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Books I've Read

Playing With Reality: How Games Shape World

Manchu Empire Army: 1600-1727 (CentSold 116)

Handbrake: Falklands/Malvinas 1982 (LAmr 28)

WWII Italian Soft-Skinned Vehicles: Volume 1

Super Slick: Huey Helicopter in Vietnam

Against Hitler's Luftwaffe in the Balkans

2SAS: Bill Stirling WWII

War on Ukraine: Volume 4 (Europe at War 35)

War on Ukraine: Volume 5 (Europe at War 36)

South American Armies: 1825-1865

Into the Endless Mist: Vol 1 Aleut Camp 1942

The Italian Wars: Volume 5 (Ret to Regt 25)

Sword for Peace and Liberty: V1 (Eur War 35)

Russian Patriotic War 1812: Vol. 1 (RtoRegt126)

Through Blue Skies to Hell: WWII Air War

Fortress Britain 1940: Secret Defences

Cold War Berlin: An Island City: Volume 3

Sailors, Ships and Sea Fights: Age of Sail

Dwell in These Demons: Part One

Model Rocketry: America's Hobby in the Cold War

Pathfinder Pioneer: Memoir WWII Bomber Pilot

To Boldly Go: Leadership, Strategy and Conflict

The Penultimate Truth (sci-fi)

The Last Days of the Schooner America

French Armies of the Thirty Years War 1618-48





The tabletop battlefield. Confederates on left and (off photo) upper left corner. Union in center and right.

ACW Gaines Mill: Gray Tide

by Russ Lockwood

As per our way, we rolled a d10 to determine sides. I ended up on the Union side along with Sam, Commander Phil, and Rich. The Rebels were: Chris, Troy, and Commander Jay. We used our usual ACW rule set: *Fire & Fury Brigade* -- the newer version, not the 1980s version.



Turn 3, but all are in photo (l to r): Umpire Dave, Union Commander Phil, Union Sam, Confederate Troy and Chris, Confederate Commander Jay, and Union Rich.

Confederate troops ready to enter the woods and attack the Union line.

Someone with more ACW knowledge than me would recognize Gaines Mill instantly. A bigger ACW buff would know how the battle turned out.

Me? Not so much. Indeed, not at all. But I could see Union fieldworks atop a hill and a relatively open right flank, although Union reserves were behind the fieldworks. Sam held



the fieldworks and left, Rich the right, and I had the immediate reserves. Commander Phil took the reserves that would march onto the table.

Opposing us was Chris across the stream in the center and Jay to his left, Union right, with Rebels infiltrating the woods. Troy would take the Confederate reserves marching on table.

Union line.

The Plans

Commander Phil ordered a shift left among the Union regiments manning the fieldworks to cover a gap between fieldworks and left table edge. I'd shuffle a brigade into the line and use my other two brigades to shore up the right flank. Phil's oncoming troops would be our Army reserve to patch holes where needed.

The one disadvantage to the Union position was a large patch of woods right in front of the right-hand side of the fieldworks. Besides the +1 die modifier for being in the woods, it also ensured the Union firepower would be only one turn -- the turn that the CSA troops charged the fieldworks.

Judging by the first moves, the CSA plan was for Jay to crunch the Union right supported by Chris. We weren't sure where Troy would come onto the table, but it was either in the Confederate rear or off to our left side right in front of Sam.

Both sides' marching reinforcements could come on table in march column on the given turn, or, delay one turn and come on in any formation six inches to either side of the entry road.

The fieldworks were worth a +1 die modifier to the defense along with a +1 modifier for melee (only) for defending the top of the hill. However, the usual +1 supported line modifier would not be applied.

L to r: Umpire Dave and the Union Lads: Rich, Russ, Sam, and Commander Phil. Photo by Mike.



The optional +1 die modifier for the Rebel Yell was in effect. All troops on both sides were Veteran, good for a +1 die modifier and a less lethal result on the musket chart when being fired at.

Victory was holding the fieldworks and causing more casualties to the enemy than you took.

Union think right flank. Photo by Mike.

The Battle

Sam shuffled left to extend the line into the gap, I filled in the spot with a brigade and artillery, and a pair of my brigades plus two other artillery batteries headed to the right. Rich withdrew as best he could.

Commander Jay's starting Rebels on the Union right flank. Photo by Mike.

Jay advanced on our right, pursuing Rich's troops, which formed up with a refused flank and an artillery battery guarding the road. That soon picked up and left as Jay advanced.

In the middle, Chris maintained an artillery assault, but suffered from a wretched a rolling result as can be imagined. Meanwhile, he moved his troops into that patch of woods in front of about half the Union fieldworks.

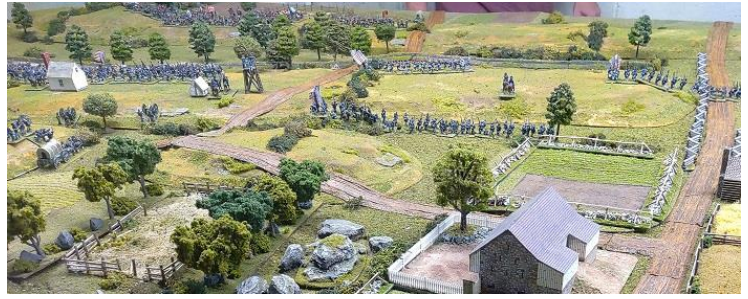
My division moves up into the fieldworks and onto the right flank. Sam shuffled units (including one at the bottom left corner) to the left to cover the gap.

I gazed into his disposition and hoped I would be able to hold. The Union brigades were big (15 stands), but fragile (at 13 stands). So, lose two stands and all of a sudden, that big +2 die modifier for movement, rallying, and meleeing disappears.

Troy's Rebels arrive. Sam just managed to cover the wooded gap to the right of the fieldworks. Chris' Rebels are crossing the stream and infiltrating through the woods (top left corner).

The Trojan Course

Troy arrived just in front of the left side of the Union line. He did indeed delay a turn and came on in regular supported line formation. He immediately headed up the hill to attack Sam. While Troy attacked, so did Chris and Jay. It was a beauty of a coordinated attack all across the Union line.



The First Big Melee

Chris charged in Rebel Yell mode. So tremendous was his Yell, that my big firepower mostly fizzled. Fortuitously, so did his. It came down to brigado-a-brigado. Plain and simple, I outrolled him. Not by much, and in one case, we had to redo the melee result when we discovered a CSA Out-of-Ammo marker that had been hiding in the woods that allowed me to turn a tie into a slight win.

My three Union brigades hold onto the fieldworks by their fingertips in the first melee, but the Confederate threat remains.

But there Chris remained, not going anywhere and filtering in fresh troops to replace brigades that were repulsed or fled. I had held the fieldworks.

So consumed with the battle to my front, I did not see what happened to Sam or Rich.

My right-most brigade (upper right corner) hangs in there, but Chris sweeps my other two brigades away and the Rebels capture my section of the fieldworks. Commander Phil's troops (bottom of photo) are backing me up and getting ready for the counterattack.



The Second Big Melee

Undaunted, Chris charged anew. My firepower responded unevenly, but my melee dice were quite even -- all low and horrible. Chris' dice proved exceptionally strong and he stormed over the fieldworks. My troops were sent packing.

Fortunately, Commander Phil had arrived by this time and created a second line, ready for the counterattack.

Troy's Rebels (bottom) cross the stream and form up to attack Sam atop the wooded hill at the same time as Chris hits the fieldworks. Photo by Troy.



Union Left: Stonewall Sam

On my left, and indeed the Union left, Sam proved quite the immovable object to Troy's attacks. One second I looked and Troy's Confederates were massing and infiltrating the woods, and then next, the rebels were a runnin' for the hills, outshot and outmeleed by Sam's bluebellies.

Here comes Troy!

Well, perhaps the Rebs were not heading for the hills, but Troy's boys suffered a reverse. Sam had not moved an inch and stood as solid as a stonewall.

Great. Now we have the Rock of Copenhagen (Mike) and Stonewall Sam (Sam). Aren't nicknames great?

Confederate Commander Jay (right) and Chris coordinate an attack on the right (versus Rich) and me (center) with considerable success. Photo by Troy.

Union Right: Rich

I had sent one brigade and an artillery battery to my right to shore up the flank and that generally worked until Jay managed to sort his Rebels out. The first Rebel advance ended in a temporary stalemate, but the second advance ended with success.

End of Game. Lotsa Rebels heading towards Union lines.



Once again, my troops hung tough in the first clash but disintegrated in the second. I only had an artillery battery on the right and was keen to pull it back, as Jay's troops were heading for my battery in multiple march columns. Rich retired, falling back on Commander Phil's line. Indeed, that was becoming a solid second line.

Commander Phil uses the tower to spy on the right flank.

End Game

And that's where we ended it after four and a half turns over three hours. The first turn (3:30pm) was a Confederate only half turn (Rebel move, Union fire, Rebel fire -- no units advanced into melee). The other four turns -- 4pm, 4:30, 5pm, and 5:30 -- consisted of the full Union move, Rebel fire, Union fire, melee, Rebel move, Union fire, Rebel fire, melee sequence per turn.

The Victory Condition was hold or capture the fieldworks and inflict more casualties than taken. If not, it's a draw.

As Sam still held about 1/3 of the breastworks and was in really good shape and the Confederate dead far outnumbered the Union dead, Dave ruled it was a marginal Union victory. Obviously, much could happen in another four turns. Jay was bearing down on Rich and Phil, but me and Phil could counterattack Chris before Jay could reinforce him -- although that would set up a Jay counter-counterattack. Troy was still able to dance with Sam, but Sam's position was quite the fortress because the left flank had no fieldworks, but was in woods, uphill, and with supported lines.

A Little Number Crunching

In retrospect, I probably should have come out of the fieldworks and into the woods. Why? Better die modifiers. All troops being equal...

With firing, defenders get 1 bonus for defending fieldworks or defending woods. So that's a wash.

With melee, defending the fieldworks was a +1 and being uphill was a +1. There was no supported line when defending fieldworks. However, had I moved out and been in the woods, I'd still have the +1 for hill and get a +1 for woods and also get a +1 for supported line. Hmmmm.

And even if tossed backwards, assuming no Rebel breakthrough advance, not too much damage, and rolling well enough in a disordered state, I could always pop back into the fieldworks.

Now, if I could only figure out these things during the game and not on the ride home...

In any case, another fine-looking game and jovial ACW battle with all concerned. Thanks, Dave, for hosting and umpiring.

Better Lucky And Good?

by Rich

I must say that the Union side was very lucky to have "Stonewall Sam" holding the breastworks on their left flank. He saved the day for the Union and he deserves to be promoted forthwith.

Stonewall: A Pretty Good Nickname

by Sam

Agreed...



Union hero Stonewall Sam (left) strikes a confident pose before the battle with Rebel Troy (middle) and Rebel Chris.

Race to Ace: Card Game

by Russ Lockwood

All card games involve the luck of the draw. Unlike *Poker*, there's no bluffing with *Race to Ace*. Unlike most wargaming, there's no die tossing, either. It's merely a case of whether you have the right card or not. I guess getting caught flat-footed might be a metaphor for jet-age combat.

The deck contains offensive-style cards, like Radar Acquisition and Visual Acquisition along with the Missile and Guns weaponry cards, as well as defensive cards such as Malfunction and Flameout. The Jammit cards are like cancel cards and can cancel an Acquisition or another Jammit. A nice one-page chart explains the cards and consequences beyond my simple recap.

Dan considers his cards at the start of the game.

Dogfights

Players draw seven cards and play one card at a time unless engaged in a dogfight. A dogfight is initiated when one player plays a Radar Acquisition or Visual Acquisition card on an opponent. The opponent then has the opportunity to play a defensive card, like Malfunction. If a defensive card cannot counteract the Acquisition, then the first player plays a weapon: Missile for Radar Acquisition and Guns for Visual Acquisition. The opponent's plane is shot down and the firing player gets a victory.

Some cards are special starred cards, such as Hot Stick and Golden Bird, which confer a benefit to the owner and remain in play as long as the player is not shot down.

First player to reach five victories becomes an ace and wins the game.

That's About It

Race to Ace lacks any sort of subtlety -- it's a fast card game of playing Acquisitions and counters. If you don't have a counter card or the right defensive card, Boom! Down you go.

One thing we found was that a player can get on a streak because the opponent without said defensive cards will often go several turns before drawing one. In a two-player game, you can get into double and triple shoot down streaks -- depends on the cards. But the games are 20 minutes to 30 minutes long while learning and half that time once you're familiar with the cards.

