it's early enough not to matter.

There's more to all this than our initial foray, such as figures can be given traits that alter modifiers up or down. There's also a point system. I believe a British Ranger was about 40 points. Daniel Boone was a whopping 150 or so points. So, you can have dramatically different capabilities for each figure.

Song of Drums and Tomahawks is an interesting little game.

Now, about those triple 6s and triple 1s effects...

6th Armored Drive In Brittany: Leave a Message

by Russ Lockwood

Before the end of the first week in August, the 6th Armored Division was about 150 miles away from the VIII corps headquarters in Avranches, Corp commander Major General Troy H. Middleton felt obliged to advise Patton he had practically no control and little knowledge of Grow's activities. "This headquarters," he wrote Patton, "has made repeated attempts to establish contact without success."

With units stretched over a vast area and moving rapidly, modern communications broke down. It was impossible to install or maintain telephone wires over such distances. High-powered, long-distance radios proved unsatisfactory. As many as eight different transmitters working on the assigned corps frequency were often heard at the same time. With the corps radio net so jammed and signals so faint, a code group often had to be repeated six to ten times to insure accurate reception.

The commanders therefore turned to messengers who traveled by jeep. But this system was not foolproof. A round trip between corps and division took the better part of the day. Messengers were excellent targets for bypassed enemy groups and individual snipers in the far-reaching no man's land, and they had to have ingenuity, patience, and luck to get through. An enlisted man who often carried messages between the 6th Armored Division and the corps though unable to read or write or follow a map returned on one occasion after a two-day trip with a bullet in his back and two captured Germans on the hood of the jeep he was still driving.

--from *Duel for France 1944*, by Martin Blumenson, p163.



HMGs 2023 Board Election Results

by John Snead

The 2023 Election, administered by Vote-Now.com LLC under the guidance of the Election Committee, is complete. Vote-Now.com LLC provided the following information:

1,599 ballots - uniquely coded for security and confidentiality - were sent out on April 14th, 2023 to start the voting process. All votes had to be received at Vote-Now.com by midnight, June 5th to be counted.

Vote-Now.com received 446 completed ballots (27.9% of the ballots sent out).

Of the completed ballots received, 439 were electronic ballots and 7 were paper delivered by the USPS. One (1) additional member opted out of voting and is considered Abstaining.

<u>Votes</u>	<u>% of Votes</u>	<u>Candidate</u>	
287	64.5%	<u>Steve Boegemann</u>	Elected
287	64.5%	<u>Joby Miller</u>	Elected
257	57.8%	<u>Jim Stanton</u>	Elected
247	55.5%	<u>Frank Luberti</u>	Elected
220	49.4%	<u>Jon Lundberg</u>	Board Alternate
161	36.2%	<u>Michael DiBaggio</u>	
160	36.0%	<u>Eric Jacobson</u>	
83	18.7%	<u>Lee Gaddies</u>	

Game Review: *Desert Storm: The Hundred Hour War*

by Russ Lockwood

In April, a new wargame company, Accurate Simulations, contacted me and I inserted its press release about its very first game release into the April AAR (see the 4/22/2023 AAR). They followed up and sent me a copy of the game, *Desert Storm: The Hundred Hours War*, so I set it up and gave it a go. I played this two-player game solo.



Components

I popped open the box to find one unmounted map (22x34 inches) that stretched from Saudi Arabia to Baghdad (Iraq), one countersheet of punch-out 9/16-inch counters of good thick stock (120 counters with rounded corners -- touche!), two decks of double-sided poker-size cards: 30 cards for the Coalition and 30 cards for the Iraqis, one 32-page rulebook, and one six-sided die.

Set up was almost smooth -- a couple of counters were different from the rules.

For example: The rules show four A-10 counters, but the countersheet had three A-10s and an AC130. I used all four counters. The swap of an AC-130 for an A-10 was a last minute production change.

One unit showed M-60s on the counter, but AMX-30s in the rules. The rules noted 10 Republican Guard units, but only nine were in the countersheet -- specifically, Saddam's Republican Guard was missing.

Iraqi set up, although Kuwait City is just off photo at lower right corner.



Designer Eric noted:

The SRG (Saddam's Republican Guard) was a sort of Praetorian guard unit meant to protect Saddam personally (in Baghdad). Ultimately (a last minute change), I decided to pull it because Iraqi players were using it as a front-line unit. After all, players aren't in any actual danger, so they don't need it to protect themselves. They'd send the SRG off to the front -- something Saddam would never have done in reality.

Bah! Wargamers! Give 'em a big, well-equipped unit and they'll use it where they want.

Close up of Iraqi set up in Kuwait and a sample card. The suit indicates the category. This Iraqi card shows that on a die roll of 1-5, the Iraqi player picks up a point in the economic category.

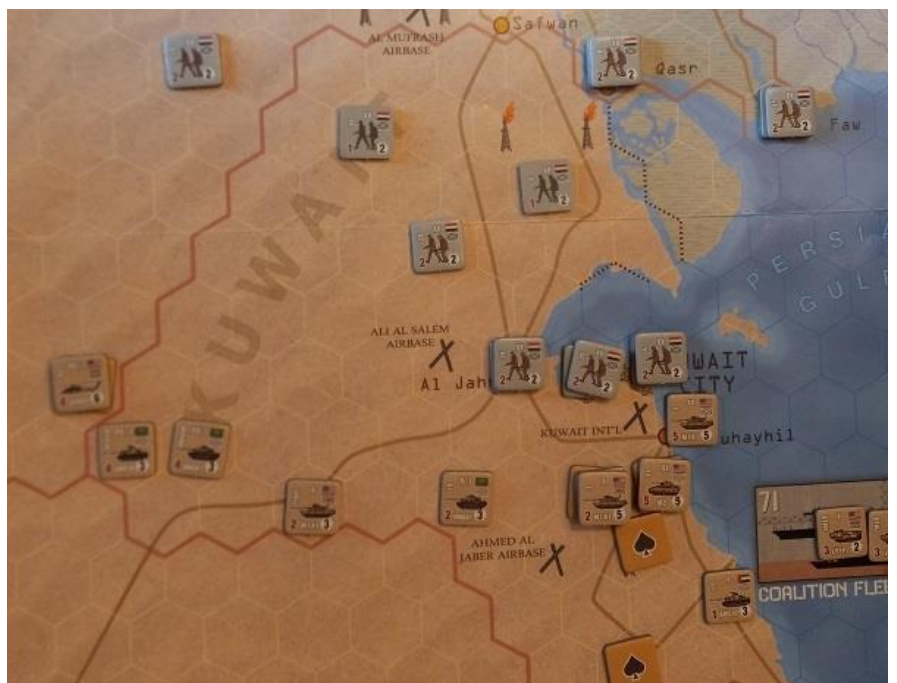
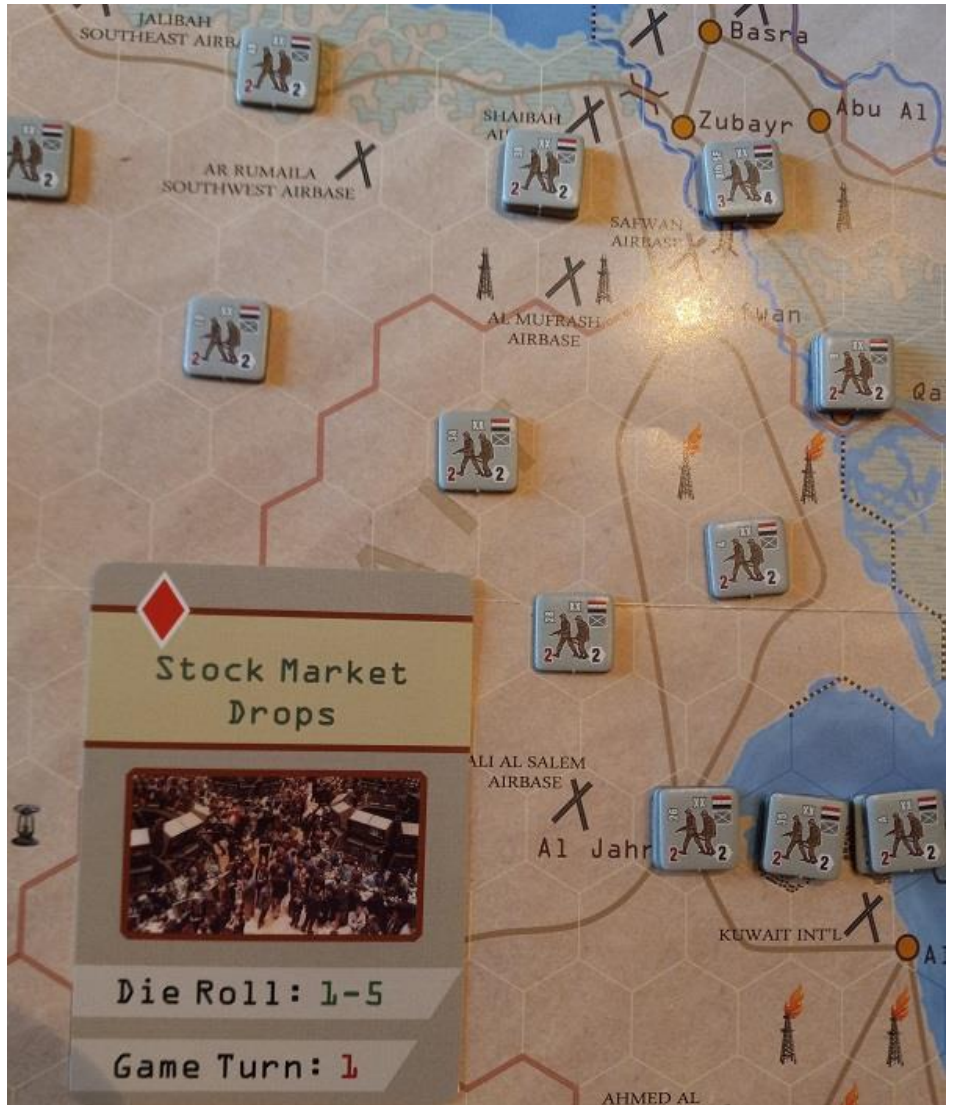
As for the counter wobbles, I'm the last person who should toss stones, or pebbles, or notes. Wargames contain many different moving parts and wobbles creep in. I've seen 'em happen to me when doing development work for *Against the Odds* magazine games. It seems no matter how much you strive for production perfection, something creeps in. You just bang your head against the wall, or at least I do, and hope to clarify with errata.

End of Turn 1. The Coalition advances out of Saudi Arabia towards Kuwait City. The spades (Moral category) indicate captured hexes (and one point in the Moral category for the Coalition). The Marines wait (naval box at right) for their moment to land.

One odd point about the map:
No hex numbers.

Designer Eric noted:

I have been waiting for someone to ask that question! The simple reason is that the game is playable in a few hours, so any need to



record locations seemed mostly unnecessary (rather than obscure the artwork on the map with a bunch of hex numbers).

Welllll...OK. Unless you play by old school e-mail. I suspect you don't need hex numbers for Vassal style gaming.

End of the Iraqi half of Turn 3. Note that Kuwait City held out on Turn 2.

Features and Functions

I would agree with designer Eric that *Desert Storm* is a low-complexity game. Map scale is 10 miles/hex, units are divisions, brigades, and some battalions, with individual air groups. Playing time is rated at four hours, although my game took me five hours, albeit with consulting the rules as I played.

Set up is free form, with Iraqi forces pretty much anywhere on the map and then Coalition forces setting up in Saudi Arabia.

Not knowing how the game played, I set up with some Iraqi forces in Kuwait City and environs and most of the Iraqi Army with a defense in depth all the way back to Baghdad.

Still not knowing how the game played, I set up most Coalition forces near Kuwait, with a handful of units on the far left flank as the 'Left Hook.' All the Coalition air was placed on the one "airfield" representing all the airbases in Saudi Arabia except for the naval air that went into the Naval box -- along with two Marine units.

The Coalition 'Left Hook' advances on Turn 4, but a line of Iraqi units awaits them.

Movement and Combat

Movement is wargames standard with units expending 1 MP for a desert (clear) hex, 1/2 along a road, and varying number of MPs for other terrain or to cross streams and rivers. Most Iraqi foot units are only 2 MP and mechanized units are 3, 4, or 5 MPs. One Coalition airmobile unit is 6 MPs, and the other is a whopping 9 MPs. I put the faster of the two out on the 'Left Hook' force.

Combat is a simultaneous. Each unit rolls to hit based on its combat strength, with modifiers based on the target's hex terrain. One hit flips a full-strength unit to its reverse, reduced side, or if already on its reduced side, eliminates it. Air combat and ground combat use the same mechanic, although air units can bomb ground units using a different combat factor from air-to-air combat.

Of note is that each unit attacks individually. You never total the combat factors of multiple units. As all units have front and reverse (step loss) sides, two attacking units can eliminate a defending unit with two hits.

The defender gets a straight-up 'defense roll' per attack. As this is simultaneous, it is possible that a reduced side attack vs a reduced side defense might eliminate each other.



There is no Defender Retreat or Attacker Advance as a result of combat. There is a defender reaction to an attack to retreat 1d6 hexes (if it lives) instead of its 'defense roll.'

The game contains an Advance Phase where the phasing player can move all units one hex regardless of terrain costs. This is quite helpful in crossing rivers with low MP units.

With Kuwait liberated, the Coalition's Main Force pushes into Iraq in search of prime category point hexes, such as the oil derricks (Economic) and Scuds (Military). The Marines landed and captured Iraqi territory. Meanwhile, Coalition units swing around the marches. A few Iraqi units await their fate.

The Cards and Victory

I was wondering about the Iraqi victory conditions. I figured the Coalition had to liberate Kuwait and kill off some Iraqi units. Er, close, but not exactly.

Victory depends on five categories (Achievements – Political, Moral, Diplomatic, Military, and Economic). After the 10th turn, the player with a lead in three of the five categories wins.

And herein lays a path for Iraqi victory. The cards provide points in various categories -- pick a card and roll well, and you get one point in a specific category. Great rolling for these "events" can make up for battlefield woes.

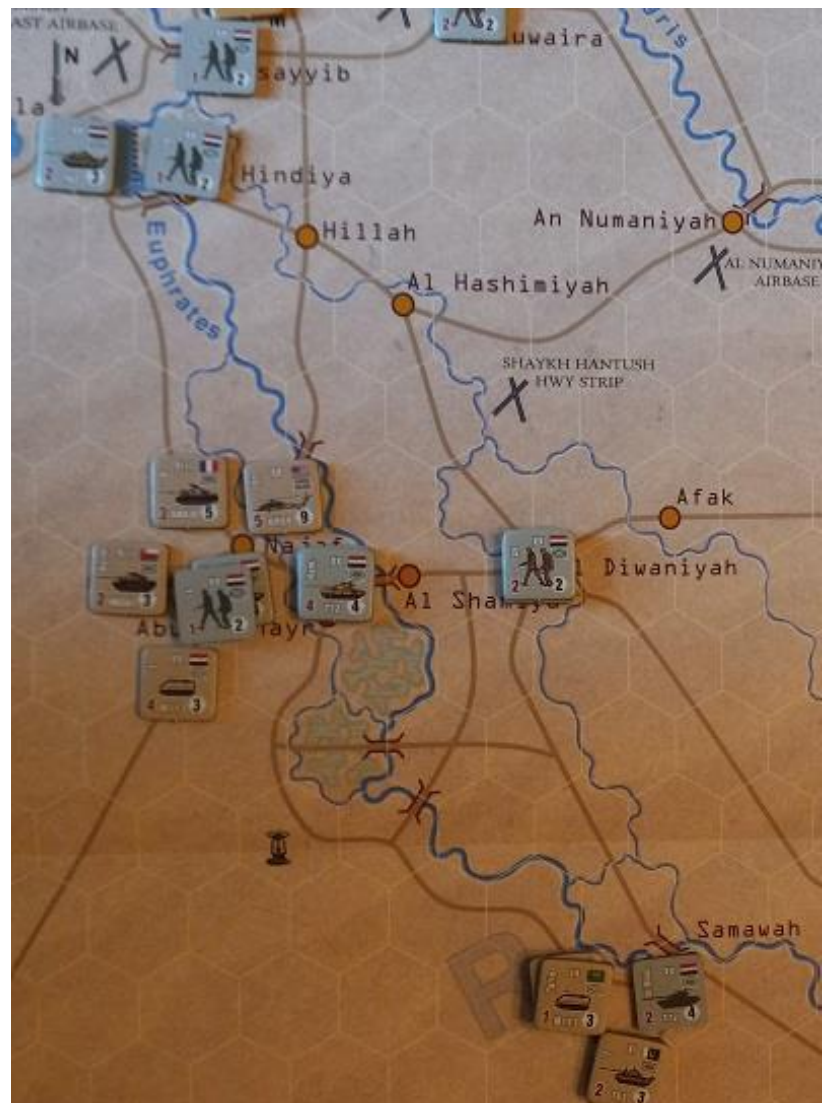
Exceptionally clever bit, that -- and a great piece of eye candy photography on each of the cards.