Dennis plays a defensive card in his first game.

Dan noted that many of the mechanics are similar, if not identical, to a game called *Mille Bourne*. Given the complex card games I've played in the past, this is a simple game for kids. If *Race to Ace* helps get 'em into wargaming, that's a good thing. It wouldn't be that big a leap to introduce more sophisticated miniatures games.



Space Base Expansion: Mysteries of Terra Proxima

by Russ Lockwood

If you've been following my chronicles of *Space Base* games with Dan, then you know we finished the first expansion (*Shy Pluto*) to this marvelous game. Dan got the second expansion, *Mysteries of Terra Proxima*, and so we began exploring what it had in store.

Like the first expansion, it contains more spaceship cards doled out at a slow pace as you accomplish objectives. The booklet explains the new cards and you read until you see a big red STOP sign at the end of a chapter. Then comes the triggers for going onto the next chapter.

The new cards expand the functions, the most notable was the activation of an entire column (number) of cards. Otherwise, it plays the same as regular *Space Base* -- why screw with success?

In the first game, I had sweet gig rakin' in the cash for karaoke. OK, I didn't sing, but my deck sure did and it surprised the hell outta me. The layered functions from multiple cards gave me plenty of coin, specialty dice gave me extra VPs, and the die rolls came my way to activate all those cards. Tabletop Grammy indeed.

In the second game, we missed an important trigger. When one of us hit 10VPs, we were supposed to open the next chapter in the expansion rulebook, which usually triggers more cards and options. Alas, we were so locked into the game, we forgot all about it until the end. So, we saved the next chapter for the next game. Ooops.

As for the game itself, 'twas a reversal from the first. Dan's deck sang with arias of financial and VP sweetness, while the best my deck and die rolls could do was burp a Taylor Swift song.

Great games. I look forward to continuing the saga to unravel more mysteries.

Start of the game.



HMGS Next Generation: Education and Miniatures

By John Spiess

Simsbury Library: Gaming the Dark Ages

Jim (left, green shirt) and I traveled up to Simsbury, CT, to run a Dark Age game based on the Battle of Stamford Bridge. Simsbury Library head librarian Mary Richardson (right) is a big fan of ours and she played in the game as well, directing the Viking team.

This group at Simsbury is much different from the kids who have played here before. Mary wanted to introduce miniature gaming to the Library's *Dungeons & Dragons (D&D)* group, so we played on a Wednesday when their group meets as a special event. I tweaked the rules a bit to allow for some of their *D&D* characters to attach themselves to a warband and act as heroes. This worked out pretty well.

The checkerboard formation becomes a shield wall during the game at Simsbury Libr. Photo by John.

Everyone picked up on the shield wall strategy right away. In the end, the Vikings pulled out a victory, which was a greatly different result from the historical outcome.

John (right, green shirt) and the Bunker Hill gamers at Greenwich Library.

Greenwich Library: Bunker Hill

A few of the regulars couldn't make it to the Greenwich Library for the American Revolution Bunker Hill game, but we had a few new players. We had a total of eight Battle of Bunker Hill players: five British attackers and three American defenders.

The British team started the attack with an assault on the fence line, hoping the Americans would send reinforcements and weaken the main redoubt. The Americans didn't take the bait, and the game pretty much mirrored what happened historically.

The British took horrendous casualties as they closed on the earthworks and a few battalions broke and ran back down the hill. However, a few battalions passed morale and were able to charge into the earthworks. The melee sealed the Americans fate, and they had to withdraw.

The British troops prepare to attack. Photo by John.



I always give a brief summary of the history behind the game scenario. These kids are middle school (with one high school student). Only three of eight had ever even heard of the Battle of Bunker Hill.

I guess the American History curriculum has changed quite a bit from when I was in school.

In any case, they had a great time, and the newcomers will be back. The parents were pretty happy at pickup.

The British storm the fortifications. Photo by John.



Wilton Library: Battle of Brunanburh 937

HMGS-NG hosted a Dark Age Viking versus Saxon game at the Wilton Library in Connecticut. Right now, we host in Wilton three times a year, but after today's game, we may receive the go-ahead for six per year. We had eight kids plus library staff play in this game. Also thanks to John Manning (green shirt) who helped out.

The initial stages of the battle. Photo by John.



We hand out flyers to help discuss the game and for the kids to bring home and show their parents. Here's the text portion:

The Battle of Brunanburh was fought in 937 between Aethelstan, King of England, and an alliance of Olaf Guthfrithson, King of Dublin, Constantine II, King of Scotland, and Owain, King of Strathclyde. The battle is often cited as the point of origin for English nationalism and arguably one of the most significant battles in the long history of England.

The Dark Ages miniatures. Photo by John.



Aethelstan invaded Scotland with a large military and naval force in 934. Following the invasion of Scotland, it became apparent that Aethelstan could only be defeated by an allied force of his enemies. The leader of the alliance was Olaf, joined by Constantine II and Owain. Though they had all been enemies in living memory, they agreed to set aside whatever political and religious differences they might have had in order to achieve one common purpose: to destroy Aethelstan.

The battle resulted in an overwhelming victory for Aethelstan's army. Aethelstan and his army pursued the invaders until the end of the day, slaying great numbers of enemy troops. Olaf fled and sailed back to Dublin with the remnants of his army and Constantine escaped to Scotland.

The Library webpage highlights the upcoming game.

LIBRARY WEBSITE EVENTS CALENDAR STUDY ROOMS RESERVE A ROOM

Home

Historical Gaming: The Battle of Brunanburh

Upcoming List Month Week Day

JUL 24
Wednesday, July 24, 2024
3:00pm - 5:00pm
WED
Featured

Program Type: Summer Reading, Other
Age Group: Teens

Please note you are looking at an event that has already happened.

Registration for this event is no longer open.
Allowed Grades: 6th Grade to 12th Grade

Event Details

Long before William and Kate, and the United Kingdom we know today, England was divided into separate kingdoms all fighting one another for power. Come and play in a game that recreates one of the greatest battles in English history that almost no one has ever heard of... fought by kings with names you can barely pronounce.

Hundreds of hand painted miniatures will represent the armies. Make decisions as a team and roll some dice to see who will control all of England. Lots of fun, and learn some history at the same time.

Presented by facilitators from the Historical Miniatures Gaming Society, Next Gen, Inc who have great experience in running games that are fun and challenging for players.

Registration required, as space is limited. This program is for ms&g grades 6-12.

Location Details
137 Old Ridgefield Rd
Wilton, CT 06897
(203) 762-3950
See map: Google Maps

Wilton Library
137 Old Ridgefield Rd
Wilton, CT 06897
(203) 762-3950
See map: Google Maps

Contact Info
Name: Teen Department
Email: teen@wiltonlibrary.org
Phone Number: (203) 762-6342

August and September

August and September are already filling up with requests for our games. Most libraries have to start planning some events for Hispanic History Month, and our events basically check off all their boxes, so our Aztec-themed presentations are likely to be popular.

We are also booked for the first Hobby U painting event held outside a convention in New Canaan. Thanks to Greg in Hobby U for letting me borrow the treasured Reaper paints and some brushes for the class.

Andrew promises to find good homes for Memoir '44 expansion packs. Photo by John.

Notes And Observations

Another side note: One of the kids, Andrew, is also part of a small group that plays *Memoir '44*. Last year at Historicon, someone had donated a whole bunch of *Memoir '44* expansion packs and various other game materials. Brenda probably remembers all of them. So I spoke with Andrew and his dad, and they have now found a good home for the expansions. I told them that if the group painted everything, we can help out even more.



More HMGS-NG Photos



Not sure what the game is, but it has a grid and markers. Photo by John.



The gamers at Simsbury Library. Photo by John.

NEWS

Terraforming Mars: Final Score Correction

by Russ Lockwood

Last issue, I recapped a game of *Terraforming Mars*, but made an error in the VP totals. In the original, I wrote "Scott was in the mid 80 VPs and Steve in low 80s. Yours truly chugged into third place in the low 60s."

Not exactly. The final score was Steve: 82 VPs, Scott: 79 VPs, and Russ: 62 VPs. Teach me not to take notes...

Sorry about that.

HMGS Resolutions: Adopted

by Jon Lundberg, Board President, HMGS Inc.

HMGS institutes greater transparency in its operations. All three were approved by vote. I summarized the resolutions. Full details on hmgs.org website. -- RL

Resolution 1

The Board shall publish Financial Statements prepared in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles for each Quarter from Q1 2020 to Q2 2024 on the members section of HMGS.org at least ten (10) days prior to the Annual Membership Meeting at Historicon 2024.

The Board discontinued the relationship with FHA (Frank Hajek and Associates) and moved accounting services to another firm. The Board authorized a final payment to FHA.

The Board also authorized annual reviews of the financials. The board will publish to the membership the Annual Financials, Auditors Review, and Maryland Certificate as they become available and the 2024 Quarterly (unaudited) Financial Statements upon completion.

Resolution 2

The Board will inform all members of various HMGS financial information at least ten (10) days prior to the Annual Membership Meeting at Historicon 2024, including access standards to the organization's assets, reconciliation of financial records and statements, banking (PNC Bank), and signatures needed for expenditures.

Resolution 3

The Board will publish meeting minutes from the start of 2023 up through June 2024 at least ten (10) days prior to the Annual Membership Meeting at Historicon 2024. All minutes are posted through May 2023. When the June 2023 minutes are approved by the BoD in July, they will be posted.

Lindbergh Kidnapping: September 2024 Lectures

by Russ Lockwood

Adapted from the press release. -- RL.

Flemington, NJ, was the site of the trial involving the kidnapping of Charles Lindbergh's son and will be the site of lectures by author James Davidson involving the topic.

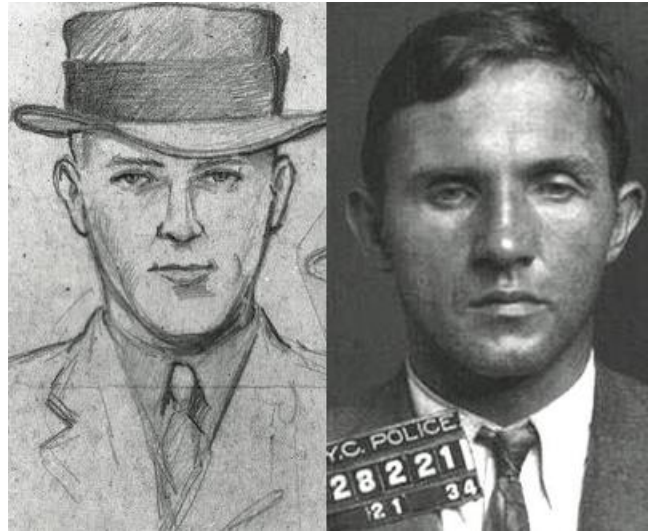
Davidson has lived the Lindbergh Kidnapping for over 30 years. A former history teacher and a popular speaker on the Lindbergh case, he grew up in Flemington,



where he heard stories of the Lindbergh Kidnapping and Hauptmann Trial at an early age.

Davidson's parents had lived in Trenton, NJ and attended a Hauptmann Execution Party at a local hotel, where they listened to Gabriel Heater broadcast the execution live from outside the State Prison. Davidson's father said all the lights in the hotel dimmed when they electrocuted Hauptmann.

As a young boy Davidson met William Allen, who worked for his grandfather and who was one of the people who found the Lindbergh baby. In Flemington he knew Lloyd Fisher, who was his father's attorney and who was also Bruno Hauptmann's attorney, while Davidson's neighbor was one of the jurors at the trial. Over a 30-year period, Davidson amassed one of the largest collections of Lindbergh Flight and Trial memorabilia.



Sketch of "John" (left) based on description provided by Lindbergh family representative Dr. Condon and photo of Bruno Richard Hauptmann (right), who was arrested on 9/19/1934.

Thursday, Sept. 5: Anne and Charles Lindbergh Part One -- Biography of the couple, including Lindbergh in Nazi Germany and the families Lindbergh fathered in Germany. At the Historic Courthouse, Main Street, Flemington, NJ, 7 pm. Free. No reservations are required.

Friday, Sept. 6: Anne and Charles Lindbergh Part Two -- Continues the tale from Part One. At the Historic Courthouse, Main Street, Flemington, NJ, 7 pm. Free. No reservations are required.

Sunday, Sept. 29: Twelve Theories of Who Kidnapped the Lindbergh Baby -- Discusses not only the most popular and well-known theories of the Lindbergh Kidnapping, but also some of the less well known that will make you rethink everything you ever knew about the kidnapping. This talk is a stunner as Jim Davidson summarizes various theories, spinning them into the facts of the case and how each theory could possibly identify other guilty parties including a famous mafia don and Colonel Lindbergh himself. You will leave this talk questioning whether or not Hauptmann acted alone or with others, what he really knew, who else was involved and whether or not he was simply framed. At the Historic Courthouse, Main Street, Flemington, NJ, 2 pm. Free. No reservations are required.

Flemington offers ample free parking about two blocks from the Courthouse in the "Juror Parking Lot" at the corner of Park Ave. and Capner St. On street parking is also available.

FYI: Free tours of the courthouse and jail are available by appointment. To schedule a tour, please call the Hunterdon County Sheriff's Office at (908) 788-1166.

-- RL

New Figs: 1812 Russian Leib Guard and Edward III

by Russ Lockwood

Adapted from the press release. --

RL.

Chris Parker Games continues to roll out a variety of 3D miniatures. His new figs, among many, are 1812 Russian Leib Guard in 28mm, 40mm, and 54mm.

Each set contains six miniatures -- all unpainted and all in a single piece. Please indicate if you want marching, charging or firing soldiers or if you want command.

Price for 28mm: \$16 per set; for 40mm: \$22 per set; and for 54mm: \$36 per



set. If you order 2 to 3 sets, you get 10% discount. If you order 4 to 20 sets, you get 15% discount. Packing fee: 50 cents.

Also, CPG released Edward III, foot and mounted, in 28mm (\$7), 40mm (\$10), and 54mm (\$20). If you order 2 to 3 sets, you get 10% discount. If you order 4 to 20 sets, you get 15% discount. Packing fee: 50 cents.

More info about these and other figures:
www.chrisparkergames.com

New Wargame: *Lang Vei 1968* by Russ Lockwood

Adapted from the press release. -- RL.

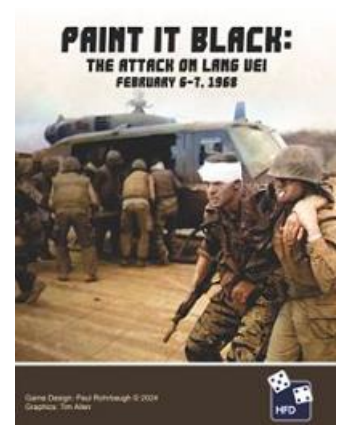
Simultaneously with the Battle of Khe San, the communists attacked the US strongpoint of Lang Vei. The the 24th Regiment of the 304th Infantry Division, supported by heavy artillery and PT-76 tanks of the NVA's 198th Tank Battalion attacked on February 6-7, 1968.

Contains: Two 11x17-inch area map sheets with game record keeping tracks, one sheet of 70 double-sided counters, one players' aid sheet, and eight pages of rules. Players will need to provide a deck of standard playing cards and at least one d10.

Each turn represents 45 minutes. Units are mostly companies or platoons. Tank units represent two tanks (full strength) or one tank (reduced strength). An inch on the map is about 100 yards.

Paint It Black is designed by Paul Rohrbaugh and features graphics by Tim Allen. \$22.95 plus shipping. A custom card set is \$11.00.

More info: <http://www.hfdgames.com/PIB.html>



GHQ: 6mm Modern Polish Tanks by Russ Lockwood

In 2019 a new long-term program designed to modernize the Polish Armed Forces was introduced. Over the period of the next 10 to 14 years a large portion of the equipment currently being used by the Polish Army will be either upgraded or replaced. Some elements of this program are already in place. The Polish Ministry of Defense signed a contract aiming at modernization of all Leopard 2 main battle tanks used by the Polish Army to the Leopard 2PL standard. The completion of this program is planned to take place prior to 2023. The first Leopard 2PL arrived in March 2018.

The Polish Army has 1,009 tanks (2017) including 249 Leopard 2 tanks (117 Leopard 2A4, 105 Leopard 2A5, 25 Leopard 2PL, 2 Leopard 2NJ), 232 PT-91 tanks, that underwent modernization in 2016, and 328 T-72 tanks. 230 of the T-72s are being upgraded by the Bumar-Labedy arms manufacturing plant. Improvements include: installation of new radio communication systems, digital engine control and start-up system, 3rd generation thermal imaging cameras, external transport baskets, and any necessary overhauls and repairs that can improve their longevity and combat ability on the modern battlefield.

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Poland has donated over 200 T-72 tanks to Ukraine's army, along with dozens of other armored vehicles. As a result of the invasion, the Polish government has expedited the process of modernization of the military equipment. In July 2022, Poland signed a contract to acquire

 Unpainted 1/285 (6mm) Modern Micro Armour T-72 M1 W81 - \$13.99USD	 Unpainted 1/285 (6mm) Modern Micro Armour Leopard 2 N52 - \$13.99USD	 Unpainted 1/285 (6mm) Modern Micro Armour K2 Black Panther SK3 - \$13.99USD
 Unpainted 1/285 (6mm) Modern Micro Armour M1A2 SEP Abrams, TUSK II N632 - \$13.99USD	 Unpainted 1/285 (6mm) Modern Micro Armour Oshkosh M-ATV N535 - \$13.99USD	 Unpainted 1/285 (6mm) Modern Micro Armour 152mm SpGH DANA wz-77 N656 - \$13.99USD
 Unpainted 1/285 (6mm) Modern Micro Armour K9 Thunder SK6 - \$13.99USD	 Unpainted 1/285 (6mm) Modern Micro Armour K239 Chunmoo MLRS SK11 - \$13.99USD	 Unpainted 1/285 (6mm) Modern Micro Armour RM-70/85 MLR N659 - \$13.99USD

1000 K2 Black Panther tanks and 460 K9 Thunder howitzers from South Korea for (the cost for the latter was US\$2.4 billion). The first batch of K2 tanks and K9 howitzers was delivered in December 2022. Further deliveries are scheduled for 2023-2026 period. More info: www.ghq.com

Above from Wikipedia:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish_Land_Forces

Reprint: *Java Sea* by Russ Lockwood

Adapted from the press release. -- RL.

This volume in Avalanche Press' *Second World War at Sea* series game is based on the Japanese operation to secure the SW Pacific. It includes 180 "long" playing pieces, depicting the major fleet units of both sides: battleships, aircraft carriers, cruisers and fleet destroyers and 340 square playing pieces, half the size of the ship pieces, mostly depicting aircraft but also smaller warships and markers. The game uses the maps and playing pieces from the old *Strike South* game, but otherwise is completely new with additional playing pieces, a completely new set of 40 scenarios, and Second Edition series rules with full-color play aids.

The two operational maps depict the South China Sea and the East Indies, including all the major ports and airbases. The area covered stretches from Formosa on the north to Australia on the South. The maps overlap with that from *Eastern Fleet* on the west edge, and stretch to New Guinea on the east where they overlap with those from *South Pacific*.

All of the battles of the Japanese *Strike South* are included: the battle of Java Sea and Sunda Strait, the last cruise of the British battleship *Prince of Wales*, and many more. The Allies may look outnumbered, but the Japanese are undertaking a very risky shoestring offensive with the bare minimum of force.
\$99.99

More info: <https://www.avalanchepress.com/gameJavaSea.php>

Cities of the Damned: ATO 60 Shipping by Russ Lockwood

Adapted from the press release. -- RL.

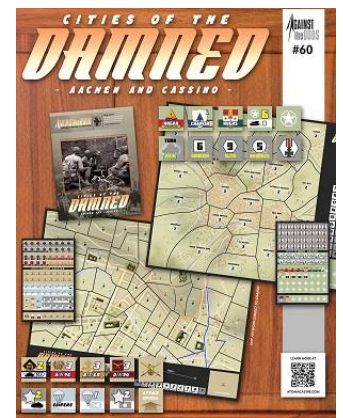
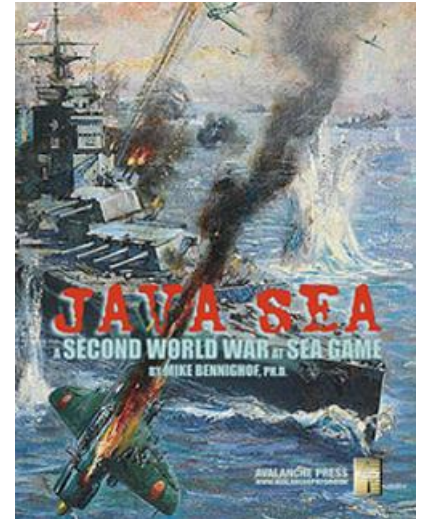
The two solitaire games in *Against the Odds* No. 60 magazine are *Aachen* and *Cassino* (see the 4/26/2024 AAR for game details) and are now shipping. Price: \$34.95 includes US shipping (\$47.95 international). Designed by Michael Rinella (*Aachen*) and Paul Rohrbaugh (*Cassino*), Development by David Jones, and Graphic Design by Mark Mahaffey.

Full details are at:
<https://www.atomagazine.com/Details.cfm?ProdID=180>

Stalingrad: Verdun on the Volga

Next up from *ATO* is the 2022 Annual (yes, 2022, not 2024 - getting there) featuring the game *Stalingrad: Verdun on the Volga*. This is a "reprint" that has been updated and upgraded and is being published in the usual *ATO* ziplock format (not a box).

With a setup time of less than 15 minutes and a large, double map-board, players will have plenty of chances to try new approaches and come back for more. The original three very different scenario situations gave players the option to go for a game that might be complete in 3-4 hours or one that will probably take 8 hours, although there are VP checks along the way that could shorten things suddenly.



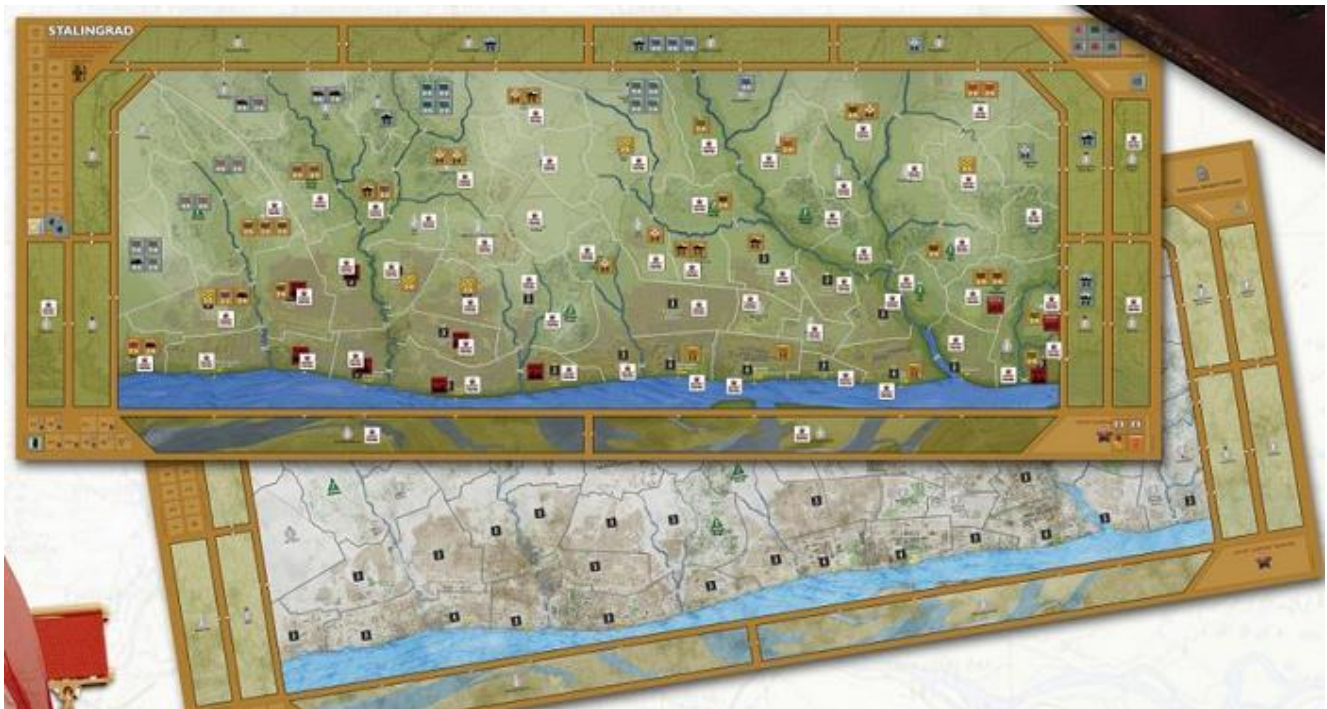
Price: \$59.95 includes US shipping (\$94.95 international). Designed by Michael Rinella, Development by Kevin Duke, and Graphic Design by Mark Mahaffey.