Game On: Air War Priority

The way I set up the Iraqi ground units, Coalition ground units cannot reach 'em on the first turn. But you can bomb 'em and the Coalition starts with an edge in aircraft that gets a whole lot larger on Turn 3.

At the end of Turn 5, the Coalition 'Left Hook' drives deep into Iraq. Baghdad is not too far off top of photo.

The rules seemed a wee bit vague about the non-phasing player launching intercept missions. My thought was that if the Coalition wanted to limit the Iraqi air force, it assigned a fighter unit to bomb each Iraqi air unit. That way, if it lifts off for interception, the fight is over its base. The rules permit interception, but didn't specifically say what happened if that air unit that wanted to



intercept was being attacked.

To my mind, if the aircraft wanted to emerge from hardened shelters, they had to engage the unit or units bombing it.

Not so, says designer Eric:

The Iraqi aircraft can intercept any Coalition air units they want (not just those that flew to their airbase). Coalition air units don't "pin" Iraqi air units to their airbase -- they're assumed to be in the air already...that is, IF the Iraqi player wants to fly...which he may not want to do if there's nothing but F-15's and F-16's up in the air on the first turn or two.

Alas, bombers like B-52s are great at bombing things, but not so much at dogfighting. If the Iraqi air unit can intercept any unit anywhere on the board, regardless of fighters over the airbase, those are the first ones I'd go after. The flip side is that the Coalition can escort bombers with fighters to try and tempt the Iraqi player to intercept.

As designer Eric noted:

Well the game is probably a little over-generous with the Iraqi air force (to give them something to do, however briefly), so I wanted the dilemma to persist that the Iraqi player either has to fight and risk getting shot down or sit there and get bombed (what happened historically for the most part). There's actually no right answer since die rolls are unpredictable.

Note that in air-to-air combat, such as would occur during intercepts, the owning player decides which units take a hit. If the Coalition escorts a bomber with a fighter (stacking is maximum two air units per hex) and the Iraqi player intercepts with a MiG-25 (5 combat) and a MiG-21 (1 combat) vs a B-52 (0 combat) and F-16 (6 combat), the Iraqi player would use the MiG-21 as the damage absorbing unit in the event of a Coalition hit. Likewise, if both MiGs, hit, the Coalition player decides how to allocate the two step losses. The bottom line is that the Coalition player has to pay attention for the first few turns. After the IAF is gone, the bombers only have to watch out for the 1-in-6 AA hit.

By the end of my game, the Coalition lost seven air units eliminated and 10 more that lost a step.

Almost Right

So, my initial game was flawed as I used a Coalition fighter to "pin" an Iraqi fighter. I also only used one Coalition fighter per pin, so it gave the Iraqis more chances to survive the Coalition aircraft.

My Iraqi air force lasted until Turn 4, but I was also using the Coalition air force to bomb on turn 1. Of course, every bomber had a 1 in 6 chance of losing a step from AA. And each lost step added a point to the Iraqi tally in one of the victory categories.

Not to beat the Iraqi Air Force topic to death, but as designer Eric noted:

The Coalition player can burn off two turns flying *nothing but* F-15s and F-16s to force the Iraqi air force into an unenviable position (i.e., it's hardly better to dogfight than to just sit there and be bombed). But, forcing the Coalition to burn off two turns can allow the Iraqis to possibly win the game by running out the clock, so the dilemma behind that choice is that the Coalition player can keep his bombers back until after the Iraqi air force has been destroyed. Ah, but the Coalition giving up those two turns can make it a tight game. These are the ways that the game actually gives the Iraqi side a chance to win when they were otherwise completely outclassed historically.

I must say, holding back the bombers until Turn 3 would make for a tighter Coalition timetable. Indeed, if the Coalition suffered more inept rolls like I did with the F/A-18 fighters... I don't know why, but the F/A-18s had a tough day as their dice turned ice cold.

Liberating Kuwait

I committed most of the Coalition ground units to liberate Kuwait City. It's a tough nut to crack and take if defended stoutly and I stuffed Iraqi infantry and tanks into the city streets. The Coalition attacked on Turn 2 and only took it on Turn 4. Oh, I filtered units around it, but if the Iraqis put a few more units along the line, and if these units survive bombing attacks, it might take half a game to recapture Kuwait.

There is no Supply phase, so cut off units fight without penalty.

I also (incorrectly) only used one air unit per hex to bomb. Players are allowed to use two air units for bombing in the same hex. That may have gotten some blocking units eliminated a turn earlier, albeit while leaving other units intact.

The Iraqi 38th Infantry Division at Quernah defies the odds and holds out as a traffic jam forms behind the lead Coalition units. The outflanking force infiltrates across the river. End of Turn 6.

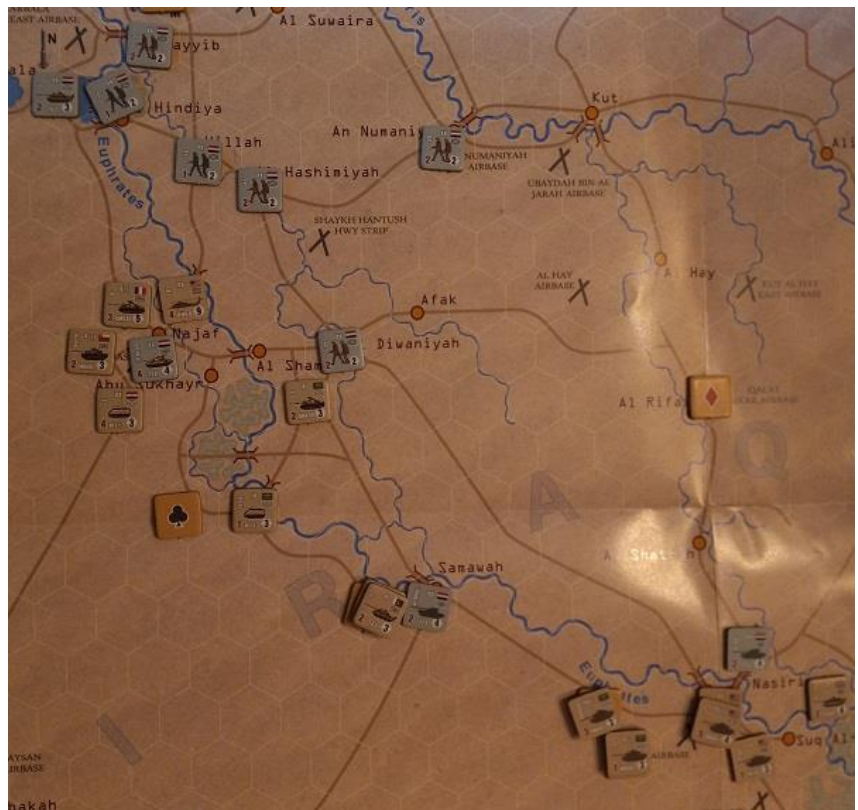
Ground Drive

The left hook waddled forward. I mostly had 3 MP units, so progress was somewhat slow. I added a couple more units on Turn 2, and aided by bombing, cleared the roads heading into Iraq.

The main drive swerved around Kuwait City and headed up the Euphrates River. Swampy chokepoints funneled the attacks, so I sent units towards the center of the map to outflank the defense and perhaps exert pressure along with the left hook.

By the end of Turn 6, the main drive had stalled at the chokiest of choke points at Qurnah (Iraq). For the Iraqis, the 38th Infantry Division that held out in the town proved to be almost immortal. Bombing didn't touch it. Ground assaults across the river often failed. On Turns 6 and 7, the 38th lived a charmed life until it didn't. Saddam must have given out some medals for that stand!

End of Turn 6. The 'Left Hook' is stymied at Najaf, but is pressing forward in the center. The Iraqis form a last-stand line.



Meanwhile, the ground force on the left moved forward with the idea of cutting off any Iraqi units still in the middle of the map. There were not many, but a nice Iraqi line stared down the 'Left Hook.'

The Republican Guard set up to defend important crossroads, but bombing and ground assault swept them aside.

The Coalition forces converged on Baghdad.

Last Turn: Turn 10

At this point, Iraq had leads in two categories and the Coalition had leads in two categories. In the fifth and deciding category, the Iraqis had a one point advantage.

Here's where the cards came in. Both sides selected cards to play in this fifth and decisive category. The Coalition got luckier and tied the score.

The Iraqi's tried to set up a defense, but bombing and a Coalition swerve around the porous line ended up taking two Baghdad hexes at the end of Turn 10, giving two more points to the Coalition. It was a squeaker of a victory. Close first try!

Saddam sure wishes he had his 'Praetorian Guard' unit. The Coalition units close in on Baghdad..and ending positions.

Game Rule Lessons

I didn't use the air interception rules correctly, but then again, I only used one fighter to "pin" one Iraqi aircraft. Pairing two high-powered Coalition fighters should obliterate the Iraqi AF in two or three turns, not the four I took.

That said, the bombers would have stayed put, leaving the ground war to the ground troops. Only after killing off the Iraqi AF can the bombers stay safe from air-to-air combat.

I also blew the bombing rule. You can indeed place two bombers atop one target -- I only used a maximum of one per target. That may have helped eliminate Iraqi ground units earlier.

I also completely forgot to use the rule of village militia that ambush the first Coalition unit to enter a village! Iraq has a lot of villages. Given the Coalition losses from AA fire, an equivalent in ground ambushes would slow down the Coalition.

By the end of my game, the Coalition lost two ground units eliminated and a dozen or so that lost a step. You can bet that number would increase with the militia ambush rule in effect.

Not too bad of a mangling of the rules...

The only rule that doesn't make sense to me is the air interception rule. I suppose the Iraqi fighters could be up and alert and flee the oncoming Coalition air, perhaps even into position to attack bomber packets elsewhere, but it doesn't seem to ring right, especially if you can't use AWACS capability to zero in free hunting fighters. Then again, I'm not a modern buff...

And I would be remiss not to mention that my grognard eyes wished for larger fonts. I prefer smaller images and larger numbers.

Enjoyed It

Any time a game comes down to the last turn right out of the box, before you learn all the key hexes and key cards, that's a good game.

It was indeed simple enough to learn for the most part.

I did like the dilemma of deciding whether to use the Coalition air for ground support or to bomb key industries. Besides nailing the Iraqi Air Force, the air can go either way. I usually split it with varying degrees of success.

The cards serve as little bits of chaos intruding into your well-oiled, lean mean fighting machine. You don't lose anything, per se, but good rolls help you.

Overall, *Desert Storm* offered an excellent first go with just the right complexity level. I look forward to future games with live opponents.

Enjoyed it.



Desert Storm Air War: Perspectives and Prospects 10 Years Later

Lecture by Col. John A. Warden III at Connections 2002 Conference

By Russ Lockwood

At the Connections 2002 Conference at Maxwell Air Force Base, I attended a number of lectures, including this one. Here's my write-up of his lecture. I thought you might find it interesting after reading the review of Desert Storm. This comes from the MagWeb archives.

Warden's other book, *Air Campaigns*, is required reading if you intend to comprehend the use of air power. His efforts in plotting and planning the air war during the Gulf War directly impacted the success of Coalition forces, saved lives, and indirectly contributed to the collapse of the Communist state in Russia. You hate to use the phrase "living legend," but Warden matches the hype when it comes to air power.

Goodbye Clauswitz?

It is Warden's belief that we have the technological and intellectual capabilities to reduce the unknowns of war "close to zero." Superior tactics do not guarantee success, for example, in Vietnam the US won the vast majority of tactical battles but lost the war. However, superior strategy combined with superior tactics do, for example, the Wintel personal computer systems' idea of open software architecture versus Apple's proprietary strategy.

Good strategy requires four good elements: where you'd like to end up, the application of resources to get there, defining and understanding what opposes you and your resources, and a plan for termination (end strategy).

"War is about creating a future."

The idea is to design your future without trying to predict it--the difference is that you concentrate on a strategic focus and use your effort to create it rather than reacting to outside events.

He specifically points to an environment where new equipment is available, but needs to be deployed in a new way--not just do the same old job. For example, in WWII, to obtain 90% precision on a target required 1000 sorties dropping 9000 bombs--most creating craters, not hits. But today, with precision munitions, that same 90% effectiveness can be accomplished by one F-117 dropping a single bomb. You don't send 1000 stealth fighters or bombers to hit one target. We had to learn to manage hits, not misses -- and that's a veritable revolution in air campaign strategy, because we have to understand that "craters are misses."

As you ponder the future picture, don't be surprised if you get it. In the Gulf War, the goal was a stable Middle East, and as part of that Iraq had to be tossed out of Kuwait. Yet--and this is arguable--a stable Middle East required an intact Iraq, for if you destroyed Iraq, a new Iraqi government would by definition be unstable. At the time, political planners figured a 10-year period of stability before they had to do something else. Warden comment at the time: if the Coalition got 10 years of peace, it'd be lucky. Well, 10 years have passed and now the Coalition, or what's left of it, hasn't come up with a new strategy for the future.

We operated under certain precepts in the Gulf War to see that our strategy would fall into place. We made the central issue that the war was against Saddam Hussein and not the Iraqi people, that we wanted to minimize civilian damage so that the country could get back on its feet again after the war, minimize our on casualties, and fight asymmetrically--which is a fancy way to say we'll fight the war on our terms, using our strengths, and perhaps using unconventional approaches to eliminating enemy combat power.

Finally, as we craft the future, we need a "measurement of merit" to gauge the success of the strategy. For example, in Vietnam, tons of bombs and body counts were the measurements used to drive the entire US war effort. That was not particularly astute. In Iraq, we used electrical power as one measurement -- the longer it is off, the more effective the campaign.

However, Warden warned that this edges into effects-based measurement and away from straight quantitative analysis. Using the electricity example, Warden noted that Iraq contained about 200 targets. After 10 days of bombing, the Iraqi electrical system was for all intents and purposes shut down.

Yet, in an analysis by one of the Defense Department intelligence agencies, the campaign against Iraqi electricity was called a failure. When a member of Warden's staff called to ask the analyst why, the analyst replied that the Air Force had hit only 20 targets, and 10% is a failure. When it was pointed out that most of the electrical grid in the country (and 100% of the grid in important centers like Baghdad) as offline, the analyst said 10% was 10% and

nothing else mattered -- and then hung up on the staff officer. The point is that numbers alone do not tell the whole story and we must measure the effectiveness, not just the quantitative effect.

Target For Success

Iraq contained 200,000 potential targets, such as 750 aircraft, 200 support aircraft, AAA sites, radar installations, infrastructure, and so on. Obviously, a priority was established according weighting targets according to the importance of system effects. The key here is to define the enemy not as the traditional force-on-force mechanism, but as an interlocking system with "centers of gravity." A handful of targets in one center of gravity could have exponential effects on the enemy's ability to resist.

Warden defined five centers -- think of it as concentric rings one in the other. From the small inside ring (top priority and effects) to the large outer ring (lowest priority and effects), the five are:

Leadership (the brain: Saddam Hussein, the Ministers, etc)

Process (Electricity, Finance, Communications, Bioweapons R&D, etc)

Infrastructure (Roads, Highways, Bridges, Railroads, etc)

Population (by demographics: Shiites, Sunnies, clergy, ethnic minorities, etc)

Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Police)

Thus, there's more "return on investment" so to speak if you hit an individual leader in the leadership ring than in hitting a general of a division. These targets are hit in parallel to maximize damage to all systems, but priorities exist.

Warden noted that the air campaign in Serbia commenced without the planners of the Gulf War campaign and did not create such a system of centers of gravity. The 60-day Serbian campaign was originally designed for four days.

Campaign to Win

This is the nuts and bolts planning for the targets selected above. Again, parallel attacks on each system in a particular order take into account friendly orders of battle as well as enemy organization.

Finish With Finesse

All wars eventually end one way or another. You have to determine the exact exit point and how to terminate the campaign once you reach that point. Finally, you also must figure out how to reconstitute the five rings to bring about the future you defined in the beginning.