- Maps - Full color 17x44-inch double-sided area mapsheet
- Counters - 330+ full color 5/8" die-cut counters
- Rules length - 24 pages
- Separate quick set-up charts on cardstock - 2 pages
- Separate reinforcement charts on cardstock - 2 pages
- New AV/DV Tracking Chart - 1 page
- New Introductory and Operation Hubertus scenarios - 4 pages
- Complexity - Medium
- Playing time - Up to 3 to 4 hours
- How challenging is it solitaire? - Average



Full details are at:
<https://www.atomagazine.com/Details.cfm?ProdID=194>

The game's doubled-side Summer/Winter maps -- a first for ATO.



Left: Paint It Black: Lang Vei 1968 map.

Below: Paint It Black Counters.



BOOKS I'VE READ

By *Russ Lockwood*

Playing With Reality: How Games Have Shaped Our World. by Kelly Clancy.
Riverhead Books. 2024. 360 pages.

My short take: Brilliant encapsulation of the application of game theory to games and other aspects of society. The long take: read the book. It's that good.

"Games are a kind of untrue truth. What is internally consistent in a game need not reflect anything about reality" (p6).

If you've ever played a wargame rule set or boardgame and wondered if the designer actually read any military history, then you get this statement. If you ever wondered why game mechanics reward certain moves, then you get this statement.

In essence, and a theme throughout the book, "garbage in, garbage out." Sure, that may seem snarky, but the rules, assumptions, and biases guide the theory that results in an outcome of reward (or not) for the players of the game. As the author is a neuroscientist, she concentrates on how these and other games interact with our brain to produce dopamine hits that keep all us players playing.

It was in a discussion about the 1563 book *Liber de lude aleae* (*Book on Games and Chance*) and the examined tosses of 1d6, 2d6, and 3d6 that first brought up the idea of "odds" (p50) instead of "God decides." This was part of the creation of studying probability and extended to the idea that dopamine hits increase when the outcomes and rewards of an endeavor are uncertain (p63). This is later tied to players' expectations and predictions and the twin concepts of marginal utility -- the more you get, the less you want -- and marginal discounting -- higher value placed on immediate rewards rather than future rewards (p125).

In the wargame world, Chapter 4 focuses on 19th century game *Kriegspiel* in Prussia, which led to German consolidation and victory in the Franco-Prussian War. Von Moltke kriegspieled WWI enough to add motorized ammo columns to keep troops supplied with ammunition, but apparently not enough to keep the right flank strong.

In WWII, the Germans kriegspieled the invasion of the USSR in a exercise called Otto that showed the USSR would lose about 250 divisions. Sure enough, that was about the number the Germans crunched. However, the Soviets wargamed too, and "German player" Gen. Zhukov impressed Stalin enough with his own Barbarossa victory that Stalin drafted more men into the army, so even though about 250 divisions were lost, plenty of reserves were around to prevent the collapse. That came as a surprise to the Germans. One other point: Otto only went to November 1941, so the winter was all its fury was not considered.

Of note, most games are zero-sum events: one player loses while another gains, and so are not cooperative endeavors when cooperating might be better than competing. This leads into the "minimax" principle of all players vying for the most rewards with the least loss even in worst-case scenarios (p93). In games, and here IBM's DeepBlue chess program used this as the basic tenant of programming, it's a self-interest free-for-all devoid of anything else than material wins (p211).

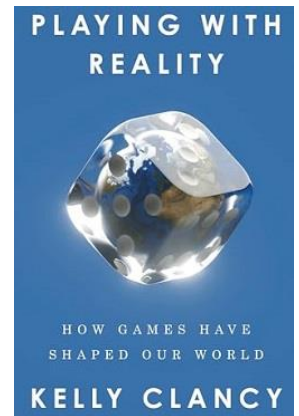
Games covered include *Chess*, *Checkers*, and *Go*, quite often in context with creating analog or digital opponents for humans. Yet game theory also includes avenues for war, politics, finance, medicine, social media, and artificial intelligence. Yes, it's a little pop culture-ish at times, but applying game theory to those endeavors gives you hope as well as horror. For the former, something like mapping proteins for diseases and cures. For the latter, I don't mean Cylons or Terminators showing up, but I do mean hordes of humans succumbing to immediate rewards and dopamine hits at the expense of facts and long-term stability.

One bit of trivia I'll add as the spread of personal computers also meant the spread of computer gaming and game theory: the 1978 book *Basic Computer Games* became an "unlikely hit." The book came from Creative Computing Books, an offshoot of *Creative Computer Magazine* founded, published, and edited by David Ahl. The book sold over 1 million copies. How do I know? I was an Asst. Editor on the magazine at the tail end of its run before being bought by Ziff-David publishing and absorbed by *PC Magazine*.

Nerd Tidbit: *Creative Computer Magazine* November 1984 issue: The 10th anniversary of the launch of the magazine. It's full of articles about the early days of computing, especially by the pioneers who were there, and p251 on has a look at the (then) future of computing. My main contribution? A chart on the Genealogy of Basic (p86).

Anyway, I was captivated by the history, analysis, and dissection of gaming reality in nearly every page of this book. It makes you think about gaming, underlying assumptions, and mechanics. It triggers admiration of those whose pioneering efforts could be used for the benefit of society even as it makes you mad at those who adapted game theory to manipulate the population. Brilliant.

Enjoyed it.



The Army of the Manchu Empire: Century of Soldier 116. by Michael Fredholm von Essen. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 272 pages. 2024 revised edition of 2009 revised edition of 1997 book.

Subtitle: *The Conquest Army and the Imperial Army of Qing China 1600-1727*

This third edition expands the information of previous versions as well as adds a center color section of uniforms, banners, and other illustrations.

Admittedly, I know more about Dr. Fu Manchu than China's Manchu Empire, so this book was a treat to read. Exceptionally detailed given what original sources are available, this third edition covers uniforms, weaponry, tactics, organization, three battles, the Navy, and village militia. A separate section deals with Tibetan heavy cavalry.

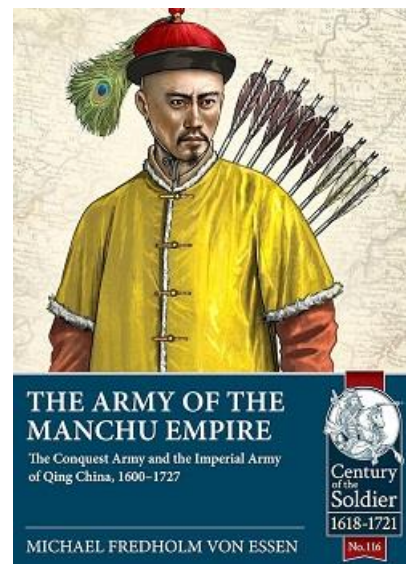
The Manchu (also known as Qing) Empire began among the nomad tribes of Mongolia as one tribe soon conquered or absorbed the surrounding tribes.

In 1601, a "banner" consisted of 100 horse archers (10 units of 10), although banner was more a social unit than a military unit. When called upon, the banner would supply a certain number of soldiers. Each banner's flag contains a dragon chasing a pearl, although as more banners were created, the final number settled at eight, which made a banner an "army" of sorts divided into "squadrons." By 1619, there were 30,000 bannermen, with field squadrons at about 100 to 200 men. By 1644, 563 squadrons fielded about 168,900 men on paper (p35).

Weaponry consisted of bow, crossbow, spear, polearms, and sword and later included matchlock muskets, cannon, rockets, and more. One cool weapon from movieland that I thought was a Hollywood creation but turned out to be real was a repeating crossbow. A box magazine of 10-12 bolts slotted over the crossbow. A lever pulled back the string, dropped a bolt into position, and fired the bolt. It was short range only and the bolts did not have fletches. The Chinese even made a double repeating crossbow with a 20-bolt magazine and two strings to fire two bolts at a time (p119).

The book contains 145 black and white illustrations, 67 black and white photos (mostly weaponry and armor), one black and white map, 13 color uniform plates, four color illustrations, 12 color flag/banner illustrations, and one color photo.

For Manchu enthusiasts, the third time is not only a charm, but a triumph. A few manufacturers make Manchu/Qing figures. If you are interested in a period that saw the consolidation of China from basically Korea to Tibet with battles against Chinese, Mongolians, Tibetans, Russians, and others, here's your reference book. Well done. Enjoyed it.



Handbrake: Latin America at War 28. by Meriano Sciaroni and Alejandro Amendolara. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 102 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Dassault Super Etendard Fighter-Bombers in the Falklands/Malvinas War 1982*

During the Falklands/Malvinas War of 1982, the UK Royal Navy suffered exactly three hits by Exocet missiles launched from Argentinian aircraft. That trio of hits sunk the destroyer *HMS Sheffield* and the cargo ship *Atlantic Surveyor*.

For the UK, it's a good thing that Argentina only had a grand total of five, count 'em, five, Exocets at the start of the war and couldn't get any more. Otherwise, more Royal Navy ships might be sitting on the bottom of the ocean.

"Handbrake," by the way, is RN code for detecting a firing radar being locked onto the ship.

This is a unit history of the Second Naval Fighter and Attack Squadron, which was the only Argentinian unit that would fire the Exocets. Indeed, the missile wasn't even supposed to be fired from the Dassault-Breguet Super Etendard fighters, but with technical manuals in one hand and tinkering with the other, Argentinian mechanics managed to mount, communicate with,



and coordinate fire control systems between missile and plane. French technicians who never got any orders not to aid the Argentinians also helped. Funny how the French never recalled their technicians...

Squadron Commander Capt. Colombo was often at odds with higher ups who were ordering missions that Colombo decided had low chances of success and had not been practiced. Again, he only had five Exocets to fire. Excellent discussion of mission planning and execution -- even the aborted ones.

The book contains 13 black and white photos, two black and white illustrations, one black and white map, 77 color photos, 16 color maps, one color illustration, 12 color unit patches, and nine color aircraft and two color ships (top and side of HMS Sheffield) profiles in camouflage.

A typo (p5): speed of 673 mph (Mach 1.02) and speed of 733 mph (Mach 0.96) should have the Mach numbers reversed.

This is quite the captivating read of the signature naval events of the war. It's technical enough to provide understanding of the interaction of modern weapon systems without being overwhelming. It's well written and provides situational awareness for both sides during the aerial missions. Well done.

Enjoyed it.

The Last Days of the Schooner America. by David Gendell. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 347 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *A Lost Icon at the Annapolis Warship Factory*

If you've heard of sailing's America's Cup, then you've heard of the ship it was named after. The *America* was built for speed and then went to Britain in 1851 and won a race around the Isle of Wight, winning a trophy that was renamed the America's Cup. Other racers came, won, and went, usually to the breakers as they were built for a race, not longevity. Yet, *America* survived and even served in the American Civil War as one of the fastest Confederate ships. It was eventually cornered near Jacksonville, FL, scuttled, and then refloated for the Union side of the war.

Ultimately, it ended up at Annapolis as a US Navy training ship and then later sat abandoned until the 1930s, where sailing buff President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the Navy to reconstruct it. The job went to the private shipbuilder Annapolis Yacht Yard.

Alas, WWII intervened and the AYY won war contracts to build Vosper Motor Torpedo Boats (aka PT Boats) for anti-sub warfare for the British. Surprisingly, the British provided only partially completed blueprints, forcing the AYY to use their own naval architects to flesh out the MTBs. Due to space constraints, AYY worked around the dismantled *America* as MTBs took precedence. A fascinating part of the book.

Anyway, a heavy snowstorm collapsed the temporary covering of the *America*, crushing it and even the Navy was forced to realize it was a lost cause. Aside from souvenirs and some pieces of wood, the remains of the ship were carted off to the city dump.

Of note: PT-694, launched April 1945, was used as a chase boat for the filming of the only flight of the Spruce Goose and was later used as the PT boat for the TV show *McHale's Navy*. One other MTB remains, with both at the Liberty Aviation Museum in Ohio. PT-728, launched in the fall of 1945, is being restored, but to ELCO PT boat standard, not to Vosper standard.

The book contains 62 black and white photos and 17 black and white illustrations.

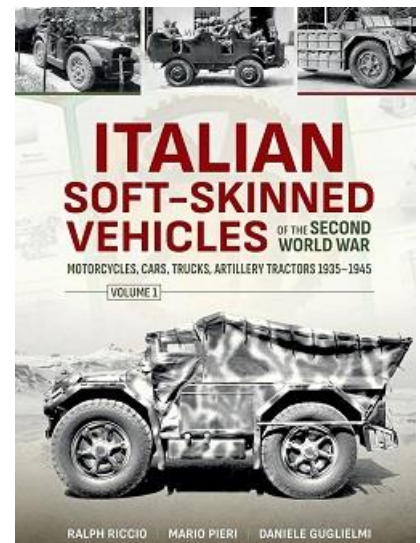
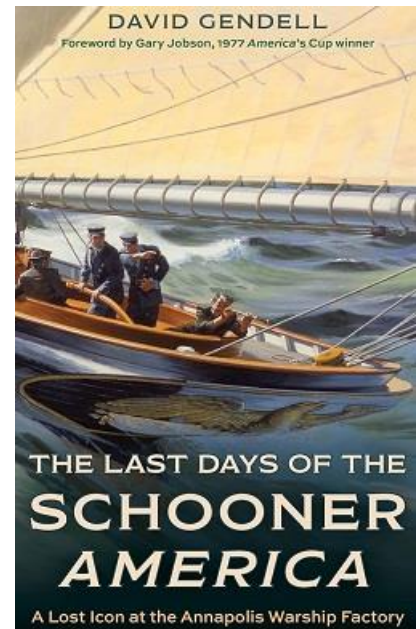
This is a well-written, easy read for fans of 19th century yacht racing and small boat production in WWII.

Enjoyed it.

Italian Soft-Skinned Vehicles of the Second World War: Volume 1. by Ralph Riccio, Mario Pieri, and Daniele Guglielmi. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 152 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Motorcycles, Cars, Trucks, Artillery Tractors 1939-1945*

I realized I had reviewed *Volume 2* (see the review in the 2/29/2024 AAR or up on hmgs.org), but forgot *Volume 1*. This is the volume containing motorcycles, cars, and light trucks. Each specific vehicle entry contains specs, photos, and short development, deployment, and service history. Some include



scale drawings (top, side, front, and back), although the scale is not listed.

One interesting light truck: Attrezzatura Nebbiogena Modello 33 (p103-104). This had a 300 liter drum, compressed air system, and series of pipes with atomizing nozzles used to generate a smoke screen. Put that in your next North Africa scenario!

The book contains 293 black and white photos and 56 black and white illustrations.

Paired with *Volume 2*, this makes for an excellent reference of the topic.

Enjoyed it.

Super Slick: Life and Death in a Huey Helicopter in Vietnam. by Tom Feigel and Larry Weill. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 222 pages. 2024.

This memoir by a Huey helicopter mechanic turned crew chief recounts his year in Vietnam. He could have stayed at an air base and fixed helicopters, but decided to become a crew chief on a Huey named Super Slick. He flew on missions across southern Vietnam and also into Cambodia.

Using an all too corporeal ghostwriter, he recounts his draft, training, and deployment in a breezy style with all the relevant details. Then comes the personnel ferrying and gunship missions, day and night, Vietnam and Cambodia, that occupied his time. When he came to the end of the one-year deployment, he emphatically refused to extend his enlistment. By dint of a drawdown, he even didn't have to serve the last few months of his two-year hitch. He went from Vietnam to out processing to home, where he carved out a career at Xerox.

Of interest to him was that his actual helicopter Super Slick, long thought to have been burned up and scrapped, ended up as part of a Vietnam memorial in Fairmont, West Virginia. It had been improperly painted as a rescue helicopter, which was corrected, and the original nose artwork was painted back on.

The book contains 40 black and white photos and two black and white maps.

Quick read and offers possible insertion scenarios.

Enjoyed it.

Against Hitler's Luftwaffe in the Balkans. by Djordje I. Nikolic and Ognjan M. Petrovic. Hardback (7.2x9.9 inches). 222 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Royal Yugoslav Air Force at War in 1941*

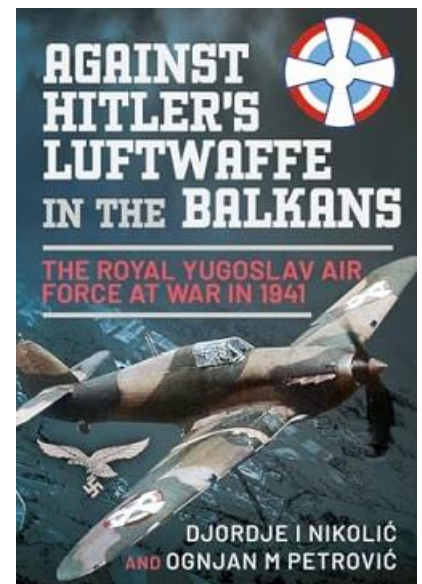
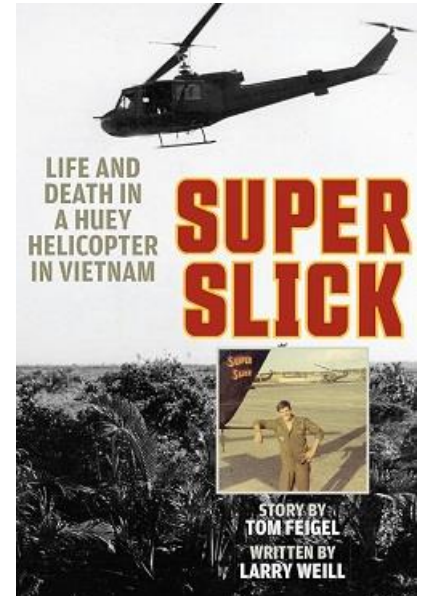
While this book contains accounts of air-to-air fighting, this is predominantly a reference guide to the main aircraft operated by the Royal Yugoslav Air Force (p42-214). It's a nice hodge podge lodge of planes, mixing German, Italian, British, Polish, and Yugoslavian models. Each contains specs, short operational history, and lots of photos, tackling planes from the 1920s to 1941.

Of note is the Yugoslavian Ikarus IK-2 from the late 1930s, which had the fuselage of a modern fighter, but used a wing attached to the top of the fuselage in front of the cockpit and fixed landing gear. It wasn't much of a fighter, but the IK-3 kept the fuselage and added wings below the cockpit and retractable landing gear like all modern configurations. Alas, too few were available when Germany invaded after the coup to make much of a difference in the air war.

The WWII battles occurred between April 6 and April 17 as the far more experienced Luftwaffe achieved air superiority, albeit with the loss of 92 aircraft and 37 damaged planes (p37). Some battles featured ME-109s vs ME-109s, but make sure any scenarios you pull from the book, and there are plenty to pull, take into account the disparity of experience.

The book contains 241 black and white photos.

Enjoyed it.



2SAS. by Gavin Mortimer. Hardback (7.7x9.8 inches). 272 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Bill Stirling and the Forgotten Special Forces Unit of World War II*

The 2SAS formed after the 1SAS, with the latter gaining the bulk of the publicity for its exploits in the North African desert under the command of David Stirling, the brother of Bill Stirling. Bill was the brains of the outfit while David was the muscle.

2SAS was supposed to be used for deep sabotage missions, with Sicily in 1943 as its first test. It didn't do so well parachuting into Italian territory and since the Germans retreated quickly, has little chance to do much.

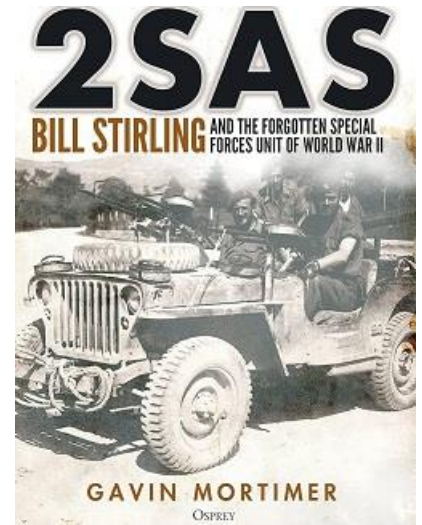
It later landed in Southern Italy to serve as army recon, a mission Bill Stirling opposed. 2SAS did some occasional good sabotage work in Northern Italy, cutting rail lines, but losing most its highly-trained men. Additional missions in France and Netherlands produced so-so results.

A time typo: "around 7000 hours" (p132) is likely "0700 hours." Also, one pair of photos (p232) has a caption describing the people, but the letter in the second photo isn't mentioned at all and seems unconnected to the photo.

The book contains 102 black and white photos, one black and white illustration, three black and white maps, 34 color photos, and three color maps.

It's a quick read. You can pull some skirmish-level sabotage scenarios from the pages. And you'll learn something new about the "other" SAS.

Enjoyed it.



War on Ukraine: Volume 4 (Europe at War 35). by Wen Jian Chung. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 84 pages. 2023.

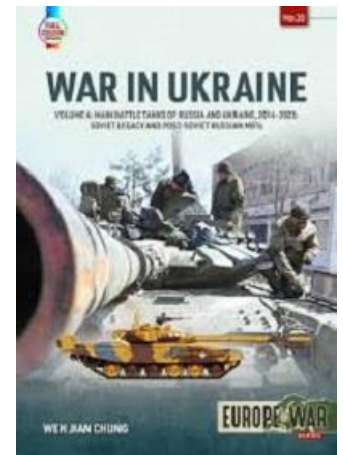
Subtitle: *Main Battle Tanks of Russia and Ukraine 2014-2023: Soviet Legacy and Post-Soviet Russian MBTs*

This is an in-depth, system-by-system examination of T-64, T-72, T-80, and T-90 tanks plus the plethora of variants and upgraded models. It points out strengths and weaknesses in design and maintenance and touches on layouts that affect Russian crew efficiency.

The book contains five black and white photos, nine black and white illustrations, one black and white map, 84 color photos, 27 color illustrations, and 15 color tank profiles in all their camouflaged glory.

While I am not much of a modern gamer, for a treadhead appreciation of Russian main battle tanks, here's your guide.

Enjoyed it.



War on Ukraine: Volume 5 (Europe at War 36). by Wen Jian Chung. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 60 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Main Battle Tanks of Russia and Ukraine 2014-2023: Soviet Legacy and Post-Soviet Ukrainian MBTs and Combat Experience*

Not to repeat myself, but this is an in-depth, system-by-system examination of T-64, T-72, and T-80 tanks used by the Ukrainians, some of which were captured from Russian units. Also, the T-64 Bulot upgrade and the T-84 are covered in these tank-by-tank technical comparisons.

The combat section contains a couple of scenario-worthy events, notably the Ukrainian defense of Pivtsi airfield and then the larger Russian capture of Lohvynore and multiple Ukrainian counterattacks to take it back.

The book contains one black and white photo, nine black and white illustrations, one black and white map, 79 color photos, four color maps, and 12 color tank profiles in all their camouflaged glory.

A couple typos: "This book, second in the miniseries" (p5) is actually the fifth in the series. Likewise, "read Part 1" should be read *Volume 4*.

While I am not much of a modern gamer, treadheads will appreciate the discussion of Ukrainian tanks.

Enjoyed it.



South American Armies: 1825-1865. by Gabriele Esposito. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 152 pages. 2023.

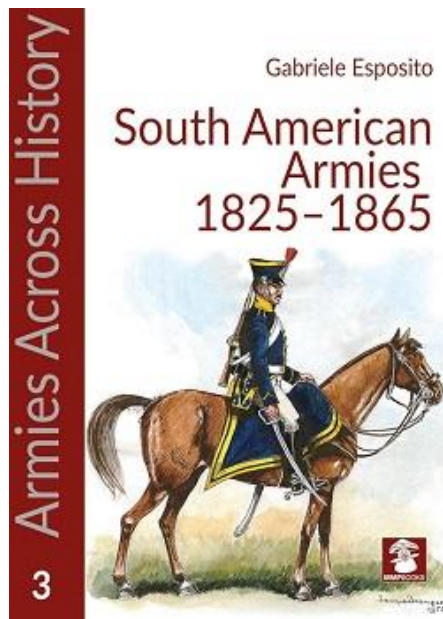
Subtitle: *Armies Across History 3*

I've used this joke before: Ladies and gentlemen, start your paint brushes. Continuous jockeying for land and power throughout these years make South America fertile ground for wargaming. The colorful uniforms make this so-called "Age of Caudillos" (military dictators) a spectacle period at times.

This book covers the armies of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Peru, Chile, Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador. Each country receives a chronological recap of army organization and reorganizations, operations, and uniform guide. Pick a war, any war, of the period and you have enough uniform illustrations to serve as a reference for your tabletop warriors.