Cardinal Rule

"Plan in the open," Warden said emphatically. Usually, plans are done in a small, select group, the disseminated for implementation. However, if you open a plan up to more people, within reason, many of the lower level people will bring ingenuity to the table and point out practical pitfalls that may not occur to a small group. Furthermore, all these people, who have been in on the plan from day 1, understand all the information, eccentricities, and nuances of the plan because they have all gone through the process. These people will be in a better situation to help disseminate the plan because they are all experts who followed the elements that went into the plan as well as those elements that were kept out.

When he was planning the air campaign, he opened up the planning process to all in uniform within the Pentagon, getting up to 200 people involved. He notes that an optimum number would be about 50 people, because that is enough critical mass to answer all questions which come up or have the contacts to tap in order to answer such questions.

And as a corollary, always have a Red Team to play Devil's Advocate. If you get a team of smart people to pick a plan apart, you will not get surprised by a smart enemy.

Failures of the Gulf War

War planning failed on a number of items, according to Warden.

Strategic Psyops plan didn't capitalize on the prep work. We did a good job on the tactical front, such as dropping surrender leaflets on front-line Iraqi troops, but nothing went beyond the front lines. And he warned that psyops should never lie -- it always backfires in the long run because the lies are always found out.

Insufficient thought was given to war termination plans. We didn't coordinate very well on a whole range of issues.

Measuring the progress could have been better, although this tends to shade into effects-based analysis. The electricity example points out the attrition-war mentality still in operation instead of a newer measurement of how much air power affects the five enemy centers of gravity.

Conclusion

"We are at a point of revolution in warfare," Warden contended. "Current wargames teach the synthetic lessons of history, not how to win the next war." The next big jump in war simulations must take into account effects-based measurement of campaign operations, not just quantitative counts.

The Gulf War triggered two global events. First, it put the last nail in the Soviet coffin. Soviet planners realized that they had spent vast amounts of money on defense in the last ten years and that overnight, the US had wiped clean the investment with stellar military performance against Soviet-style equipment and doctrine.

Second, the US became a "hyperpower," roughly defined as a power of no equal on the globe. The defense budget increase for 2003 is greater than the entire defense budget of the next biggest ally (France).

And how does a hyperpower behave? That requires a new approach to military, diplomatic, and economic strategy.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Q: How can you hone skills by not refighting WWII?

A: Emphasize Force Planning and War Planning. You have to get the students to understand the architecture of forces and how they fight and interact. Once you get these core concepts down on a historical level, you ease the students into a more contemporary frame of mind. The concepts apply regardless of historical or contemporary situations.

Col. Matt McCaffrey, head of the USAF Air Wargaming College and the host of the conference, added that the simulations have to include effects-based modelling, not just attrition modelling. That is, include a way to measure the effects of a campaign, not just bean-counting the number of targets hit/captured/destroyed/etc.

Biography

Mr. John Warden - Colonel USAF (Ret), Airpower Strategist, Theorist, and Author (The Air Campaign). Col. Warden was the architect of the Instant Thunder Air Campaign Plan that developed into Desert Storm. His plan was credited by many with reducing Coalition casualties by roughly 30,000. Col. Warden's assignments included Chief of Checkmate of the Air Force strategy cell at the Pentagon and commander of the F-15 wing in Germany. His final assignment in the Air Force was to serve three years as the Commandant of the Air Command and Staff College during which time the school won national recognition for excellence.



Biding Time on Thebus: Brax - *Traveller* RPG

by Russ Lockwood



Thebus wasn't a bad spot to spend a few weeks waiting on spaceship repairs. While off the main trade route, it sat directly on a secondary route, so plenty of traders hit the port for business and pleasure.

The place boasted a large enough cross section of galactic sentience to generate a fair-sized, if secondary, underworld. Brax thought of it as a training academy for the big time. It also proved to be a good place for a little field work for his Private Eye Essentials course. He observed the efforts of the amateurs, but they all steered clear of him. He had come from the streets and knew all the looks. Some postures are just universal across species.

He turned down a passageway that morphed from gleaming Imperial entrances to upwardly mobile facades to plain storefronts. The double helix spiral staircase with the faux wrought-iron railings shouted government intervention. Brax maneuvered down the stairs, shifting his holstered laser pistol an inch closer to his draw hand.

Brax underwent a strange schism. He felt more relaxed in an underwarren that reminded him of his many foster homebases and yet needed heightened senses to avoid underworld entanglements. He was here for information, not a brawl.

He spotted a low-rent bar called The Sharpest Claw and gave it a proper sideways glance. It looked just reputable enough to be interesting and seedy enough to be inviting. Unlike most other places, the arched entrance sat back from the passageway with a roped off dining area that stretched across the front. A giant canopy covered the whole area.

Brax smiled. Barring a broken water or sewage pipe, diners don't need a canopy. But if you wanted to avoid direct observation by the starport cameras embedded in the ceilings, then a canopy made a lot of sense.

He nodded with professional admiration. The canopy sported special material that blocked all forms of imagery. Sound neutralizers embedded in posts kept outdoor conversations relatively muted and indoor conversations secret. Electronic jammers in surrounding border positions blocked comms and other signals. No weapon scanners meant a certain confidence in a location considered neutral by all.

He glanced over the diners. It was a healthy mix of human and alien muscle. Out here in the frontier, it was easier for aliens and humans to mix. Speciesists were soon dissuaded from blatant discrimination -- or were dead because of it.

The real action occurred inside. He sauntered through the arch, entered the bar, and halted at a sign in a dozen common languages that said, "Wait to be Seated or Bleeded." Plenty of things can kill a sentient being on the frontier, Brax mused. Bars like this could hold one or more of them. He waited.

A skinny Aslan walked over, followed by a rotund light security robot painted in a dizzying array of colors. Pop-art camouflage. He had heard of it, just didn't believe it could be effective. He'd have to do some homework for his coursework.

Brax forced his eyes to examine the robot. It took him a moment to locate the hint of a shotgun barrel as well as the half-dozen weakpoints. He didn't see any other weapons. Hmmm. Homework.

"Greetings, human," the Aslan said. For a cat, that was as pleasant as it got. They're usually so arrogant, they don't deign to speak first. Brax guessed commerce overcame ego. "Whose entourage are you with?"

Brax kept his face neutral despite an inclination to smile. Somewhere he read that a smile to an Aslan showed fangs and an invitation to fight. "My own."

The cat checked his e-list. "We have no 'myown' listed."

"Check again," Brax suggested. "This time, try Crimson Permanent Assurance Company."

The change was instantaneous. The Aslan didn't have to check any list. The underwarren learned about Haven status before the recipient did. "Of course. Welcome to The Sharpest Claw," he said, and then asked what type of seating Brax wanted. "Bar, table, booth, private, or VIP?"

"Bar is fine."

"This way." The cat padded around the sign and led Brax to the bar. The robot trailed the two of them. The cat gestured to any of the seats and the holo controls on the counter, then left with the robot in his wake.

Brax tapped out an order for a local beer and a spicy noodle dish. An Aslan bartender, twice the size of a typical Aslan cat, brought his beer. "Food will be up in a moment."

Brax took a sip. Not bad. "Thanks. Needed this."

"Tough hop?"

"You could say that. Pirates jumped us and we took considerable damage, but the pirates took more. At least we managed to capture a thousand tons of ships."

The only news that traveled faster than Haven status was pirate plunder. "You're part of the Crimson Company. Station's a bit abuzz about that. I hear you're really popular down at the docks. Lotta work."

"I imagine so," Brax agreed, watching a young Aslan bring his meal. "Did a fair bit of trading this way not too long ago, so we came back here to see what we can pick up. Pirates, apparently."

Brax twirled his fork, wrapping noodles around the tines. He shoved the mass into his mouth and washed it down with beer. "The noodles are quite good."

"Real cooks using real ingredients, not robots heating up pre-packaged goods. Makes a difference," the bartender explained.

"Sure does," Brax mumbled as he sipped his beer. "I wonder if the scow chow around here is as good as the real chow?"

"Hard to say," the Aslan countered, a slight wariness entering his voice, eyes narrowing into slits. "Rumor and reality mix so well outside these walls."

Brax finished his beer. "And inside?"

Brax pulled a 250-credit untraceable data crystal, held it against the base of the glass and pushed both towards the bartender. "Another beer, please, and anything else you can think of to make this meal memorable."

The bartender relaxed, palmed the crystal with ease, and refilled the glass. "You already know about the ships Crimson brought in, although some say your outfit has a mobile base in the outer reaches of this system."

"News to me," Brax replied, tossing the bartender a small bit of information as part of the give and take of listening.

"They say you captured 74 pirates along with the ships."

"Maybe they started with 74 sentients, but only half that number filled our hold. I expect that outfit will think twice before tackling us again."

"Trader named Anders might have 400 tons of catnip going bad in his warehouse and will sell cheap."

"But how to get it across the border? We've never been across the border. Got no contacts."

The bartender started to purr.

Brax swigged his beer. "I take it you might be able to help with any potential transfer?"

"Purrrr-haps. Who says you have to go across the border?"

"Interesting." Brax took a swig. "But perhaps something a tad more exciting than a little honest bootlegging?"

The bartender leaned closer. "I understand one of the fabled Imperial treasure ships suffered a malfunction."

"Didn't make its jump point?"

"Fifty-fifty whether it's in space at all."

"Where else would it be?"

"I heard tell it was on planet at Arunat-Siri."

Brax nodded. "A better meal than I believed possible. I'll have to come back again and maybe bring another interested party."

"Just ask for me, Thrawlk."

"Good to meet you, Thrawlk. I'm Brax."

Thrawlk's ears perked up. "Brax? Brax Ruttles?"

"Yeah. That's me. Something I need to know?"

"Purrrr-haps." The bartender hesitated, weighed his words, and replied, "If you are Brax Ruttles from the Imperial Army, then an arrogant human with darkness in his eyes was looking for you."

"Today?"

"No, a few weeks ago. He came in with obvious Imperial agents. Whether these are in the service or ex-Imperials, I don't know."

"Do you know this human?"

"No. Never saw him before..."

Brax breathed out and drained his glass before the bartender continued.

"...But his first name was Blaster."

Brax lowered his glass to the counter in a mixture of relief and consternation. So, it wasn't Aslan bounty hunters. As the bounty was so miniscule, that might indicate desperation. Desperate cats do stupid things, but on a rare occasion can surprise you.

He turned the name over in his mind. Human. Blaster. With an Imperial escort. Then it hit him. It had to be Blaster St. John-Smythe. What did he want after all this time?

"Do you know him?" the bartender prodded.

"I may, but if so, it was many years ago."

"Well, he seeks you now. And I am not the first sentient to be asked about your whereabouts."

"I expect not." Brax paid for the meal and beer with another untraceable crystal. "Thanks for the tip. I'll be back."

Shipshape Thebus Fashion

Six weeks passed, including the time it took for one of their ships to buy a replacement jump drive for the corsair. The new ships needed new crew, so the Crimson Permanent Assurance Co scoured the system for talented mercenary crew -- pilot, astrogator, engineer, steward, marine, and perhaps one or two more -- to fill out the rosters on the cargo ships.

Meanwhile, Gaines escorted the 34 Prisoners of Pirates (PoPs) to Cordan to collect the 4 million credit reward.

All the ships finally were repaired and flight tested to Crimson satisfaction. Despite the record repair bills, CPACO retained a respectable 2.7 million credits in the bank account.

The CPACO combined fleet planned to jump back to Marduk and then Torpid to conduct trading and provide a shakedown cruise for the newly repaired ships.

From Torpid, the freighters *Mad Medic* and *Hatchet* would continue trading as they jumped towards Drinax. Dr. Sparks had plans to create the Trojan Medical Academy on Drinax. Meanwhile, the *Harrier* and the Destroyer Escort *Valkyrie* headed towards Arunat-Siri to track down the treasure ship rumor.

The Fellowship of the Stars prepared to leave Torpid.

The Treasure Ship Caper: *Traveller* RPG

by Ed

Alas, Brax (hey, that's me) missed this adventure session, but Ed filled in as chronicler of the Fellowship of the Stars.
-- RL

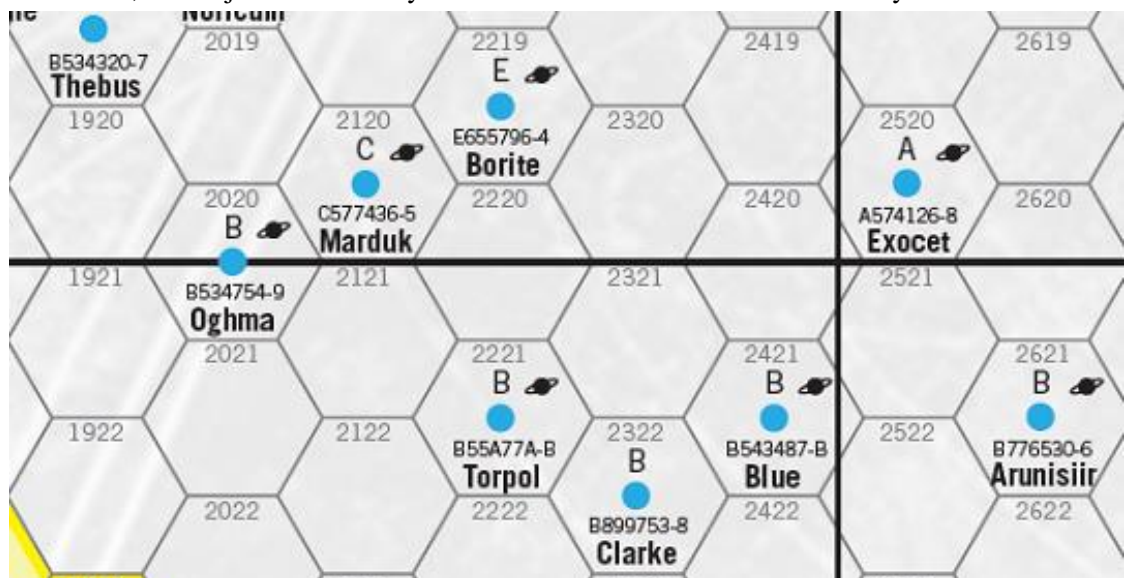
In a dingy spaceport bar in Thebus Spaceport, the last of the applicants walked in. The Crimson Protection Assurance Company (CPACO) had just finished rounding out the freighter crews for the upcoming voyage. He'd taken a beating recently, but his suit and tie were neat. The glasses he wore, an affectation of the business class, were mended at the bridge with white tape. Luggage whirred quietly behind him, a perfect match to the briefcase he held in his left hand, leaving his right free as he offered it to shake.

"Fletcher Neihart, damned glad to meet you," he said, grasping Dr. Sparks's hand. Neihart was a professional Broker and his ship *Finity's End* had been pirated some weeks before. This Fast Trader worked out of Fist, an Imperial system that anchored one end of a major trade route with the Heirate. His documents were in order, but instead of a salary, Fletch asked for a share "according to the scheme I've heard you've created." [While Gaines is away, Fletch will receive that share.]

Also a pilot and steward, Fletch joined the Valkyries' crew as the Crimsons left Thebus System in Week 85

and arrived in Marduk in Week 86, where they remained with the hired crews (taking full shore leave) in *Hatchet* and *Mad Medic*, conducting profitable trade.

Taking on new cargo, CPACO moved on to Torpid in Week 88, and Week 89 was spent buying and selling goods there before moving on to Blue in Week 90. Here



the freighters headed to Drinax, while *Harrier* and *Valkyrie* headed to Arunissir to track down a rumored Imperial Treasure Ship, the *Marten II*, said to have crashed there.

Arriving in Arunissir System in Week 91, the Crimsons, in their guise of honest traders, broadcast their ship identities and were challenged by a sister vessel of the *Valkyrie* (formerly the *Antelope*, a storied slayer of Aslan), the *Arshad*, still apparently in Imperial service.

Our papers passed with flying colors, thanks in part to the skilled administrivia of Captain Karlsbad, who burnished our otherwise perfectly legal papers to a superb shine. We were instructed that certain areas of the spaceport were off limits -- so the rumors of a crashed Imperial treasure ship were true? Indeed, a 1600-ton vessel, the *Marten II*, occupied one of the landing pads, which it had damaged upon landing. The ship showed damage.

Down to the Surface

The Crimsons landed and conducted our trade for a modest profit, quite a success given the backward nature of the planet, which possessed only a downside port. It didn't take long to see the Treasure ship wasn't going anywhere, and it was under heavy guard by six Imperial Marines in powered armor.

As this planet is controlled by human factions with Aslan figureheads, the Crimsons soon approached by one demanding a port fee based on our tonnage. Fletch, not a man of action, was so unnerved by this demand he pulled out his stunner, and the Aslan yelled for the police.