As for scenarios, you'll likely need another reference for terrain and OOBs. The OOB information often excludes numbers, even as it uses familiar terms. For example, the 1821 Peruvian naval infantry brigade consists of two battalions, which is closer to a modern use of regiment (p105). In 1825, a regular Division consists of two infantry battalions and one cavalry regiment of four squadrons (p106-107). Numbers would be helpful here and in a multitude of other spots, but I don't know if the sources of the period detail such.

The book contains 167 color illustrations, with each uniform plate showcasing from one to four figures. Spectacular uniform guide. Nice recap of the period's armies. Nice job. Enjoyed it.



Into the Endless Mist: Volume 1: The Aleutian Campaign June-August 1942. by Michal A. Piegzik. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 106 pages. 2023 revised version of 2022 monograph.

Subtitle: *Asia at War 49*

The ability to translate Japanese provides this first volume with the details needed to appreciate the campaign for Attu and Kiska from both sides. The stormy and foggy weather often made the campaign a deadly game of blind man's bluff, with numerous aircraft rising into the murk never to return to ship or base.

The Japanese went north for strategic purposes and the US needed to respond as newspapers played up the propaganda victory of Japanese on US soil. Small Japanese carriers launched air raids on Dutch Harbor and elsewhere, while US attacks -- often using PBYS, B-24s, and B-17s due to the distances involved -- proved irritating, if not decisive. US submarines scored notable successes in the hide and seek nature of the fog, although not without cost.

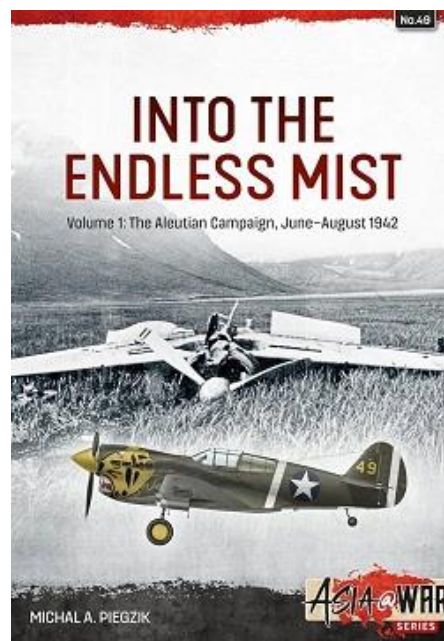
US intercepts of Japanese signals played a role in thwarting Japanese ambitions, although the relatively simultaneous victory at Midway and subsequent landing at Guadalcanal played an even larger part in convincing Japan to focus elsewhere in the Pacific.

One US bonus: The recovery of a virtually intact Zero fighter that was sent back and analyzed to reveal secrets and provide pointers to US pilots.

The book contains 72 black and white photos, 15 black and white illustrations, five black and white maps, four color maps, four color profiles of ships, and 15 color profiles of aircraft.

Of note to wargamers: OOBs and other tabular data abound within the pages -- 39 tables in all. You can certainly pull some scenarios from the pages. Well covered and well done.

Enjoyed it.



The Italian Wars: Volume 5 (Retinue to Regiment 25). by Massimo Predonzani. Softcover (7.2x9.7 inches). 187 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The Franco-Spanish War in Southern Italy 1502-1504*

I've enjoyed the last two volumes of the Italian Wars series and this new volume continues the good work. For the reviews of *The Italian Wars: Volume 3 Battle of Pavia 1525*, see the 08/21/2022 AAR and for *The Italian Wars: Vol. 4 Ceresole 1544* see the 01/21/2023 AAR or see both up on hmgs.org.

In any case, the French King Louis XII invaded Italy to recover Milan and set his sights on the southern Italian Kingdom of Naples. However, the Spanish also had their eye on it as well. So the two conspired to split it between them. All was well until they bickered over a couple of provinces in between. The war was on.

With a few period sources, the war seems well covered, until you start reading about the disparities between the accounts. This contains an excellent examination of troop numbers at various skirmishes, sieges, and battles along with descriptions long and short of the actual events and outcomes.

Short bios of prominent commanders, especially French, Spanish, and Italian Captains, are included along with their heraldry. Units and troop numbers are also listed.

A couple non-fatal typos: "Challenge of Berinetta...described in the following chapter" (p29) is really in the chapter after the following one; and "see map on page 33" (p36) is slightly off as the map is on page 34. Subsequent directions to pages were correct in the book.

The book contains seven black and white photos, 33 black and white illustrations, 11 black and white maps, and eight color plates containing 25 mounted and 15 foot illustrations.

The maps need help in terms of scenario-worthiness, but the numerical explanations and discussions are exceptionally helpful. Well done.

Enjoyed it.

A Sword for Peace and Liberty: Europe at War 35. by Philippe Wodka-Gallien. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 94 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Volume 1: Force de Frappe -- The French Nuclear Strike Force and the First Cold War 1945-1990*

This history of the French nuclear weapons program describes efforts to build, test, and field atomic bombs. The first French test was in Algeria on February 13, 1960. Success of this four-year program meant the French joined the plutonium bomb club.

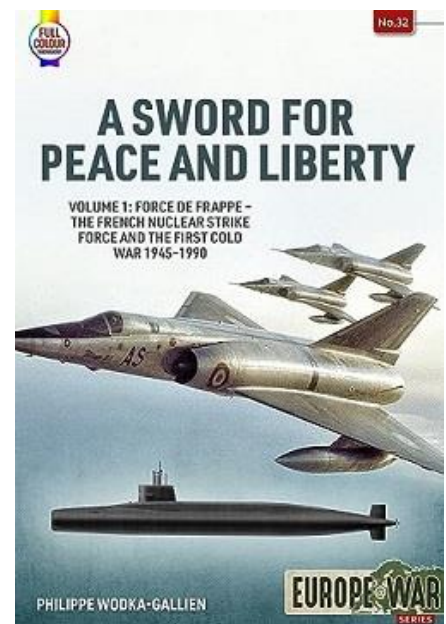
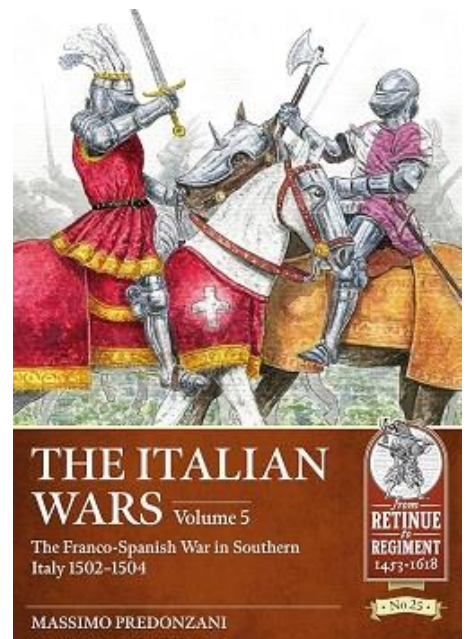
The French eventually built up a triad akin to other major powers, with aircraft, submarines, and missiles capable of delivering strategic nuclear ordnance. The arsenal then expanded into tactical nukes.

One typo: US General Groves is correct on first reference, but is "General Groove" (p63) on second reference.

The book contains 51 black and white photos, six black and white illustrations, one black and white map, 99 color photos, 13 color illustrations, three color maps, and 19 color profiles (nine aircraft, two vehicles, six submarines, and two aircraft).

I tended to skip around the text, in large part because it would stray from a chronological presentation and in larger part because nuclear weapon technology makes my head spin. It's nice to know we have an ally in France which can counter any nuclear weapon threat by communist or rogue states -- cold comfort if it came to an actual nuclear exchange, but so far proving to be a deterrent.

Ties go to the author. Enjoyed it.



The Russian Patriotic War 1812: Volume 1 (Reason to Revolution 126). by Modest Ivanovich Bogdanovich. Translated by Peter G.A. Phillips. Softcover (6.2x9.2 inches). 386 pages. 2024 translated reprint of 1861 book.

Subtitle: *The Russian Official History*

This first volume of a three volume set starts with the Treaty of Tilsit and ends with the First Battle of Polotsk. In between are the strategies, maneuvers, and battles between the Grand Army under Napoleon and the Russian Army under Tsar Alexander I. Plenty of diplomatic events and schemes -- including ramifications of violations of the Continental System and French annexation of the Duchy of Oldenburg held by the Tsar's uncle -- contributed to increasing tensions between the French and Russian Empire that finally erupted in a French-led invasion.

A nice logistical recap of both sides' provisions, transports, and supply magazines led into the invasion. The French created 17 battalions totaling 5,000 to 6,000 wagons that could haul two months' supply of provisions for 200,000 men (p46). Napoleon invaded with over a half a million, so you can visualize how far that prep work would last.

The Russians established 58 artillery parks (p52-53): 20 front line with all the charges, cartridges, horses, and carts needed for the Tsar's troops, 19 in the second line identical to first line except without the horses and carts, and 19 in the third line with raw materials only. A number of cities contained magazines with additional stockpiled munitions and provisions.

The maneuvers and battles often examined the actions of individual battalions and squadrons. Understanding this is the official Russian history, you will excuse the author for claiming the French and allies always outnumbered the stalwart Russians in every battle and apparently, the Russians always killed and wounded far more French than the other way around.

The text describes maneuvers through a lot of villages, towns, and cities in Russia -- and I don't pretend to know even the smallest percentage of them. The book contains 15 black and white maps of battles, maneuvers, and theaters (thankfully including scales) with unit locations and movement arrows. I wish they were larger. I'm guessing they're from the original book, so you get what you get. Needless to say, if you have a really good period map, you can follow the maneuvers without a problem.

My only complaint is the use of the Russian word "verst." It is a unit of measure that the translator refused to translate into English miles or even kilometers. I had to look it up on the web: "A verst is an obsolete Russian unit of length defined as 500 sazhen. This makes a verst equal to 1.0668 kilometres (3,500 feet)."

So when something is 4 versts away, that's 14,000 feet, or 2.65 miles. I suspect the translator didn't want to do the math every time verst is mentioned in the text -- and verst is the only unit of measure in the text.

Appendix XII contains a full Russian OOB, XIII contains the French OOB, and XIX contains the Russian I Corps OOB -- all down to battalions and squadrons, but only aggregate troop numbers. Appendix V describes the terrain of the theater. A couple appendices are in French. The text mentions weather on particular days.

As long as you understand the perspective of the writer, this is a fine examination of the beginning of Napoleon's 1812 invasion of Russia.

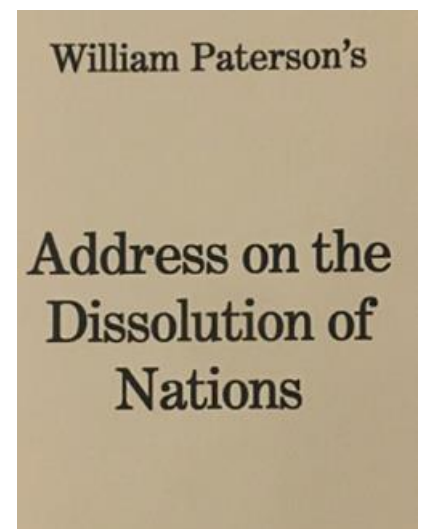
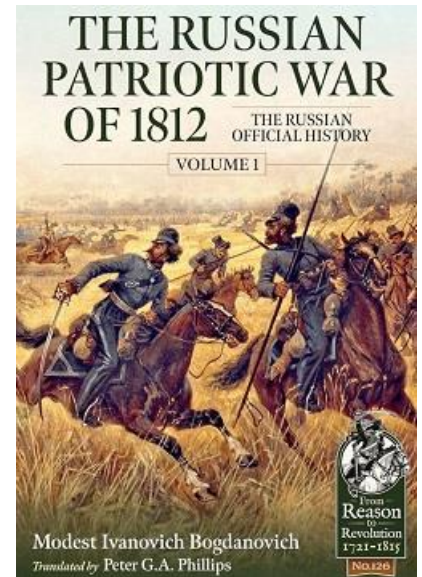
Enjoyed it.

Address on the Dissolution of Nations. by William Patterson. Softcover (5.4x8.5 inches). 25 pages. 1997.

I had heard of Thomas Paine and his *Common Sense* pamphlet, but I'm sorry to say that William Patterson and his *Address* was new to me. Maybe with the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution coming, writings from pre-War of Independence will receive greater distribution and remind us how and why the US was created.