Luckily Hardcastle was nearby, and Efkraft the Aslan suddenly decided we were his best friends, and within a few minutes Karlsbad and others were helping the Aslan press his demands for a sizable port fee from the Imperial Treasure ship.

From the archives, Arunissir had been attacked and conquered by the Aslan 300 years ago. Since then, the Aslan have become the "royal class." However, only 30 Aslan families remain and everything is run by the humans. They are just seen as wealthy and useless on the planet.

The Fellowship of the Stars would ultimately spend three weeks in the downport on Arunissir, weaving a plan worthy of an *Oceans XX* movie. It was decided we should take the ship without a shot being fired. In the end, we didn't quite manage that -- three shots would ultimately pew pew pew, someone would come within a "dive for cover" moment of death, and....

The Caper Begins

Wendel scouted the Treasure Ship, but the Marines noticed him. Fleeing into the night, he made convincing Aslan noises. The *Marten II* was well guarded by watchful Marines in powered armor. He contributed many tricks to the ongoing effort, culminating in a stealthy prowl from the hold of the Treasure ship to a toilet stall near the engineering section.

Anton proved very helpful to the effort, though he didn't talk much, helping with the *Marten II*'s mess in engineering and ultimately applying his considerable skill to making a stellar jump within the 100 planetary diameter limit.

Hardcastle exercised his mysterious powers of mental perception frequently over the three weeks we were on planet, reading minds, issuing suggestions, and ultimately convincing Captain Torsa of the *Marten II* that when one of his borrowed engineers told him the local rebels had planted a bomb that would destroy the vessel and all should evacuate, he should order such an evacuation immediately.

Fletcher Neihart, who told various folks he was sundry other people, such as The Colonel (a Kentucky Colonel, Coleman wondered?) or Claude-Henry Smmoot ("two m's and don't you forget it"), managed to discover a few bits of tricky business going on aboard the Treasure Ship, usually with the help of Hardcastle. He and Karlsbad struck a deal with local Aslan-hating revolutionaries to attack the port at the end of the third week of our stay, give or take, in exchange for five tons of Advanced Weapons. He and Karlsbad declined to do the deal for three tons plus orbital bombardment of the homes of various local leaders.

Sparks on the Move

Dr. Sparks went everywhere, did everything, a veritable super-human blur of activity. He generated knockout gas and created a cure for it (administered with a push of one's finger). He diagnosed a genetic disorder for Osha, the *Marten II*'s Astrogator, and talked her into misjumping the Treasure ship to our advantage (one of the several hundred backup plans). He saved Fletch's life after one of the three pew's went directly into his chest, nearly killing him.

He planned several parties intended to disable a good portion of the crew, though alas his biggest bash was cancelled thanks to a mind-controlled Marine, a decorated war hero named Manchu -- I mean Selevedez. And he had a hoity-toity dinner with Captain Torsa and arranged for our engineers to save the Marten II's thoroughly fried bacon. And when the excrement hits the rotary air displacement device, Sparks was on board the Marten II helping the boss Marine with a cybernetic issue and was able to make sure the man can barely walk once the alarm starts.

Coleman served admirably as an Engineer for Hire on the Marten II, which suffered an extensive engineering casualty when someone planted a bomb in the Jump drive, killing all the ship's engineers and injuring others. When the alarm rang out that the ship was in danger from the revolution erupting outside the ship, he heroically offered to stay behind and disarm the bomb, and was hailed for his bravery as the ship's crew obeyed the order to abandon ship.

Of course, the "bomb" was all part of the misdirection, for the ship had no explosive device to worry about.

No one was sure where Brax had gone. Sometimes he was seen guarding the ship, and other times, down in a lower berth. No one was sure.

Karlsbad, with Wendel's help, negotiated on behalf of Efkaft (but no one knows if the Imperials paid up or not), shelled out his own cash to bribe disaffected Marten II crew members Illin and O'Leary so they would smuggle things on board for us (and maybe steal the Captain's socks -- don't ask). And he provided the revolutionaries with valuable administrative and tactical advice to help them make the deadline for the attack.

When the Manchu -- I mean crazy war hero Marine -- pulled a pistol and shot Fletch (who tried to take advantage of his psi-programming by the Pirate Lord Irontooth), Karlsbad whipped out his Gauss pistol and put two high-velocity rounds into the man, ending his agonized, brainwashed life.

Karlsbad then calmly fired off a detailed report to Captain Torsa which prevented heavily armed and armored Marines -- dare I say "Space Marines?" -- from coming to find us with a certain gleam in their eyes. Thanks to Karlsbad, the whole thing became a case of the Navy throwing the Marines under the bus.

Marines use similar armor.

The Revolution Begins

Much of the crew remained onboard the *Marten II*. Karlsbad was actually being interviewed for the job of 1st Mate. Coleman called the bridge and said there's a bomb. Because Hardcastle succeeded on just this correct day, the Captain immediately called for everyone to abandon ship.

Sadly, he wasn't the "last one off the ship" type or a "going down with his ship" type and he took the Vault Key with him.

Karlsbad contemplated ordering the gas be triggered (brought to a secure area by stealthy Wendel and placed in life support by Coleman), but the ship still contained a full crew, and he remembered the Drinax techies can open the Vault at our leisure once we escape. The crew all left. Coleman made the roll for the M drive to turn on while Karlsbad nudged the computer to seal the spacecraft.

In space, Fletch started jamming the Arshad by playing an old TV show scene in which an officer sings "I'll take you home again Kathleen" over and over. On the ground, the Revolutionaries attacked the ground-based missile systems. Karlsbad successfully took off, but it's a long way to 100 planetary diameters....

After 40 minutes, the Arshad broke through the jamming at such a high gain they couldn't get a message through to the *Marten II*.



Karlsbad, playing for the Oscar, told the Arshad he won't stop and pull over and be boarded because he's the pirate Black Jack...and hung up the space phone. The Arshad activated their fire control systems, but Anton made the seventh critical die roll in this complex scheme, which had heads like a hydra squirming all over the place....

The Crimson Permanent Assurance Company's ships *Harrier* and *Valkyrie* completed their jumps and arrived in the eerie silence of space, vast, dark, swept by the faint solar wind of the distant star of Blue System. Time passed. The *Marten II* did not appear. Are our fellow Crimson's dead, destroyed by Jump drive failure? Are they rocketing through the mystery that is hyperspace, never to return?

A Hole in Space

Just as Fletch decided to sell the remaining Advanced Weapons on Blue, the *Marten II* appeared five full days overdue. Anton's genius surely saved a more serious misjump, having only missed it by one ("Missed it by THAT much"), causing a slightly longer stay in hyperspace than usual. After coyly refueling at Blue, which CPACO belatedly discovered has no gas giant, the Crimson fleet proceeded to Drinax, arriving in Week 98.

All cons end with "cooling the mark." In our case, CPACO cooled the mark -- the Empire -- through misdirection. Our ships had left when the caper cooked off. Karlsbad commed Captain Torsa with a bloodied face (thanks, Wendel!) to say the revolutionaries had taken the ship, then imitated Black Jack, on voice comms only when the Arshad called.

If we're investigated, we can claim to have been ransomed by Irontooth. With all the chaos on the planet, one can hope they never even come calling, but we'll see.

Meanwhile, O'Leary and Illin probably have some great lines that involve heavy drinking and their artificially boosted kidneys that render them mostly immune to the effects of alcohol.

Dangling Threads

While our caper went off with only one minor hitch, there are a few dangling threads left to mention:

Astrogator Osha, in need of genetic treatment, works for GeDeCo and was tasked with getting the ship to Acrid (off course) so that a com package in the Vault could activate and do...something. Dr. Sparks discussed her treatment, got her to agree to misjump the ship to a different place and promised we'd get the proper thing to the proper place, but this plan was not needed, as the "steal the whole ship" caper worked ... much to everyone's surprise.

Crazy Marine Selevdez appeared to have the voice of Pirate Irontooth in his head, something that occurred as a result of a battle near Florian (psiker) space. Through this and other indications it appears the plan was for the *Marten II* to misjump to Acrid, where the pirate lord would take the ship (and murder everyone aboard). One can only hope this story comes out during the follow-up Imperial investigation.

Launch Pilot Henshaw's daughter was kidnapped by Pirate Irontooth, who has a very Aslan first name I can't remember, and was coerced into helping with the plot to misjump the *Marten II*. Maybe we can get this info to the Imperials anonymously. The pirates will probably kill the kid when they don't get the treasure. And for sure if Irontooth figures out we snatched this rich prize out from the chomp-reach of his jaws, we're in for it to the extent that guy can bring the pain.

Irontooth is a rival of Admiral Darrylen and his other brother Darrelyn and is based at Threev.

It is fairly certain First Officer Jagad had some story, but we never found out what it was. Mechanic Polo was super thankful that our engineers came to help. He put it all down to luck. And in the end, we were pretty lucky.

We might follow up in the future to see if the revolution worked -- it probably did -- to get the planet on Drinax's side.

Registration is open...Visit hmgs.org to sign up.



On My Mind: LWTV HMGS White Paper

by Russ Lockwood

Little Wars TV's Greg Wagman and Miles Reidy released a list of 14 suggestions to grow HMGS and boost attendance at conventions. LWTV has covered HMGS conventions extensively and has hosted games during the conventions, but I believe these are their own personal opinions, not a LWTV position. These suggestions generated a little bit o' buzz among my gaming buddies, so I figured I'd toss my two cents in the ring...



For full disclosure, I am a dues-paying member of HMGS and pay the admission to attend HMGS conventions. I attend the member meetings at the conventions, which I find mostly interesting. I am also the HMGS Newsletter Editor, although "newsletter" consists of posting convention recaps and lots of book reviews on the hmgs.org website. My words below are my own personal opinions, not a HMGS position.

Additionally, for a decade, I attended HMGS East conventions as a dealer (MagWeb). As a dealer, I also attended regional HMGS and miniatures conventions, Origins for seven years, and a few other non-miniatures shows. I also did marketing on various network and cable TV shows, newspapers, radio, and web, plus advertising in larger magazines such as *Military*, *Military Heritage*, *Armchair General*, *History*, and so on in an effort to generate members for MagWeb and an interest in military history and gaming in general.

My point is less "been there, tried that" and more "how are you going to convince folks to come to something as esoteric as miniatures -- at least when compared to video games, RPGs, and Taylor Swift concerts."

On To Opinions

I'd like HMGS conventions to grow, too. Wagman and Reidy presented 14 ideas and I agree with some of the suggestions, but I also disagree with other suggestions. I'll take the 14 in order, but I recommend you read their report in full -- it's on the web -- because I'm truncating their (in purple) suggestions.



1. Consolidate to Two Flagship Shows

Consolidate to one large summer show and one large winter show to create scarcity. The board should be strongly commended for securing an affordable, longer-term agreement with the downtown Lancaster Marriott convention center.

That would be Historicon (summer) and Fall-In (winter), leaving Cold Wars (spring) out in the cold. I'm not sure scarcity is the way to grow HMGS.

I personally like three big, main conventions, but I also am within 2 or 2.25 hours of Lancaster and an hour to Valley Forge. If you only have two, sure I'll only go to two. If you have three, I'll go to all three.

That said, there is a limit and I think three is it. I doubt I'd go to a fourth show.

As to where they should be held, HMGS needs at least 80,000 to 100,000 square feet, with about 25,000 square feet of it in a continuous space for the dealer area, and with a hotel attached. And affordable. Not easy. It's about \$40,000 to secure the space. In case you're wondering, 100,000 square feet at the Philadelphia Convention Center in the middle of Philadelphia costs \$98,000.

2. Sponsor Smaller Regional Events

Like ScrumCon, or make Cold Wars a regional con. As a bonus, many vendors would find the prospect of new geographic locations an exciting opportunity to reach a fresh customer base. Emphasis south of Washington DC or north of New York could expand HMGS's geographic reach.

Moving some of the conventions around has been discussed for decades. Moving Historicon from Lancaster to Fredericksburg resulted in falling attendance, so keeping the big summer convention in Lancaster seems like a winning idea. Moving Fall-In to Maryland Fairgrounds proved fruitful to MagWeb, but less so to other vendors. The southern surge never emerged.

A couple decades ago, Bill Gray did extensive data mining of attendees, miles traveled, and travel time. At the time, Lancaster was a sweet spot when considering a three-hour drive to the convention.

Cold Wars 2023 did OK after being missed for three years. Bet it does better in 2024. Other non-gaming, non-profit groups reported slow starts to their revived, post-covid conventions. Just the way it is.

That said, on an overall basis, spreading three conventions over a larger area may make HMGS more accessible to a larger audience, even if the individual convention attendance will decline.

Moving one convention into VA can pick up folks from that area even as that specific location causes New England attendance to drop off -- and visa versa -- if a convention moved to CT or MA, the south and west attendees would likely drop. The total exposure to HMGS via a major convention is greater, but like any other moved convention, it may shift the geographical following. I also expect HMGS conventions will be smaller because only do miniatures as opposed to a regional gaming convention like ScrumCon that has minis, wargames, eurogames, RPGs, cards, etc. It does take time for a new event to filter onto people's attentions and calendars.

In the past, HMGS has held preliminary talks with Adepticon to see if there was synergy. HMGS did "brand" the historical miniatures events at ScrumCon and started HMGS Next-Gen. Efforts are taking place. It takes time and you don't want a repeat of general gaming conventions kicking historicals to out of the way locales.

3. Revamp the Awards Program

Offer a wider range of awards to spread more recognition among Game Masters. Social media coverage of all award winners. Establish private Facebook Group, by invitation only, for award-winning GMs.

I volunteered as a judge at the Cold Wars convention to wander around (with Glenn Kidd) during a set time to look at all the games being played and pick two that highlighted great games based on presentation and audience participation. This goes on all show with other judging teams.

Now, recognizing these award-earning GMs during the game proved quite an event for GM and gamers. These folks do deserve wider recognition on the HMGS website -- but you need a better website (more later, see #11).

I'm not sure how many categories you need to add. I suppose more can't hurt, and every GM deserves praise for toting a game to the show, but let's not turn the awards into "show up and get a trophy."

4. Saturday Night Signature

Create and promote a signature event Saturday night to keep people around.

Yes, Saturday night used to be a big gaming night, but my gaming group (and that includes me) got older and started to leave earlier for home. Sunday is quite vacant as a gaming day. If my gaming group lived real close, that would be a great day to plan a game -- the venue is empty, the facility is spacious, and you can game without distractions.

I'm not sure what this signature event will be, but I like the idea. By its nature, it would have to be big and appropriate for lots of participants in one big event. Something akin to a Jenkintown Hobby extravaganza, or the National Security Game, or Borodino -- all were 50+ -player games in their heyday.

The event must be super simple to learn and quick to play if you want 50+ gamers to finish that night...

Or maybe a Bring & Buy auction...

Or *Bingo*. That game can accommodate a lot of people. OK, maybe not *Bingo*.

Hey, before you toss any stones, I'll be listening for your Saturday Night suggestions to appeal to a couple hundred potential gamers...

HMGS does have a Saturday Afternoon Beer Bash in the dealer hall, but moving that to evening probably wouldn't do much.

5. Walk Up Opportunities

Encourage/promote opportunities for shorter games that include openings for unregistered "walk up" players.

Actually, this is somewhat of the norm when a game isn't filled. I can't tell you the number of times over the decades that I walked by a table, stopped to admire something, and was asked by the GM if I'd like to play because he had a spot open. I also know of GMs that would accommodate an extra couple of players beyond ticket counts if interest is tableside.

But I get your point. Walk up and play. The time of under an hour is the trick with a miniatures game. Skirmish actions with two or three figures per player might be a solution.

6. Offer Premium Services

Hobby University is an excellent example, where a limited number of specific classes could be offered as Premium courses. Instructors for those classes would need to be compensated with a percentage of sign-up fees. "Early Bird" pre-registration windows for games in the PEL or "First Look" room block deals. Test a "premium

convention badge” model at Fall In 2023. Adepticon’s ticket model offers tiers from \$25 to \$100, plus an additional \$5—\$25 per game played. Could a similar format work for HMGS? It’s one possible approach worth considering.

Logistics aside, increasing the cost of entry doesn't seem like a way to attract more attendees.

Would increasing an all-access full convention pass from current \$65 (\$45 for members) to \$100 dissuade the grognards? Probably not. But you better figure out something that merits the increase especially if tacking on \$5 to \$25 fees **per** event. Do the GMs get a cut?

Dexcon, a regional gaming convention in Morristown, NJ, that was like a mini-GenCon, charged \$75 for the weekend. Sign up for any game available at the three- or four-day show just by going to the sign-up sheets taped to the wall. No pre-reg. Free snacks (soda, chips, etc.) for all attendees, plus ice cream night, candy night, and so on. Special GM snack room with hot coffee and a better grade of snacks. Some sort of points system I never worried about for participating and then trading in for vender-donated goods. Nice little con that attracted 1,000+ (my badge at the last pre-pandemic one was 1500) over July 4th weekend. Those are the things worth the extra badge cost...