In full disclosure, I am a relatively new trustee of the Hunterdon County Historical Society in Flemington, NJ, and have been helping in the archives. Admittedly, I'm primarily muscle for the dismantling, movement, and reassembly of shelving units and collections. But that also means becoming familiar with the type of publications stored on said shelves, including this booklet. Copies are available via the HCHS website.

The first 14 pages of this booklet offers a biography of William



Patterson, who served in the Continental Congress twice, was governor of NJ, and later became a US Supreme Court justice, followed by an analysis of his political tract outlining the ills of the British system of government and the underlying problems of greed, corruption, and societal envy.

The date of the *Address* publication is not known, but it was pre Revolution and probably early 1770s. His essay warns about then current conditions, or at least how he perceived them.

He asserts that "most governments, perhaps all, naturally tend towards tyranny" (p18) and people must be watchful of the conduct of rulers. "An artful prince, abetted by a set of obsequious dependents...beguiles [people] about security...his first acts of oppression wear the semblance of law...clothe every violent measure in the venerable garb of legal authority." (p18)

"The excessive opulence of some and extreme poverty of others is in every state a sure sign of declension...equal distribution of lands was the chief cause of the grandeur of Rome...enabled her to rise above her lowly condition" (p19). Understand that at this moment of time, only landowners counted for political purposes, so providing land to the populace gave all a stake in good government. Of course, Rome Republic-wise, wealth conferred by owning land also conferred an obligation to become a soldier to defend Rome -- and a solid army contributed to the grandeur of Rome.

As a lawyer, he also warned about a multiplicity of laws as "a source of calamity and mark of declension...Great and commercial nations require a variety and number of laws...When laws are too numerous and complicated...or too vague and obscure...a spirit of litigation will seize upon every class of people" (p20).

"Does not a nation totter on the brink of destruction...when the balance within is not equally poised?" (p24)

These passages and others remind me of a phrase I use: "There's nothing new like history." This is a play on Harry S. Truman's quote: "There is not really anything new, if you know what has gone before. What is new to people is what they do not know about their history or the history of the world."

Excuse me as I get on a soapbox. I'm a big believer about knowing where you've been to help you understand where you should go. I suspect, given historical precedent, Plato's five stages of political government will continue to spin on: aristocracy (government by small privileged ruling class), timocracy (government by honored property owners), oligarchy (government by the few), democracy (representative government), and tyranny (government by single person). This little booklet reminds me that tumultuous times are nothing new and it always remains our choice how we react to events that generate our future.

Enjoyed it.

Through Blue Skies to Hell. by Edward M. Sion. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 238 pages. 2024 reprint of 2008 book.

Subtitle: *America's "Bloody 100th" in the Air War Over Germany*

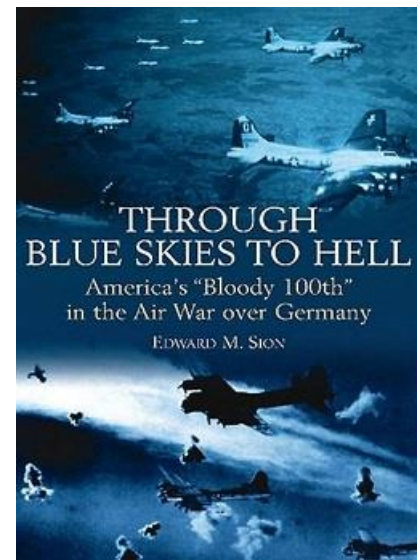
This comprehensive introduction to the US 8th Air Force in WWII covers pretty much everything you need to know about bombing operations over Germany in WWII. Most of the info will be well known to air war buffs, including training, formations, tactics, radar bombing, aircraft characteristics, and so on. Besides the odd new factoid, the key to the book is the diary of 1st Lt. Richard R Ayesh, a bombardier with 35 missions in a B-17 (p123-174).

First, some new factoids, or at least new to me. The US built and used 15 BQ-7 aircraft -- basically, a B-17 or B-24 packed with 9 tons of Torpex explosives and radio controlled by a trailing B-17. Two crew took off and then parachuted out over England. The plan was radio controlled and crashed into a target. The Germans had a similar idea with the Mistral tandems. Out of the 15 missions (August 1944 to January 1945), two crashed in England and the other 13 proved too disappointing to continue the program (p17-18).

In 1943, the US suffered "20,000 major accidents" that killed 5,603 aircrew. By war's end, more than 15,000 air crew died in accidents (p60-61). It takes about an hour to form up a heavy bomber strike before leaving England (p62).

As for the mission by mission diary, associated commentary fills in the blanks about acronyms and events. About 26,000 8th AF personnel were killed in the war, or about 7.42% of personnel, which was more than twice the death rate of the next highest service: the Marines at 3.29% (p186).

The book contains 35 black and white photos, six black and white illustrations, and nine black and white maps.



Typos: "14, 000 feet" has an extra space and "1.000 feet" needs a comma, not a period (both on p139). Also, the Allies "devastated 79" German cities (p182) or "obliterated 77" German cities (p187). Not sure which number is correct.

It's a good introduction to the US WWII air war over Germany. The diary entries showcase the routine, and sometimes the horror, of air ops.

Enjoyed it.

Fortress Britain: 1940. by Andrew Chatterton. Hardback (6.2x9.2 inches). 272 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Britain's Unsung and Secret Defences on Land, Sea and in the Air*

When the UK faced a German invasion after the fall of France in WWII, it got building and creative. For the building part, it constructed more than 18,000 pillboxes in 1940, although construction tailed off after August when the threat of invasion faded (p22). A pillbox and supporting earthworks could be built in a day (p23).

Of more import were 1.6 million civilian volunteers (p53) who made up the Local Defense Volunteers (LDV), which would be renamed Home Guard. While most were essentially lookouts and patrollers, a small subsection was trained in all sorts of guerrilla operations, including sabotage and assassination. All sorts of ingenious camouflaged posts were built with weapon caches and wireless sets to support their activities should the Germans invade. It's quite an interesting accumulation of organization, training, prepwork, and goals.

The major services, such as RAF, Royal Navy, and Coastal Command receive a cursory mention because so much has already been written about them.

The book contains 13 color photos, 17 black and white photos, three black and white illustrations, and three black and white maps.

Typo: "and it we win" (p174) should be "if we win."

Those with a penchant for What-If scenarios can combine the knowledge within with figures and rules of choice to see what might happen behind the lines of the German invasion.

Enjoyed it.

Cold War Berlin: An Island City: Volume 3. by Andrew Long. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 84 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *US Forces in Berlin Keeping the Peace 1945-1994*

Subtitle: *Europe at War 27*

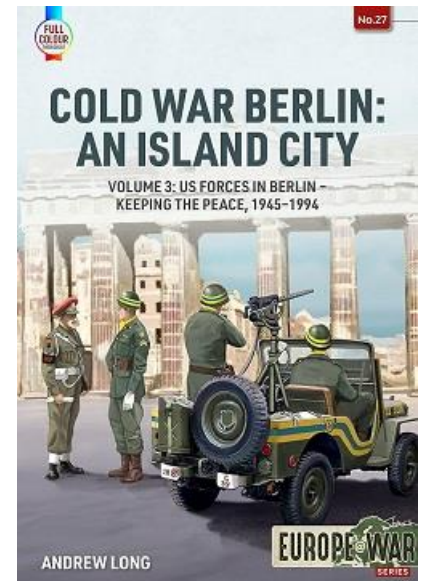
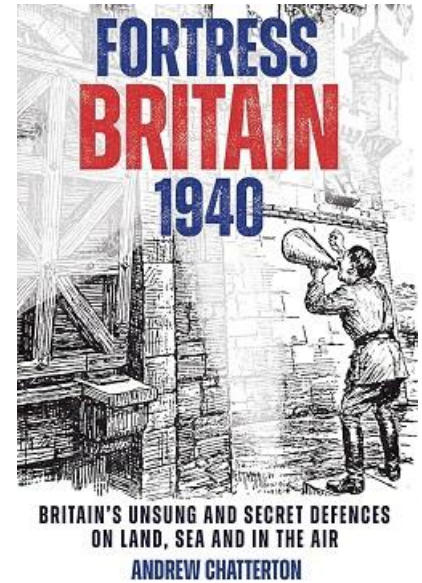
Provides political and military organizational analysis of post-WWII governing of Berlin (Germany) by the US, UK, France, and USSR along with procedures of policing, units, social life of the city, and touching on Cold War spy activities.

A small surprise to me is that World War II was not officially over until long after 1945. Germany started the war, but the surrender in May 1945 was not the actual end of the war. Due to events surrounding the post-WWI Versailles Treaty, the Allies were leery of a treaty lest it be the trigger for the next world war. The official end of the war was June 1951 for the USSR, July 1951 for the UK and France, and October 1951 for the US (p11).

The famous Checkpoint Charlie and Berlin Wall are covered. Of note, 3.9 million people fled the Soviet zone between 1949 and 1990 (p49). That's far more than I expected.

Spandau Prison held seven Nazi bigwigs, and all but Rudolf Hess were released by 1966. Hess committed suicide in 1987. After him, the prison was demolished and the rubble dumped into the Baltic Sea (p51).

The book contains 61 black and white photos, 49 color photos, six black and white illustrations, 15 color illustrations, 10 black and white maps, five color maps, and 18 color profiles (four aircraft, eight vehicles, and six uniforms).



If you are looking for a setting for a Cold War spy RPG or a What-If the Soviets attacked the West scenario, here's your book. Make that series of books. You can find my reviews of *Volume 1 (Europe at War 9)* in the 05/27/2021 AAR and *Volume 2 (Europe at War 12)* in the 10/26/2021 AAR or both up on hmgs.org.

Enjoyed it.

Sailors, Ships and Sea Fights. edited by Nicholas James Kaizer. Softcover (6.6x9.8 inches). 351 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *From Reason to Revolution No. 121*

Subtitle: *Proceedings of the 2022 From Reason to Revolution Naval Warfare in the Age of Sail Conference*

Consists of 14 chapters covering a wide variety of topics relating to the Age of Sail. Despite the 2022 date in the subtitle, this is indeed published in 2024. Indeed, footnotes mention web pages "accessed 30 Aug 2023" (p191). I don't know if this particular chapter is a rewrite or included additional information.

I can't say this is a page turner. Indeed, given most authors' credentials as PhD students and professors, this seems to me to be an academic publication with all that less than sparkling academic prose that entails. That said, the information is golden within the narrow confines of each chapter's subject matter.

You'll learn about the Second Morean War between Venice and the Ottomans, although no sea battles are tactically described, just operational maneuvers. The article on Spanish Sea Power 1731-1748 gets an assist by *Close Action* designer Mark Campbell, who commented on the first draft. French Light Squadrons successes against the British may spawn some scenarios. 1745 Jacobite Naval efforts is next, followed by British customs enforcement in the American colonies.

The Battle of St. Lucia, which could have turned out to be a French victory over the British similar to the British victory over the French in the Battle of the Nile, offers the most tactical of sea battle descriptions. Alas for the French, poor ship handling and even worse gunnery saved the British. An analysis of War of 1812 US versus British one-on-one duels proves interesting.

The Naval Administration section may be of interest for a campaign game regarding subpar British efforts of shipbuilding, supply, and sickness in 7YW. A George Anson bio explains his revamping of British Royal Navy operations and a British Consul for Norway John Mitchell details his efforts to repatriate and recruit Royal Navy sailors as well as a little intel work on the side.

British Naval Court Martials 1812-1818 discuss death and flogging sentences for a variety of infractions. Black pilots aided the British Navy in navigating US and West Indian waters with some success. Finally, the last chapter covers pensioners admitted to the Greenwich Naval Hospital 1764-1864.

The book contains three black and white photos, 12 black and white illustrations, and 10 black and white maps.

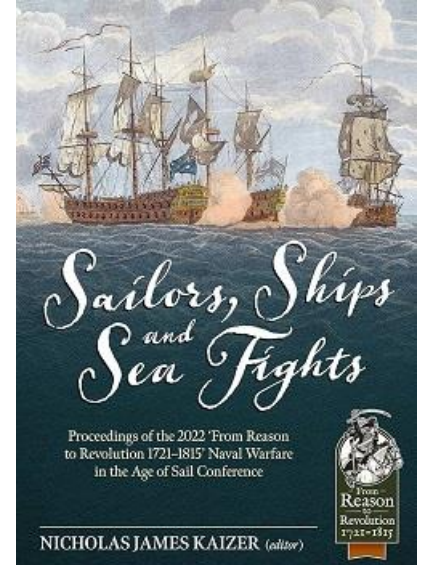
You can certainly tell the difference in prose between a master and commander like Quintin Barry and these ensigns and lieutenants. The information is spectacular, but you need to be a real Age of Sail buff to work your way through most of the chapters.