7. Re-Evaluate HMGS Membership

What if membership cost \$10 a year and did not include any convention ticket discount? Decoupling membership from regional convention discounts may even allow HMGS to widen its appeal beyond the US East Coast and draw upon nationwide support.

Sorry. I'm guessing here, but I suspect the convention entry fee discount is a big reason for joining HMGS. I don't see an influx of members at \$10.

That said, I kinda get the idea of a "national" HMGS organization instead of the balkanized regional organizations. Then we can talk about one or two scarce conventions with the financial wherewithal to secure marvelous venues.

8. Showcase Event Signage

We need to spotlight our best-looking games. Posters and banners.

Not a bad idea **IF** you know what a game will look like before it arrives at the show. It's a pre-con logistics issue.

That said, maybe something a little more informative than a white board with the GM awards would be helpful, assuming you find the award-winning game while it is still running. “The Look Nook” might have a list of games that volunteers walked around and found looked good.

9. Exit Surveys

Establish a brief “exit survey” hosted by an online platform like Survey Monkey.

Good idea. HMGS has our e-mail addresses. Start with the 14 suggestions. Careful about how the questions are worded. I can smell a push poll a mile away...and that doesn't help anyone.

If you don't know what a push poll is, it's used all the time by advocacy groups to "push" an answer the group wants to here by corking the questions.

10. Hire a Social Media Manager

HMGS needs a far more aggressive social media presence. Hire a social media manager as a high priority. Hire a professional photographer to cover Historicon 2023.

Before HMGS does any hiring of social media people, the website needs tweaking. See #11.

After you get the website set up with an interface that's easy to use to both load and look at photos and game recaps, then we can talk about hiring professionals.

11. Website Refresh

The HMGS.org website needs a visual overhaul -- where stunning wargame photographs are front and center.

This should be the number one priority! To be fair, the HMGS board knows this, if only because I've suggested it.

The photos posted by members are in the member's only forum areas. I get that putting the forums behind a pay wall keeps flame wars off the site, but it also keeps non-members from seeing all the cool gaming interactions that HMGS showcases at shows. I also understand Section 230...

I will also suggest (and have done so) that HMGS revive a printed, mailed quarterly newsletter that shows up in the snail mail. It doesn't have to be a 200-page glossy magazine, just a simple 8-page newsletter that reminds members they are HMGS members and here are some upcoming shows and what went on at the last show, and so on - like just about every non-profit. If you get ads, you can expand the page count.

12. Board Game Tournaments

Formally bring historical board games into the HMGS tent by fostering and publicizing limited tournaments.

I don't mind expanding the tent to include boardgames. I play a lot of 'em -- or at least buy them to look at and glean OOB and terrain ideas. I've also played cards games, dice games, and eurogames at the shows. The Game Library is an excellent spot to try new games and look through old ones.

It gets away from the "miniatures" mission of HMGS, even if some miniatures games play like boardgames. But then again, we include sci-fi and fantasy miniatures games, too, which gets away from the "historical" aspect. I don't mind that either. I play sci fi and fantasy games. RPGs, too. If you're reading this AAR, you know that.

As long as it's historical gaming, I think we're good to see if boardgamers (tournament and otherwise) want to attend. I've often thought about attending the boardgaming conventions that feature large multi-map games like the old *Europa* or the *Third World War* series and whatever current monster games are available. If multiplayer, all the better.

At GenCon in the late 90s or early 2000s, Tom Johnson ran a 1944 *Europa* game with maps stretching from Normandy to Italy to USSR -- West, East, and Med fronts all in action with multiple players per front. He even printed up badges and offered battlefield promotions to control larger portions of the front if you played long enough. I played it for a few hours -- something extremely difficult to pull off **except** at a show. Like the HAWKS' Schlegel's Ferry game I played in many conventions ago, play for an hour, play for a day.

13. Big Show Outreach

Subsidize top GMs to stage exceptional historical games at PAX Unplugged or Adepticon with official HMGS signage.

This ought to go over well with all the volunteer GMs who are not subsidized...

14. Traditional Advertising

Evaluate traditional print magazines like *C3i*, *WSS Magazine*, and *Wargames Illustrated* for potential.

HMGS did run adverts for conventions in *WI* and *MW* a decade or so ago. I'm guessing it didn't do well enough to continue? Dunno. You might also include magazines like *Strategy & Tactics*, *Against the Odds*, *Yaaah!*, and other board wargame magazines, too. *ATO* and *S&T* take booths at HMGS shows, so there is synergy.

Based on MagWeb efforts of full-page, full-year ads in general history magazines with larger circulations, the return was minimal and faded with time.

Final Argument

These ideas are only the start of what should be a very bright future for HMGS. But this paper intends to go beyond the "idea" stage by laying out direct, actionable steps that can be taken immediately -- and in most cases, at minimal financial expense. They will require initiative and volunteers willing to take on new roles and new projects.

First, thanks to Greg and Miles for taking the time to put their thoughts on paper. It's never easy to stick your neck out. But it is also often the only way to start a broad, constructive discussion.

Realistically, about 25 or 30 members show up for the membership meeting, or about 1% to 1.5% of the attendees. Granted, most are here for shopping, gaming, and visiting with gaming friends and acquaintances, not a meeting. I'm guessing by the colored shirts at shows that another 25 to 50 folks are volunteers who man desks, check badges, and so on. There's even one volunteer who writes up a 40 to 50 page AAR every month...with some help from friends. Plus we have a host of GMs that put on games. That's a great start.

Maybe the new blood will volunteer to enact some of their ideas. Not all of them are doable, but some of them are worth trying. All this is at least the start of a conversation about growing HMGS and its conventions.

Ramming Speed: Greek Trireme Battle

by Russ Lockwood

Dave's Renaissance naval wargame between Venetians and Turks (see the 12/23/2021 AAR) provided the inspiration for Troy's adaptation of the *Galley, Guts, and Glory* rules to the Ancient era.

At start (clockwise from left): Rich, Marc, Sam, Umpire Troy, Dave, and Jay. Siren Island towards left corner of photo and Hydra Island in middle top.



Troy laid out a panoply of triremes and quinqueremes with a couple octoremes as fleet flagships. Somewhere in the Aegean, two Greek fleets collided: the Nereus fleet of all that is bright and pure in Greek civilization and the Phorcys fleet of all that is dark and twisted.

Of course I was in the Nereus fleet.

A couple of my ships and crews. The marker with the arrow indicates a move of at least four inches, including from previous turn. We needed at least a four-inch move in order to ram.



The Fang Islands

Two islands jutted up from the sea. Known as the Fang Islands, Siren Island proved a valuable hunting ground for the sea-nymphs while Hydra Island often found the many-headed sea serpent awaiting ships of the unwary. As I was on the port side of the fleet, I was near Siren Island. Dave was on the other flank near Hydra Island while Fleet Admiral Jay was in between.

I faced off against that sea reiver Rich, while Dave was opposite sea monster Sam, and the Phorcys fleet was commanded by Sea Dragon Admiral Marc.

Turn 2: Sam (top left) strikes first as Dave looks on. The rest of us maneuver for ramming positions.



Row, Row, Row Your Boats

Our plan was pure simplicity itself -- attack the enemy head on and let the dice gods decide. Oh, Jay had some semi-shuffle with Dave in an effort to doubleteam a Phorcys ship by playing around Hydra Island, but we all knew that wouldn't amount to much.

I tried some fancy maneuver using Siren Island to screen a ship while feigning slowness in the middle. The idea was to draw one of Rich's ships past the island and go for a two on one ram attack.

Rich, for his strategy, held back one ship and crisscrossed with another. It was still two of his ships versus

two of mine to port of Siren Island, but one of his ships was a quinquereme and thus larger than my trireme.

Worse, I stuck my nose out just a little too much and Rich managed to nick just enough of my side for a more deadly side ram instead of a head-on ram. And his ship was larger.

Meanwhile, my plan to use Siren Island as a shield to ambush almost worked, but that didn't amount to much, either. A head-on ram caused his ship to veer in front of his reserve ship. I had a clear shot at his side.

Sam sinks one of Dave's ships.

Alas, Rich got the initiative and swung his endangered ship out of the way and his reserve ship plowed into my ambush ship.

Around Hydra Island, Mark sinks one of Jay's ships and is in turn sunk.

Dave vs Sam

By Hydra Rock, Sam struck first. Smashing into Dave, he managed to sink the starboard-most of Dave's ships. Much Greek trash talking was heard among the waves.

"You stink, Capt. Halitosis!" Dave yelled.

"What's the name of your ship with the ram-sized hole in it? The Porous?" Sam retorted.

"Oh yeah? You still stink, Capt. Malodorous!" Dave yelled.

"Very funny, Admiral Humorous!" Sam ribbed. "You should open up a comedy show ... in Oceanus' agora!"

Jay vs Marc

The ever-calculating Jay also tried small, tactical movements to doubleteam Marc. He didn't need to. Marc started out rolling OK. Indeed, he sunk a ship and was sunk in turn. That might have been the highlight of the battle for him. After that, he rolled bad.

How bad was it?

It was so bad, Poseidon cried.

How bad was it?

It was so bad, his ships didn't sail long enough to collect barnacles.

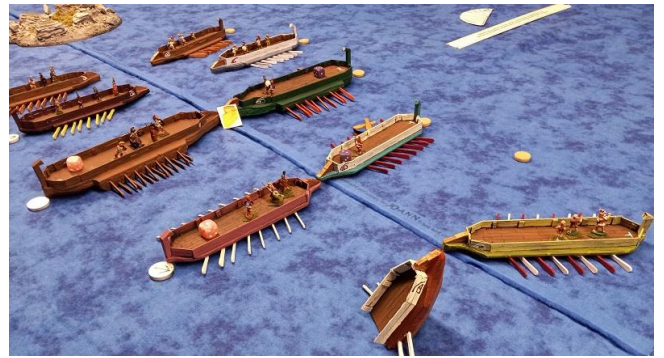
How bad was it?

It was so bad, Zeus threatened to lightning strike his dice.

So, how bad was it?

It was so bad, one of Marc's ships caught on fire. Seriously. One of his ships caught fire. It's a case of ignition indignation.

Marc tries to pat out his ship's fire.



Back at Hydra Island

Apparently, Sam borrowed Marc's dice. Dave plowed through the remainder of Sam's fleet.

Back at Siren Island

With all my ships outmaneuvered and locked in combat with Rich, I took the only course of action left to me: I boarded. All my boarding rolls were successful, so all my lads swarmed the enemy decks. I never left anyone on my ships -- I sent them all. Ares loves an all-out effort.

Apparently, Rich also must have borrowed Marc's dice. Every one of my boarding actions swept the decks of enemy sailors. True, I took some losses, but I had enough left to rig towing lines.

My crews start the boarding action mostly on Rich's ships.

End of the Battle

It was a Nereus fleet victory, or a Phorcys fleet rout, depending on your point of view. It was mostly a straight-up die roll battle as maneuvering was limited, although most of us tried to greater or lesser effect.

For a first testing, this played well. Troy can add oar shears and other more complex maneuver elements later. Nicely done. Thanks Troy for putting on the game and Dave for hosting.



More boarding. My (empty) ships towards bottom of photo. The crossed oar markers mean the ship has lost half its oars. The yellow marker indicates the ship has lost its ram. The die indicates the number of hull hits accumulated on the ship. The round shield marker (upper right) indicates that my boarding crew has surprise and gets a +1 in melee combat.



Books I've Read

By Russ Lockwood

The Battle of Rocroi: 1643 (Century of the Soldier No. 94). by Alberto Raul Esteban Ribas. Softcover (7.1x9.7 inches). 175 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Clash of Seventeenth Century Superpowers*

From the overview providing background to Franco-Spanish wars to the detailed examination of weapons, armor, organization, and overall army conduct, this book sparkles with brilliance. The information is accessible, the prose is nice and tight, and the presentation is top-notch.

It includes short bios of the major commanders, which help set the command scene for the actual battle. The analysis of the sources is worth the price of admission alone as the author strives to offer a comprehensive recap despite the muddled and often conflicting source material.

The book contains eight black and white photos, 39 black and white illustrations (mostly period), 10 black and white maps, and eight color uniform plates.

The main battle map, when combined with the OOB appendix, offer detailed placement of every regiment and tercio.

Quality wise, the only flaw I could find was a missing period at the end of a sentence (p114). Of course, I would also like detailed numbers in the OOB, although these appear in the text.

I've become ever impressed by the *Century of the Soldier* series. Rocroi is in the top three that I've read. Brilliant.

Enjoyed it.

Men of Armor: Volume 2 - Cassino and Rome. by Jeff Danby. Hardback (6.4x9.3 inches). 434 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The History of B Company, 756th Tank Battalion in World War II*

Brilliant. Absolutely brilliant. By the time you finish reading this volume, you'll feel like you were riding with B Company in 1944 Italy. It is hyper detailed, down to individual tanks and men. It reconstructs the planning and execution of operations with sweet prose. This covers more than just B Company or the 756th -- so it puts the unit's actions in context of an overall plan of attack.

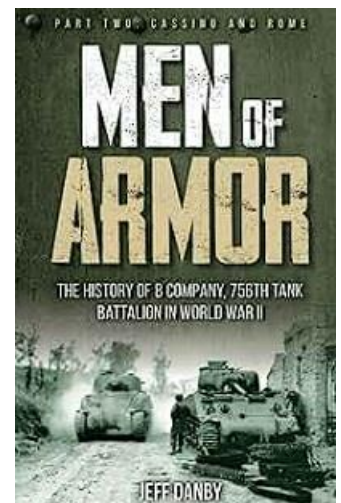
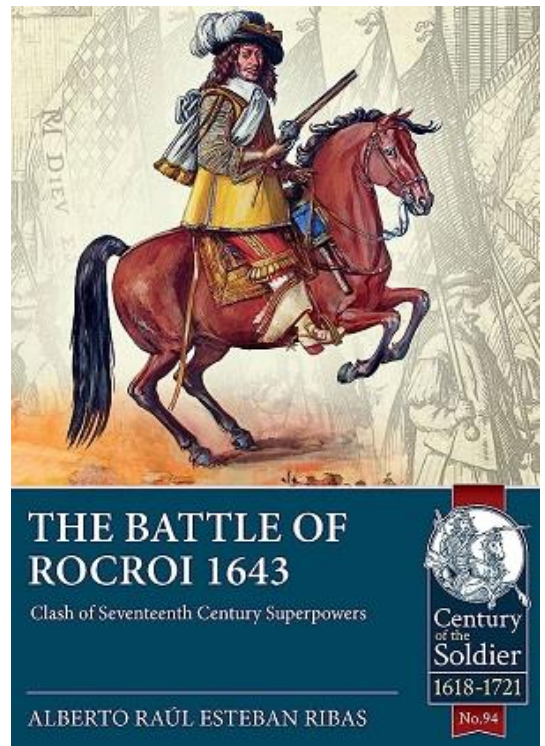
For all you tabletop commanders, you will learn how a tank battalion attached to a variety of US infantry divisions -- and even a French outfit -- parcels out platoons and companies depending on the mission.

Some unusual, if standard practices: Shermans support fired at ranges of 2,500 yards to 3,000 yards; ammo and fuel never seemed to be a problem overall, but intense firing at anything that looked like it might hold Germans did deplete ammo often enough until a replacement tank platoon could come up; M2 tank recovery vehicles were used a lot, but tank transporters only a couple times; D Company (M5 Stuarts) were vulnerable and so often were just left for rear support instead of recon; friendly fire (aircraft and artillery) were really resented and happened more than expected.

The book contains 91 black and white photos, 17 black and white maps, two color photos, and 21 black and white illustrations. OOBs are in the appendices.

From tank on tank shootouts with a platoon of infantry to an analysis of larger Corp-level strategy, Danby details how a small cog of troops and tanks fits into the larger picture of driving up the Italian peninsula. This is how a unit history should be written. I have to go locate *Volume 1* (North Africa and lower Italy) and now look forward to *Volume 3*.

Enjoyed it.



Alpini: Italian Mountain Troops 1872-Present. by Enrico Finazzo. Hardback (9.3x12.2 inches). 255 pages. 2023 reprint of 2020 book, which was reprint of 2017 book.

As Alpini refers to the Alps, these mountain troops proved versatile and tough. Used in Italy's colonial land grab in Eritrea and Ethiopia, they were nonetheless on the losing end of the 1896 battle of Adua. They were used to conquer Libya just before WWI.

Yet it was WWI where Alpini troops proved their mettle in the Alps. Up until Caporetto, they battled Austro-Hungarian and German forces among the mountains with varying degrees of success. The conditions as described were horrific, yet both sides carried out attacks, counterattacks, and mining with regularity.

During the pre-WWII era, Alpine troops formed part of Italy's East African force and occupation of Albania force. They were specifically held back from participating in the Spanish Civil War.

The descriptions of each main battle is a tad light on details, but the accompanying maps can help create tabletop scenarios. Full OOBs for the Alpini force as a whole are at the beginnings of major chapters, although numbers per battalion need to be pulled from the text, when available.

I had not read this before, but the Italian invasion of Greece was prompted by Hitler's occupation of Romania at the request of the Romanian government. Hitler had not consulted with his Axis partner Mussolini and in a tiff, Mussolini ordered the invasion of Greece (p149).

One interesting scenario that can be pulled from the pages is the Montenegro revolt: 4,000 partisans versus 1,800 Italian troops, including 11th Regiment Alpini troops, garrisoning Pljevlja on December 1, 1942. Map of garrison deployments, photo of pillbox, and text description should make for an obscure, but hopping little scenario (p176-177).

Some typos: Pljevlja is in the text, but the subhead shows Pljevja (p173); missing space between "Fourth Batteries" (p99); enlarged lines of text (p44 and p157); and "during the 1959s and 1960s" is likely 1950s.

The book contains 308 black and white photos, 50 black and white maps, 51 color photos, six black and white illustrations, 12 color maps, 17 color illustrations, and 30 color uniform illustrations.

The book continues the unit history to present day, so you can get an idea of uniforms from the modern color photos. I can see why it gets reprinted. Well done.

Enjoyed it.

Battle of Leyte Gulf: A New History of the World's Largest Sea Battle. by Mark Stille. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 320 pages. 2023.

Moment by moment, the battle of Leyte Gulf gets a fresh analysis by a WWII Pacific War expert. Besides a number of Ospreys, Stille authored the excellent *Pacific Carrier War: Pearl Harbor to Okinawa* (see the review in the 10/26/2021 AAR or up on hmg.org).

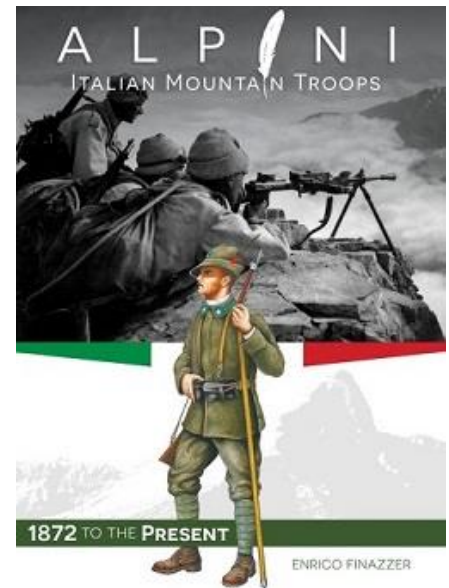
Here, he dissects the Japanese Sho-I plan, the US defenses, and Halsey's race to engage the diversionary remnants of the Japanese carrier force. Along the way, he adjusts our understanding of the battle, including a focus on the US air attacks, and tackles a number of historical misconceptions, including the myth that Kurita's force than engaged Taffy 3 turned away too soon and would have obliterated the US landing forces in Leyte Gulf. The US Seventh fleet, recent victors of other prongs of the Sho-I task forces, and the remaining US air squadrons would have had something to say about a Japanese entry into the Gulf.

The book contains 40 black and white photos and five black and white maps. A full OOB is also included.

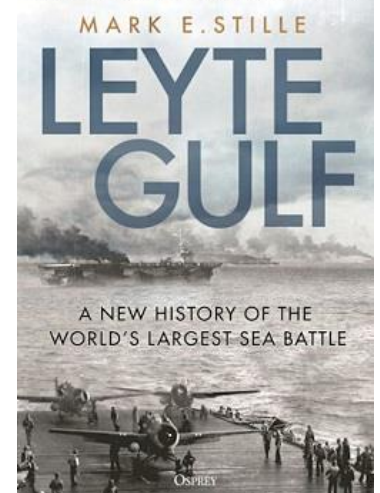
Stille posits Sho-I as one big naval banzai charge for naval honor instead of a long, slow decline at the end of logistics failures. He also suggests (p65-67) a better strategy would have been to wait until January 1945 when carrier pilot training would be complete and give the carriers at least a smidgen of a chance and combine with mass kamikaze attacks. But he also notes that this would be unlikely to turn the tide.

Well written. Well researched. The tale unfolds with precision and includes expert analysis.

Enjoyed it.



"Masterful. Mark Stille debunks many of the myths still surrounding history's largest naval battle... A worthy read for any naval historian."
Jon Parshall
Co-author of *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*



The Shogun's Soldiers Volume 2: Century of the Soldier 99. by Michael Fredholm von Essen. Softcover (7.2x9.8 inches). 183 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The Daily Life of Samurai and Soldiers in Edo Period Japan 1603-1721*

The sequel to *The Shogun's Soldiers Volume 1* (see the review in the 3/02/2023 AAR or up on hmg.org) continues the excellent descriptions of samurai in Edo Period Japan. You are immersed in the education, entertainment, crimes, punishment, and overall culture of the time. This is a time of relative peace, not war, so no battles are within, just the structured life of Japanese society.

Of amusement to me was a school punishment: stand in the corner or on top of a desk with a cup of tea and a lit stick of incense. The incense measures the time needed to remain in this position for a specific transgression (p15). For actual crimes, courts dealt out corporal punishment, banishment, prison, labor camps, and execution depending on the crime.

Entertainment included theaters, street performers, various levels of more intimate fun, gambling, and sumo wrestling. School days are covered, as are travel, religion, and other aspects of life for all classes.

The book contains 40 black and white illustrations (mostly period), one black and white photo, 41 color illustrations of costumes and other aspects of period life, five color warrior illustrations, and three color illustrations of banner and standards.

Well done.

Enjoyed it.

Formidable. by Terry Crowdy. Hardback (7.0x9.9 inches). 236 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Arthur Flint's War Against Tirpitz and the Kamikazes*

When I first saw that the book was a 'tribute to the author's grandfather,' I figured it would use diaries and letters to recap Arthur Flint's WWII service. I also figured he must have done something heroic to be labeled formidable. Boy, was I completely wrong.

Arthur Flint's wartime memorabilia is lost to time, but is somewhat based on a late 1990s discussion with him about his service. As for the rest, the title refers to the aircraft carrier *HMS Formidable*. This is less about his grandfather and more a history of the ship's WWII service while Flint was onboard.

Flint trained as a steward and worked his way up from assistant steward to steward for the pilots. The ship seemed ill-fated at the start -- its launching was an accident that killed 37 people, although the ship did float.

The ship took part in air attacks against the German battleship *Tirpitz* and eventually found its way to the Pacific to help carry out ground attacks against islands south of Okinawa. Flint flits in an out of the narrative as much as his Royal Navy record, one conversation, and paucity of mementos allowed. The rest covers *HMS Formidable* air ops, further accidents, ports of call antics, and routine operations. Of note, the *HMS Formidable* used US Corsairs as well as British Fairey Barracuda torpedo bombers.

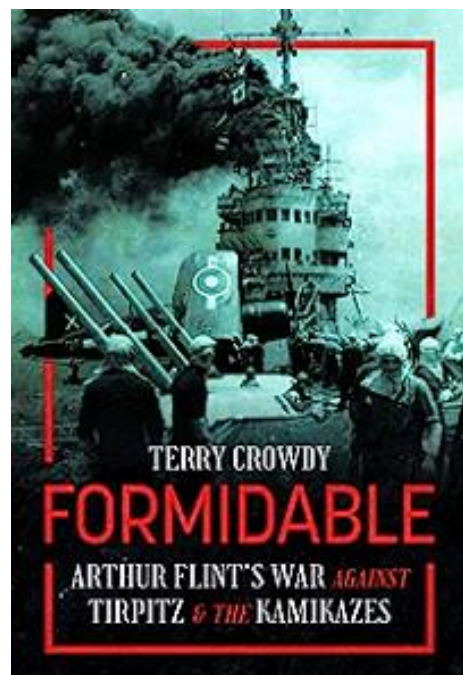
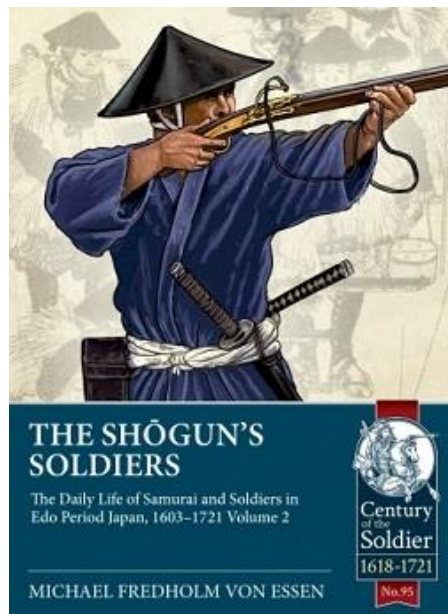
Japanese kamikazes struck the ship at least twice, ending its active service. Flint remained with the Navy for a year after the war's end and promptly married his sweetheart.

An interesting tidbit: When the ship returned to the UK from a Mediterranean cruise, revenue agents swarmed the ship to charge duty on all the sailors' trinkets that they brought back (p29).

Another: If you look at the cover, you'll see a pure white roundel on a wing. The British adopted this alternative because they feared a red circle would be mistaken for a Japanese insignia.

It's all well-written and well-illustrated with 208 black and white photos and two black and white maps. Nice to read about Royal Navy operations.

Enjoyed it.



Armies of the Italian Risorgimento. by Gabriele Esposito. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 110 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Armies Across History 2*

This uniform guide provides 112 color public domain illustrations (featuring 263 soldiers and officers) of 12 pre-unification Italian armies (Piedmontese, Modenese, Tuscan, Two Kingdoms, etc.). You'll notice Knotel, Cenni, and others among the artists and the reproduction quality is top-notch. Somebody worked this over with Photoshop or an equivalent.

The prose is generally OK, but this seems an English as a second language text. It will be rolling along describing uniforms, weapons, organization, and all the wonderful information you want in the subject when you run into twisted syntax. It happens far more than it should starting in the initial -- and marvelous -- chronology covering 1848-1870.

For example: "After some abortive attempts repulsed by Chrzanowski, the Austrians launched their final and decisive attack, which broke in a definitive way the Piedmonese line" (p8). It's not that it's technically wrong, but it's clumsy. If that was the extent, no problem. However, many more awkward sentences pepper the text.

Speaking of text, the layout needs more paragraph breaks within the walls of text. This needs better editing and layout to make the fantastic information more accessible.

Yet, you will likely buy this for the illustrations to help you paint up Italian unification armies while you pick your way through the text.

Enjoyed it.

The Hundred Years War: 1337-1453. by Anne Curry. Softcover (5.9x8.2 inches). 144 pages. 2023 reprint of 2002 edition.

Subtitle: *Essential Histories*

The marketing says this reprint contains 50 new illustrations, but don't let that distract you from the sparkling prose. This reads well and fast, hitting all the highlights of the war (more like a series of wars divided by peace treaties that were broken) between England and France.

No one particular battle is covered in detail, but the overall strategy of both sides -- under several monarchs -- receives attention.

As for the imagery to support the text, the booklet contains 25 color illustrations (predominantly medieval manuscript drawings), three black and white illustrations, 23 color photos, one black and white photo, and 10 color maps.

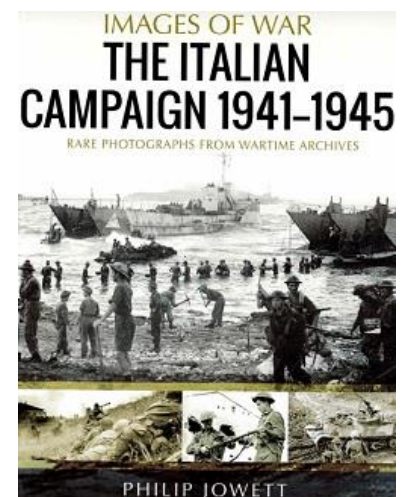
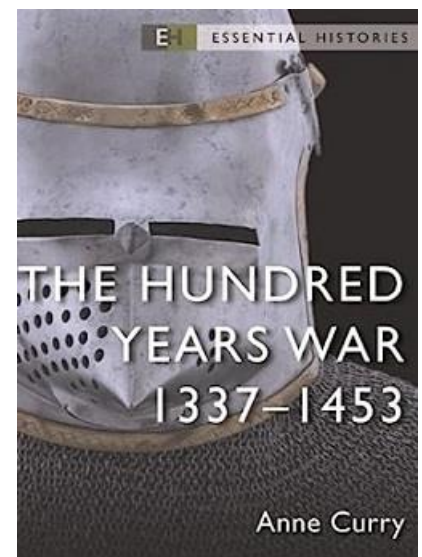
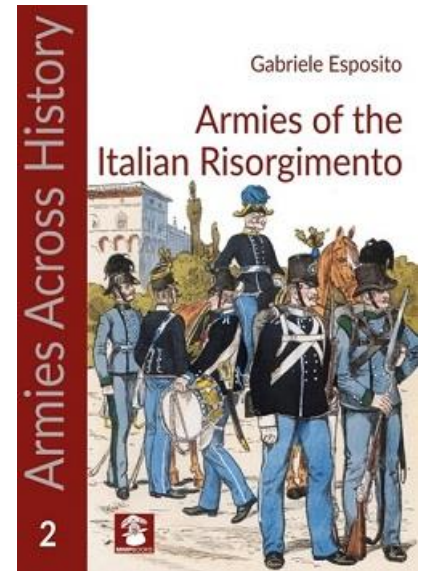
For a quick overview, *Essential Histories* are like *Cliff Notes* (or *Spark Notes* or whatever the online equivalent is) but with more savvy. You won't get much to plop on a tabletop, but you will get a strategic overview.

Enjoyed it.

The Italian Campaign 1941-1945: Images of War. by Philip Jowett. Softcover (7.4x9.7 inches). 240 pages. 2023.

The latest volume in the photo-intensive series mostly showcases WWII uniforms and warfare in Sicily and the Italian peninsula. US, German, and British armed forces predominate, but British Commonwealth and other countries receives some photo coverage, too.

A few of my favorites: Eight-man German crew pushing and pulling a PAK 38 AT gun up a road (p51), 100 Belgian commandos from Nov 1943 that manned part of the British line and then were sent to Yugoslavia to fight with partisans (p64), three Nepalese Gurkhas standing around chatting, and a Panther turret buried and made into a pillbox (p136). As for the Panther turrets, by Feb 1944, 112 had been buried/emplaced and by Aug 1944, another 155 more were emplaced. They had extra armor bolted on top for added protection against artillery. I guess there was a shortage of tank hulls.



There's also an entire chapter of Italian partisan photos, if you're looking for more than mountainous assaults. All totaled, the book contains 344 black and white photos, one black and white map, and two black and white posters.

A couple typos: missing space between a period and the "A" of the next sentence (p106) and "Tiger V" (p112) should be "Tiger I" or perhaps as written elsewhere "Tiger VI."

One odd second-class unit -- the "Finance Guard" -- is mentioned as being stationed on Pantellaria Island (p1). They surrendered pretty quick after Allied bombardments and invasion. Never heard of them before.

It's another fine volume in the series. I don't know how many volumes Pen and Sword published so far, but with millions of photos in archives, I suspect they are not running out anytime soon.

Enjoyed it.

British Frigates and Escort Destroyers 1939-45 (New Vanguard 319). by Angus Konstam. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2023.

A quick overview of these ship types discusses how they helped win the WWII Battle of the Atlantic against the U-Boats. Charts detail launch histories, specs, and ultimate fates of individual ships within the various classes.

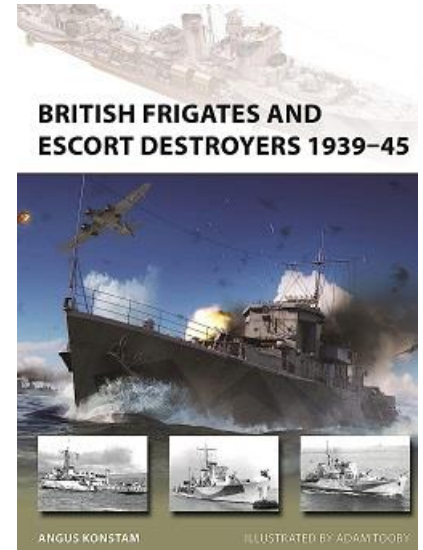
For the record, Escort Destroyers (in US parlance called Destroyer Escorts) were smaller versions of Destroyers optimized for Anti-Submarine Warfare and AA missions. Four types were produced, with 86 rolling out of shipyards with each taking about 12 to 18 months for construction.