Dwell in these Demons: Part One. by Andrew Hannon. Softcover (4.9x8.0 inches). 46 pages. 2024.

I'm not much of a horror reader save for HP Lovecraft's Cthulhu series from the 1920s and 1930s. Apparently, Hannon is an editor at a UK horror website 13Horror with plenty of horror books and anthologies to his name.

In this first part of his new book, Joe Henry celebrates his otherwise normal ninth birthday with his family watching his older brother channeling a demon, performing telekinesis with objects and his bed, and mimicking people he met in the park in Riverdale. And that's about it for part one.

The prose moved along OK and I had a vivid sense of the kid out with his birthday present bike and his Uncle Ray for ice cream and such, the torment of the mother and father, and the surprise of the priests. The telekinesis scene reminds me of the Exorcist.



On a side note: I have been in, through, and around Riverdale, NJ, and didn't recall a Queensbury Road, where the Henry family lived. I assumed (bad idea) that because the uncle lived in NJ, so did the Henry family. Bad assumption. I did a Google Map search. The setting is Riverdale, MD, which does indeed have a Queensbury and other roads mentioned in the text.

The problem I had was the second sentence of the first paragraph, which seems to tell me the end before I got going. I don't know if this is Hannon's signature style, but to me, books are a journey -- don't tell me the end at the start. Let me experience what the main character experiences as it happens.

I don't have *Part Two* in hand, but I have a good idea where the plot is going as the events based on the second sentence. Maybe I'll be surprised. Hope so. Joe seems destined for bigger things. Ties go to the author. Enjoyed it.

Model Rocketry: America's Hobby in the Cold War 1960-1980. by Alexander Procyk. Hardback (8.75x11.5 inches). 96 pages. 2024.

This big picture book of model rockets introduces the hobby of model rocketry and then offers photos of the numerous rockets available to Cold War kids and grown-up kids. Apparently, five levels of skill were needed to assemble these kits, insert a rocket motor, and fire away.

The kits described here are the lowest powered of the rockets, usually a tube with engine and parachute and some sort of capsule or glide vehicle. The majority of rockets pictured within use an engine letter grade of A, B, or C. A few D-powered rockets are included.

The photo captions list name, length in inches, and sometimes the engine size or other attribute. The text doesn't explain how high a rocket could travel, although a B4 engine would provide thrust for 1.1 seconds and a B6 would provide thrust for 0.8 seconds (p20). This is a photo book of rockets, not a primer. I think that was a missed opportunity.

Estes rockets takes up the majority of pages. I guess they were the model rocket company of the day. It started out as a fireworks company.

The book contains 162 color photos, seven black and white photos, one color illustration, and two black and white illustrations.

One typo: "Estes first rocket kit" is missing an apostrophe (p26).

Some interesting models: *Star Trek* Enterprise (p60), Klingon D-7 (p61), *Star Wars* X-Wing (p63), Space Shuttle (p57), and my favorite: a badminton shuttlecock (birdie) adapted to hold a rocket engine (p25). The others are, well, rocket-shaped, except for the poorly-performing rocket car (p45-46).

Other than the occasional TV news segment, I don't know if model rocketry is popular. It may be as illegal as fireworks in some states -- I don't know. Growing up, I didn't know of any clubs or school activities that shot a rocket into the air. But I do like the pictorial history of model rockets for its historical value and I'm sure YouTube has plenty of model rocket launch videos.

Enjoyed it.

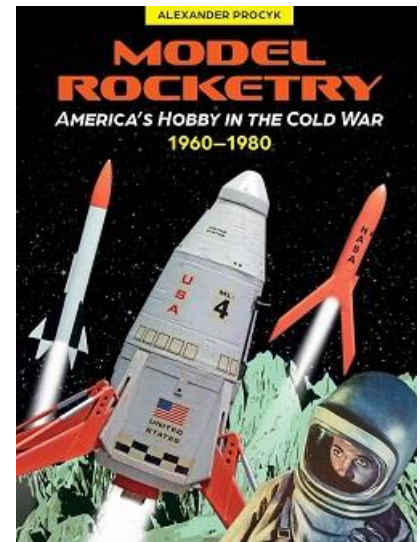
Pathfinder Pioneer. by Col. Raymond E. Brim (Ret). Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 281 pages. 2024 reprint of 2016 book.

Subtitle: *The Memoir of a Lead Bomber Pilot in World War II*

A pleasant memoir about a mining town lad who went to college but left to join the Army Air Corp after Pearl Harbor. He describes basic and pilot training. Although originally earmarked as a fighter pilot, some Army decision sent him to bomber pilot school, where he learned how to pilot four-engine bombers. Assigned as a co-pilot to a B-17, he traveled from the US to Brazil to Africa to Europe to end up in the 8th Air Force.

Deployments and missions followed as he learned the ropes. Interesting tidbit: where your plane was assigned in a formation determined whether the pilot or co-pilot had control of the plane. Rare was the mission that the plane didn't suffer holes from flak hits, especially when planes next to his exploded from direct hits.

His request to advance to pilot status was granted, but instead of main bomber stream missions, he was assigned B-17 pathfinder missions that marked



the target for the rest of the bomber stream.

He served out his 25 missions and declined to remain in theater for more missions -- he saw enough of combat and considered himself lucky. Indeed, right after transferring into the pathfinder program, his bomber stream aircraft suffered a near flak hit that sent shrapnel into the cockpit and killed the co-pilot. Had he been in that seat per usual, he wouldn't have made it home.

Of the Army Air Force's 115,332 casualties, the 8th Air Force suffered 47,483 of them, including about 26,000 killed (p96). Many of the casualties were accidents -- he recounts one in Britain where a 500-pound bomb accidentally detonated and destroyed three B-17s and killed and wounded many of the airmen and ground crew around.

Stateside, he fulfilled a number of training and instructor missions until the war ended. His civilian life proved unsuccessful, so when the USAF asked if he wanted back in, he rejoined immediately as pilot for nuclear bomb data collection. He later was sent to Alaska in charge of remote Aleutian Island bases and then into the Pentagon.

The book contains 31 black and white photos. A possible typo: A photo of the Dornier DO-335 Arrow push-you, pull-me fighter is labeled as a bomber. Wikipedia notes it was designed to be a bomber, but in 1942 was switched to be a fighter, with initial prototype flight testing in mid 1944.

The memoir offers a pleasant read, filled with the details of service. Mission by mission, he lays out his WWII service and then his transition back to civilian life and then back to USAF life.

Enjoyed it.

To Boldly Go. edited by Jonathan Klug and Steven Leonard. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 282 pages. 2024 reprint of 2021 book.

Subtitle: *Leadership, Strategy, and Conflict in the 21st Century and Beyond*

An interesting collection of 35 essays about how science fiction media (movies, TV shows, and books) reflect actual military operations and leadership. The essays cover the hard factors of aircraft, ships, parts, tech, and numbers as well as the soft factors of leadership and strategy.

Six main topics: The Captain's Hand, The Final Frontier, The Prime Directive, The War of the Worlds, The Rise of the Machines, and The Dark Side. You can guess the essays' contents from the topic. Whether you appreciate the conclusions depends on whether you buy the individual speculations.

Probably the best quote I ran across was: "Fiction helps us cut through the fog of the unknown." (p175) If you keep that in mind, you'll appreciate the essays.

The best, in my opinion, was Kathleen J. McInnis' *Sun Tzu, Ender, and the Old Man*. It dealt with "strategic empathy" in conducting a war against aliens using examples from *Ender's Game* and *The Old Man's War*. She argues that the principles pulled from the books can be adapted to real-world examples in the current day. I found it compelling.

One slight criticism. The 35 essays often use the same main media and often recap the plots of the same movies. This can get repetitious. You just have to grin and bear it.

One point of complacency I'd argue against: "The likelihood of a conflict against an intergalactic race in the future may be slim..." (p52). Well, the key fudges are "may be" and how far away is the "future." Humans being humans, I expect the likelihood to be far more than slim, especially if aliens have the same fear of the fog of the unknown.

Nerdy Factoid Alert: The first *Star Wars* movie (*Episode IV: A New Hope*) saw the Stormtroopers fire 405 shots and hit the intended target only 22 times -- about a 95% miss rate (p250). This is used to emphasize the point that aloof leadership unconcerned about shoddy equipment undermines combat efficiency. The only hint about why Stormtroopers are such bad shots comes from a line by a Stormtrooper armor-clad Luke to Han about how he could hardly see anything while wearing the helmet.

Each essay dissects sci-fi media to make a point about past, current, and future military theories and practices. Overall, while they form a bell curve of interest and military application, they do make you think -- and that is exactly what they were meant to do.

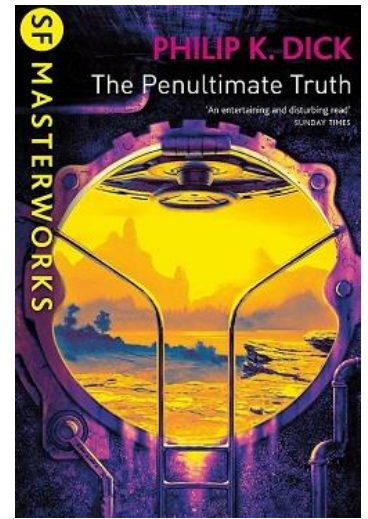
Enjoyed it.



The Penultimate Truth. by Philip K. Dick. Paperback (4.3x7.0 inches). 238 pages. 1964.

I struggled to finish this book about an elite ruling class keeping the workers confined to underground "ant tanks" by partially-true tales of a war-devastated, radioactive dystopian surface. The surface feudal lords rule over wilderness demesnes on the rebound and jockey against each other. They even send down the equivalent of Soviet political officers to keep the workers in line. One worker "president" of an ant tank breaks through to the surface, evades the robotic guards, retrieves a much-needed artificial pancreas, and discovers that the war is suddenly declared over.

This is essentially much of the setting, minus the pancreas, of the more recent *Wool* (see the review in the 01/31/2021 AAR). Not exact, but close enough, as *Wool* described the "ant tank" (i.e. silos) more than the controlling class. But the two are all about an elite group controlling the masses. I just never identified with any of the *Penultimate Truth* characters or found the plot that interesting.



French Armies of the Thirty Years War 1618-48. by Stephane Thion. Softcover (7.2x9.8 inches). 231 pages. 2024 revised edition revised edition of 1994 book.

Subtitle: *Century of the Soldier No. 117*

After a short recap of the 30YW, the book starts with an overview of the French Army 1534-1616, with the third chapter picking up a more detailed history from 1617-1635 and the fourth chapter finishing it off from 1635-1648.

This begs the question about why the title is 1618. A gaffe, I guess.

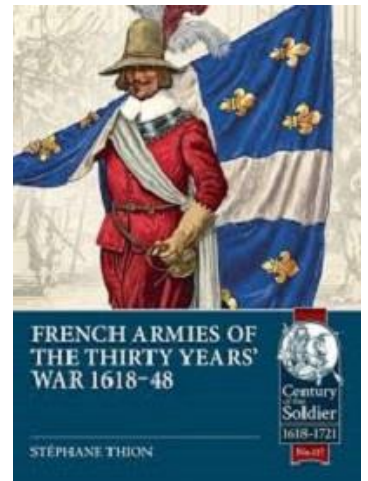
In any case, the infantry, cavalry, and artillery receive detailed descriptions and analysis of organization, tactics, and command and control. Within these years resides a story of creating and fine-tuning the pike block concept. I find the flowery period excerpts to be part quaint and part in need of being condensed into English -- a bit herky, jerky reading at times.

Chapter 5 concerns uniforms and flags, while the next chapter outlines some of the major battles and OOBs. It's a bit sketchy in detail: Rocroi (p158-160) notes the OOB as 7,000 cavalry in 24 regiments (18 listed), 16,000 infantry in 21 regiments and eight individual companies, and 12 cannon. The book ends with eyewitness accounts in a massive excerpt dump that might add a little color commentary to your tabletop introductions or explanations.

The book contains 83 black and white illustrations, five black and white photos (armor), three black and white maps, eight color uniform plates, and 24 flags (front and back) suitable for color copying and wrapping around a miniature flagpole. Note that many of the black and white illustrations are of paintings of soldiers and would have been much, much more illustrative if printed in color.

For those seeking to field troops on the tabletop, here's an excellent background guide to the TYW French army. You'll need more research for an actual scenario, but your TO&E will be accurate.

Enjoyed it.



And one more from the ACW game: A peaceful village..