Frigates are even smaller so that they could be built in civilian shipyards. Over 100 were constructed during the war.

The booklet contains 40 black and white photos, eight color illustrations, two color 1-page action illustrations, and one color two-page cutaway of the *HMS Belvoir*.

Solid *New Vanguard* volume.

Enjoyed it.



Confronting Napoleon: Volume 1 - Pultusk to Eylau. Edited and Amended by Alexander Mikaberidze. Translated by Paul Strietelmeier. Softcover (6.8x9.7 inches). 230 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *From Reason to Revolution 1721-1815 No. 101*

Subtitle: *Levin von Bennigsen's Memoir of the Campaign in Poland 1806-1807*

As a memoir, especially by a commander who lost the two main battles on the cover, you can expect an apologist work that throws blame all around. You will not be disappointed.

Yet, this also contains some excellent tactical descriptions of these two and other battles fought during 1806 and 1807 between the French under Napoleon and the alliance of Russia and Prussia. You'll find infantry battalions and cavalry regiments performing heroic deeds on the attack, defense, and counterattack as well as some blundering about blocking other units' marches, causing disorders, and causing von Bennigsen to foam at the mouth.

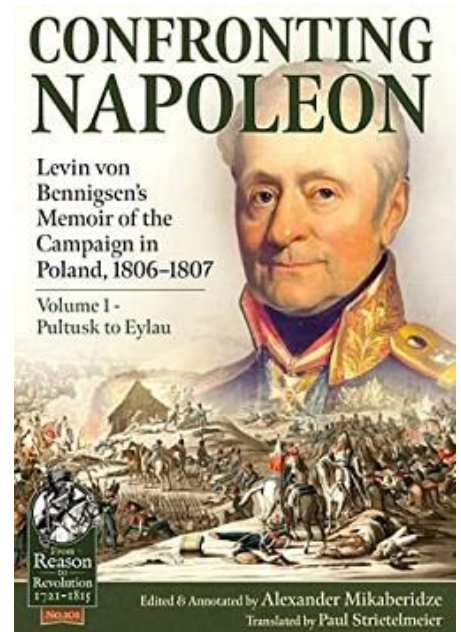
It was interesting that at Eylau, the first line of regiments had their third battalions "100 steps" behind the first two battalions while the second line of regiments deployed in battalion columns (p162). Snippets of useful scenario information are sprinkled through the book.

Oddly enough, the book also contains captured French letters that offer a bit of insight into the French command's attitudes, strategy, and deployments.

The book contains 32 black and white photos and eight black and white maps -- some good ones for a scenario set up. You'll have to pick out OOB info from the text or go to an outside source.

The hook of this book is understanding how a top-level commander faced difficult situations of maneuver and weather. That would be great for a campaign game with some chrome.

Enjoyed it.



The US Marine Corps 1775-1859 (Elite 251). by Ron Field. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 64 pages. 2023.

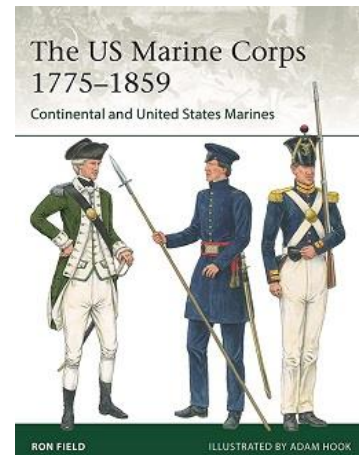
Subtitle: *Continental and United States Marines*

Covers the history, uniforms, weapons, and actions of the Marines, with an emphasis on the uniforms and weapons part. But not to worry, a few good skirmish ideas can be found in the action parts, but you'll need more information about numbers and terrain if you want to turn that into tabletop scenarios.

The booklet contains one black and white photo, four black and white illustrations, 24 color illustrations, eight color uniform plates (with 24 Marines depicted), and 16 color photos of equipment and weaponry.

It's a nice overview covering multiple wars.

Enjoyed it.



Tanks in Operation Bagration 1944 (New Vanguard 318). by Steven J. Zaloga. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2023.

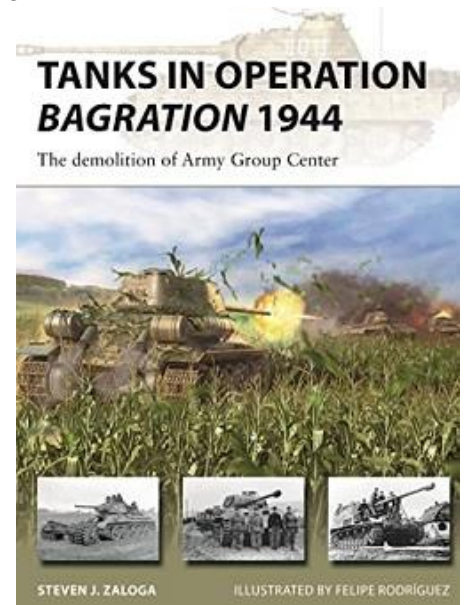
Subtitle: *The Demolition of Army Group Center*

Much of this is covered by other tank books, but Zaloga books find numbers for you in a multitude of charts and this booklet is no different. For example, USSR studies of relative tank combat values finds a Pz III at 1.0, T-34/76 at 1.16, PzIV at 1.27, T-34/85 at 1.32 and Pz V at 2.37 (p20). The biggest omission is the Tiger I, although it's labeled as "best" and the STuG III (not a tank, but often used in an anti-tank role). Later, a different chart with a different methodology puts the SU-76M at 0.74, T-34/76 at 1.0, T-34/85 at 1.14, and IS-2 at 1.62 (p26). Wish this had been less copy and paste and more unified. Some overlaps can help the spreadsheet able among us to create such a chart -- or more likely someone has already done one that's on the web.

Nevertheless, a nice overview of the operation provides the gist of the planning and attack, but it's really all about the tanks, including profiles with camouflage patterns.

The booklet contains 43 black and white photos, one color action illustration, and 11 color tank profiles with camouflage patterns.

Enjoyed it.



The Redcoats of Wellington's Light Division in the Peninsular War. by Gareth Glover and Robert Burnham. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 267 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Unpublished and Rare Memoirs of the 52nd Regiment of Foot*

These are letters and diary excerpts from members of the British 52nd who fought in Spain and Portugal during the Napoleonic wars.

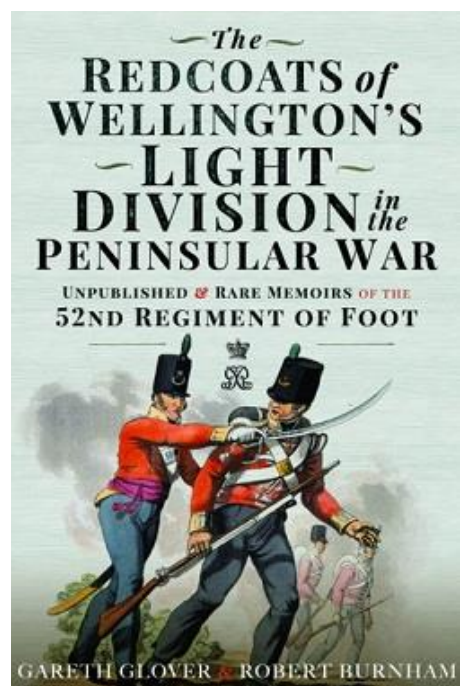
Some good tactical descriptions are within, including some that would make interesting skirmish scenarios. Most are travelogues of sorts that describe the food and terrain marched through, along with some observations of people and places -- peacefully occupied and stormed.

The book contains four black and white photos, six color illustrations, and two tactical maps.

Give some praise to Glover and Burnham -- I didn't find any typos and the prose was smooth and clean considering the sources. Nice job.

These type of accumulated memoirs offer a change of pace from the usual campaign or battle narratives and it was kinda nice.

Enjoyed it.



The Hydaspes 326BC: Campaign 389. by Nic Fields. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Limit of Alexander the Great's Conquests*

Although I've read lots of books about Alexander the Great, including many of the original surviving ancient texts, I was quite pleased with the quality of the prose and insight into this battle in India. I especially enjoyed the analysis of the ancient sources, comparing and contrasting timelines and speculating on accuracy of each.

The booklet contains five black and white photos, 49 color photos, one black and white illustration, five color illustrations, three color two-page action illustration, five color maps, and two of those less-than-useful 3D maps.

Another excellent volume in the series.

Enjoyed it.

Battle of Gettysburg 1863 (2): Campaign 391. by Timothy J. Orr. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Second Day*

This volume in the series covers day two of the battle and starts out with an extensive order of battle that is missing the one thing wargamers really like to have: number of soldiers. All the regiments are listed, so no worries there, but you'll have to pick out such numbers from the text or elsewhere.

Aside from that, it offers a terrific overview of combat in all the hot spots: Little Round Top, Devils Den, Peach Orchard, Cemetery Ridge, and Culp's Hill. As for the last one, I should be remiss not to mention Brig. Gen. Henry Lockwood's counterattack with the 150th NY and 1st MD Potomac regiments to retake Trostle Farm and stabilize the Union line (p74). In most tabletop games of Gettysburg second or third day, I'm assigned that command or the overall command at Culp's Hill. Once I commanded Pickett's division and performed no better than the historical fellow. Maybe that's why I'm always in the Union fishhook!

The booklet contains 62 black and white photos, one color photo, three black and white illustrations, two color illustrations, three color two-page action illustration, six color maps, and three of those less-than-useful 3D maps.

I repeat myself often when it comes to *Campaign* volumes -- another excellent addition to the series.

Enjoyed it.

The Spy From Place Saint-Sulpice. by Barry Michael Broman. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 240 pages. 2023.

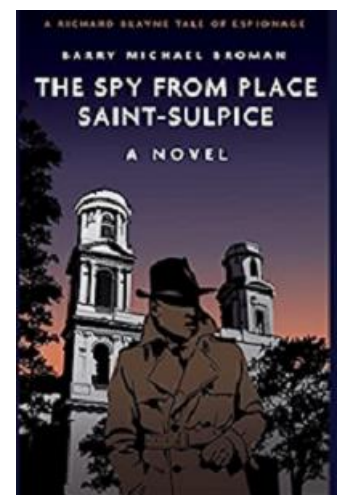
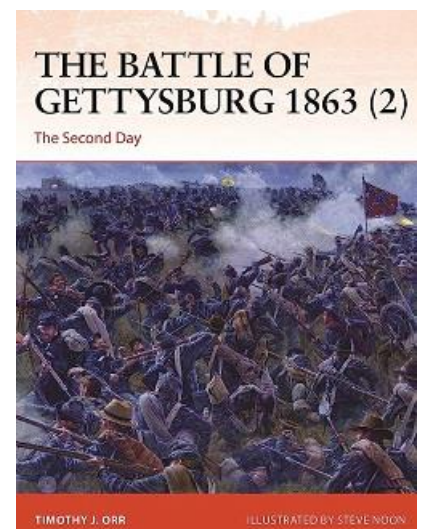
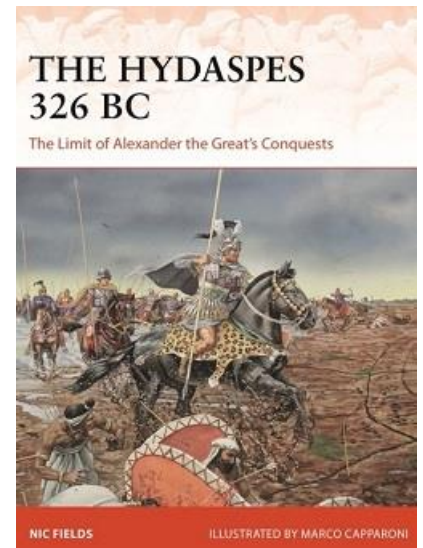
Subtitle: *A Richard Blayne Tale of Espionage*

Set in 1980's Paris, this 'tale of espionage' offers a Cold War novel before the Berlin Wall fell. Our CIA hero, Richard Blayne, gets sent to Paris to keep tabs and possibly aid Cambodian groups in their effort to take their country back. Somehow, this morphs into a caper to turn a Soviet official and plant him in Moscow to funnel information to the CIA.

The novel has all the right details -- the author was a CIA operative for a few decades. Unfortunately, I find the prose flat, as if it was a CIA report. Write what you know? He knows. Show, don't tell? Alas, he mostly tells. I say mostly because he shows flashes of drawing me into the story and characters...aaaaand then it's back to like reading a menu.

Part of the problem is the main character is a recruiter and manipulator, which is great for a CIA operative, but not for a main character of a novel. No danger. No tension. Most action occurs in a restaurant deciding which entree to order. That's snarky, but carries more truth than you might expect. The biggest menace was a rogue Soviet agent sent packing by the French for conduct unbecoming a diplomat.

I abandoned it a third of the way in, but sighed and bulled ahead to the halfway mark. Then I just skimmed to the end.



Casemate's fiction series uses the same idea: Get someone with vast subject matter knowledge to write a novel. The web is filled with self-published novels and often for a good reason: It's easy to fill a page with words, but not easy to inspire a reader's imagination.

Skyfarer: The Drifting Lands Book One. by Joseph Brassey. Paperback (4.2x6.9 inches). 299 pages. 2017.

This discount bin fantasy novel offers flaming swords, magic, demons, firearms, and ships that fly using magic navigation and some sort of crystal technology - jet or anti-grav (not sure what metadrive is, but you don't need magic to zoom around). It's a bit of a mish-mash of a setting. Why non-magic people use swords and spears instead of firearms is beyond me. Maybe it's like the high middle ages with early handguns. To be fair, firearms made a surprise (to me) appearance and then disappeared from the plot.

Anyway, young novice magician Aimee joins her mentor on one such skycraft for adventure and ends up in the middle of a war. Azrael, a black armor-clad Darth Vader character with magically infused armor and a fair knowledge of magic, is after a large magic diamond that is hidden on a fairly large island. He even kneels on a circular platform to converse with his master, Roland. Told you he was Vaderish.

The characters are quite well formed and the good versus evil aspects proffer exquisite motivations for the resulting action. It's a well-written book with a sketchy world setting but a diamond hook.

Enjoyed it.

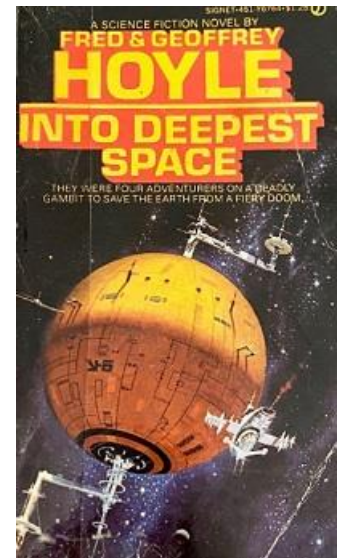


Into Deepest Space. by Fred and Geoffrey Hoyle. Paperback (4.2x7.0 inches). 173 pages. 1974.

This discount bin novel reads like it should have been left in the bin. A human and three allied aliens in an allied alien ship get captured and pulled by a giant alien Yela spaceship to a place outside the galaxy. Along this trip, they must confront a number of 'deepest space' challenges as their ship is slowly deprived of energy, life support, and so on.

Sounds great, but reads poorly. The astronomy portion of the book offers a ring of authenticity, albeit circa early 1970s, as author Sir Fred Hoyle is an astronomer of note. Why there is interstellar travel and no human colonies remains a mystery, as does the use of hydrogen to counter the effects of a solar lithium bomb that frees humanity, or at least the four main characters, from the confines of Earth. The main characters? Everything about them must be in a prequel because they are certainly not developed beyond cardboard cutouts here.

And how did they get back to the galaxy, much less to Earth? After painstakingly describing every astronomical phenomenon, the use of a black hole seems more handwavium than anything else. Maybe Sir Fred had to hit a deadline. This could have been so much more.



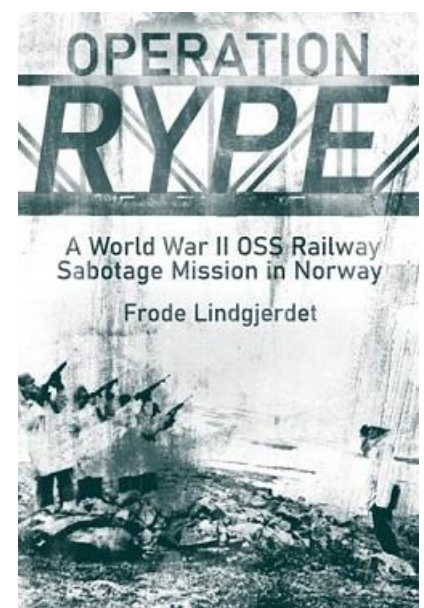
Operation Rype. by Frode Lindgjerdet. Hardback (6.3x9.2 inches). 246 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *A World War II OSS Railway Sabotage Mission in Norway*

The book is based on a couple of sabotage attacks on German railroads in northern Norway in March and April 1945. The idea was to disrupt late-war German troop movements from Finland, which had surrendered and kicked out the Germans. The US identified a key segment of the main Norway to Germany rail line and sent an OSS team (about platoon size) led by Major William Colby (who eventually became CIA director) to blow up track and bridges.

The elements played havoc with the mission more than the Germans, who used second-rate troops to guard this virtually inaccessible stretch of rail. Norwegian resistance fighters aided the Americans, and while the main base was in Norway, it was close enough to Sweden that they could slip over the border for supplies and better contact with London.

Other resistance missions are covered, but the focus is on Rype. One



incident with the elimination of a German patrol on May 2, 1945 in a firefight, or, the execution of prisoners of war, is covered in all its controversy. Some of the actions could make for good tabletop scenarios, although the tabletop Germans need to be more on the ball than their historical counterparts.

Extensive research makes for a detailed background of all things Rype, although sometimes the information dumps get a little bit tough to read. It's not exactly a mission akin to that told in the fictional, but based on a true story, movie *Heroes of Telemark*. Yet for describing the snowy and mountainous conditions of Norway and the Allied fears of a post-war German redoubt in Norway or civil war with communists, ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.

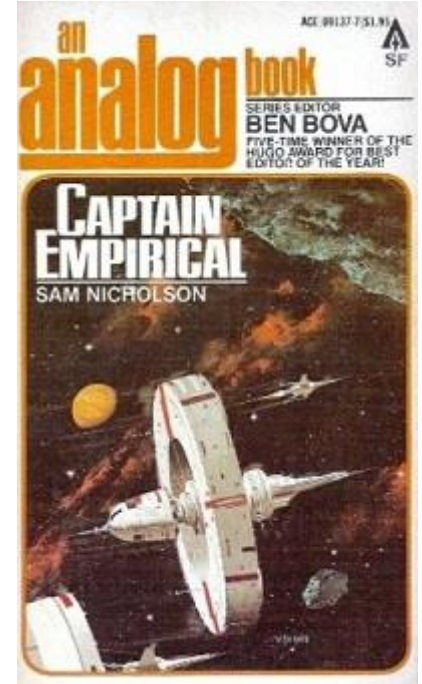
Captain Empirical. by Sam (aka Shirley) Nicholson. Paperback (4.2x6.9 inches). 342 pages. 1979.

Despite the cover, this novel following Captain Schuster covers his various maritime commands on Earth. The spaceship is only the first chapter and the last chapters, when he's shepherding ore modules that went awry.

In between, this is a marvelous character study of a rough and tumble merchant ship captain who is the company's troubleshooter because he knows the sea, the ships, and the sailors and is a fast study to unravel the cons and salvage the dangerous situations. He's like the James Bond of the merchant marine, without the gadgets, but with a knack for bashing the right heads to solve the problem. He even has an adoring company secretary.

One typo: "seige" should be "siege" (p254).

Enjoyed it.



The Philadelphia Campaign: 1777. by Michael C. Harris. Softcover (6.6x9.4 inches). 128 pages. 2023.

Engrossing and concise *Casemate Illustrated* study of the 1777 campaign that led to the British victories at Brandywine and Germantown and British occupation of Philadelphia as well as Naval and Hessian setbacks. It explains the strategy for both sides, zeroes in to the weaponry and tactics, and explains how Washington continued to learn from his tactical defeats while pursuing a successful strategic plan. About nine months later, the British abandoned Philadelphia and crossed NJ on the way to NY.

Couple typos: "Cornwallis swing left" should be "swung left" or perhaps "swings left" (p111) and "Americans handily repulsed American attackers" should be "repulsed Hessian attackers" (p104).

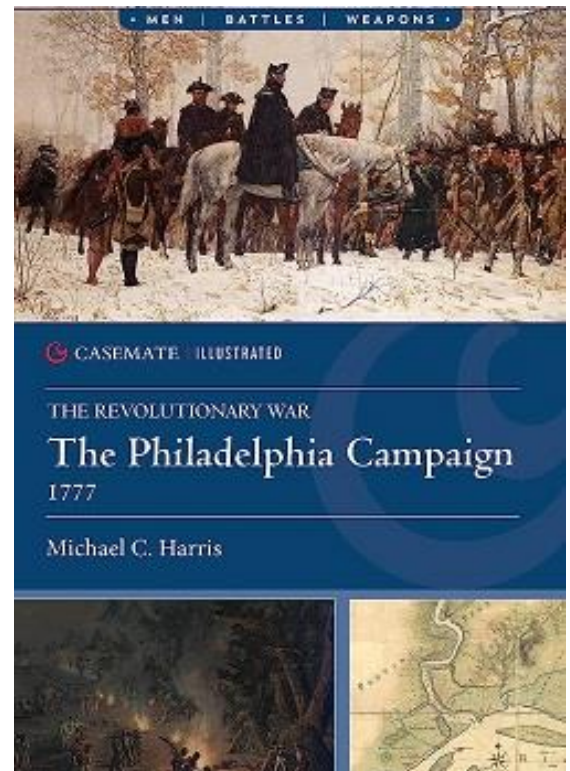
The booklet contains 73 color photos (mostly re-enactors) and historic markers, 21 black and white photos, 14 color illustrations, 10 color maps, and three black and white maps.

One odd point: 150 NJ Militiamen joined some Morgan's Riflemen and Lafayette to claim victory during a skirmish at Gloucester (p112), but early in the book, the author calls the NJ Militiamen "next to worthless" (p22) -- only the Pennsylvania militiamen were worse than the Jersey Boys. Apparently, Gloucester must be the difference between the two.

If I could make one formatting suggestion: increase the font size -- there seems plenty of space between the lines.

Except for those two stumbles, it is well written and hits the high and low points for both sides.

Enjoyed it.



Such a Clash of Arms: Maryland Campaign September 1862. by Kevin R. Pawlak. Softcover (6.6x9.4 inches). 128 pages. 2023.

Concise *Casemate Illustrated* study of the 1862 Maryland campaign culminates in the Battle of Antietam. The booklet offers a decent overview of the soldiers and their weapons, strategies, and battles, and zeroes in on some of the details often skipped, like the battles in the gaps, as well as offering ideas about who dropped the orders wrapped around three cigars.

A couple typos: "withering fire meant forced Douglass' line back" (p86) can do without the "meant." Also, "Douglass'" (p86) and "Miles's" (p30) use different possessive apostrophes for a name ending with an "s." For the record, either way can be acceptable as long as it is consistent, although I prefer "s'" rather than "s's" if you really want to know.

Like the sister study, *The Philadelphia Campaign: 1777*, I'd like to see the font size increased.

The booklet contains 41 color photos, 55 black and white photos, five black and white illustrations and six color maps.

Enjoyed it.

Men and Machines. Edited by Robert Silverberg. Paperback (4.2x6.9 inches). 219 pages. 1968.

With all this talk about artificial intelligence roiling society, I found a discount bin book that reprinted 10 short stories covering the same subject. These stories, originally printed from 1941 to 1964 in various magazines, consider how we humans will adapt, or not, to AI-controlled robots.

Most of the short stories cover the robots taking over. *With Folded Hands* by Jack Williamson (1947) builds on the robots keeping humans "safe." *The Twonky* by Lewis Padgett (1942) gets my nod as runner-up for best story.

Enjoyed it.

Military Low-Level Flying: From F-4 to F-35. by Scott Rathbone. Hardback (horizontal 10.0x7.0 inches). 276 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *A Pictorial Display of Low Flying in Cumbria and Beyond*

Back in the late 1980s, I was on vacation in Scotland, driving a four banger along some road halfway up a river valley ridge. The tops of the ridge were covered in cloud, so I was in this tunnel with not another car for miles. I heard this attention-grabbing loud whoosh. A military jet zoomed past, navigating between cloud and water. It was gone before I really registered what was going on.

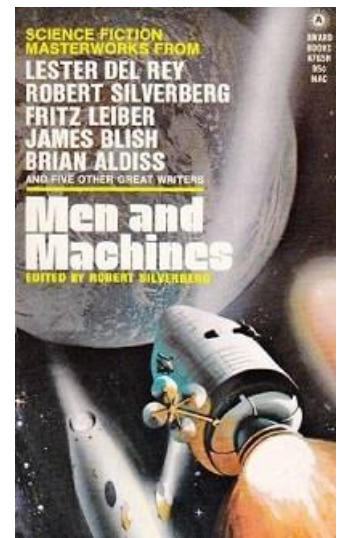
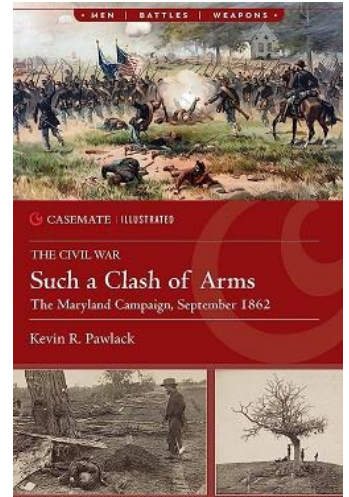
This photo book captures a wide variety of military jets, prop aircraft, and helicopters zooming up valley in low-level training flights from the 1980s to the 2020s. Apparently, the author's hobby is such photography to the extent of making logs of what flew when. He pulls in photos from his fellow low-level aircraft photographers.

Better yet, the aircraft comes from a variety of air forces, so even though you will see the same type of aircraft multiple times, the camouflage patterns and markings differ -- something for those who want to paint period models.

I counted 315 color photos, each with a caption listing type, location, and date. Most are printed one to a page on good stock with clear, sharp photos of the aircraft.

Best one? Hmmm. Tie between Vulcan bomber in 2009 (p152) and the sole WWII-era plane, Avro Lancaster, in 2013 (p165). Honorable mentions go to Westland Puma helicopter in 2005 with orange and black tiger striped camouflage (p102), F-22 in 2016 (p183), and F-15 with D-Day stripes in 2021 (p253).

Enjoyed it.



8th SS Cavalry Division Florian Geyer: Images of War. by Ian Baxter. Softcover (7.4x9.7 inches). 127 pages. 2023.

The 8th SS Cavalry Division grew out of a rebuilt SS cavalry brigade and was named after a leader in the 1524 German Peasants' War. This volume continues the photo-heavy series' work, unearthing unit photos from the US National Archives.

You'll be able to get uniform details from the photos, with about a quarter of them from training and the rest from front-line and rear-area service.

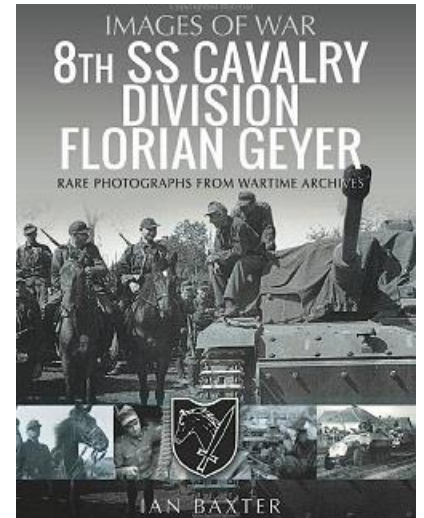
Best photo: a motorcyclist walking his bike across an improvised wooden railroad bridge (p50).

The book contains 149 black and white photos, plus a number of OOBs 1941 to 1945 in appendices.

One typo: Of the 30,000 SS troops in the siege of Budapest, only "800" (p5) broke out and made it back to German lines and later, of the 30,000 SS troops in the siege of Budapest, only "700" (p96) broke out and made it back to German lines.

This division had some front-line combat, but mostly was involved in anti-partisan operations on the Eastern Front and Croatia, which meant it mostly slaughtered civilians and burned down villages. After Croatia, it was moved into Hungary, where is served as a front-line unit.

Photos could use a little Photoshop magic, as lots contain small white dots and other imperfections. I don't want to be too picky as I don't know the original condition. As with just about all of the *Images of War* volumes for modelers, enjoyed it.



Stalingrad: Death of an Army (BattleCraft). by Ben Skipper. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 64 pages. 2023.

A decent recap of the Stalingrad campaign of 1942-1943 offers commander bios, OOBs down to division level, and a sprightly-paced recap of the major attacks and counterattacks. The entire historical narrative is peppered with photos.

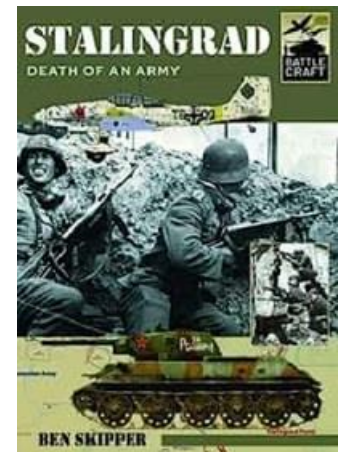
Yet the reason you buy a *Craft* volume is primarily for the modeling. Like others in the series, this *BattleCraft* volume uses four models and photo-heavy build sequences: STuG III (1/35 Tamiya), T-34 (1/35 Zvezda), JU-87 Stuka (1/48 Airfix) and Yak-9 (1/48 Modelsvit).

Unfortunately, *BattleCraft* volumes tend to be spiced by the details that make the regular single-tank, aircraft, ship, etc so useful. For example, the build photos don't have any captions, so you have to guess what was done. If you're already good enough to figure out the process, then you probably are experienced enough not to need the booklet in the first place.

The book contains 128 black and white historical photos, four color maps, eight small color camouflage illustrations, 20 color photos, and 129 color modeling photos.

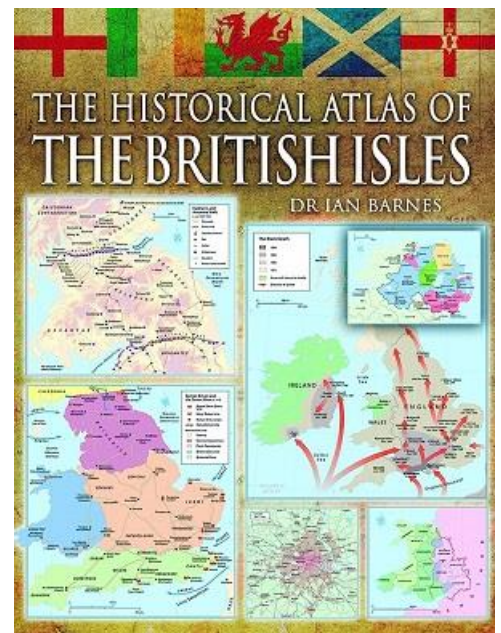
The one interesting trick I found was use of modeling clay to make the camouflage squiggles when using an airbrush (p63). I can't say I understood the explanation of the masking tape step (p62), but I'm not a modeler.

Plenty of books cover the history of Fall Blau and Stalingrad, but if you're serious about the modeling, I suggest buying the individual *TankCraft* and *AirCraft* books for a detailed discussion of creating superb modeling effects.



The Historical Atlas of the British Isles. by Alex Swanston and Ian Barnes. Softcover (8.5x10.8 inches). 224 pages. 2023 reprint of 2011 book.

This atlas contains 142 color maps on a tour of British history topics, usually one page of text with a facing page of one map. Topics include: Stonehenge, Roman Invasion, England in 1066 before the invasion, War of the Roses, Industrial Revolution Canals, Imperial



territories, Victorian railroads 1850-1890, WWII Battle of Britain, and plenty more.

I can't say I read this cover to cover -- it's not exactly a page turner -- but I did read through a variety of chapters and pored over the associated maps. Appendices list Kings, Queens, Prime Ministers, and Battles.

Anyone contemplating a campaign based on England might find this useful for territorial divisions, resource allocations, and so on. I found the chapter *Making of England 916-919* to provide a good starting point for a Dark Ages campaign. The map contains shire boundaries, fortified towns, and other towns -- just the thing for an area map. Enjoyed it.

The Army Grows

Keith kindly provided a couple of photos of his latest painting efforts.

