

# The Kommandeur



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## From the President Charles Marshall

By the time this issue of *The Kommandeur* reaches you I hope all of you out there have had a great and thankful Thanksgiving. Sometimes it's easier to complain than to be thankful, but honestly I feel we as a Society and America as a nation have much to be thankful for. Without a doubt my thanks go out to all of our active servicemen, not just in Afghanistan or Iraq, but everywhere in the world for all the work they do and the risks they take. I'm also thankful for the opportunities afforded me by this great nation and for the little things, like a spare moment every week (or other week?) that I have to make a wargame move with one of my opponents; opponents whom I can trust will not disappear on me because of my erratic schedule or occasional rule flub. That's a great part of our Society. I know this from experience, having played more than a few games through other venues before becoming an AHIKS member and having my opponent simply stop playing with no explanation whatsoever. Some were losing, some were beating me, but, regardless, they just quit. That really made me feel like I had wasted a huge chunk of my valuable time. It was extremely frustrating. Since joining AHIKS, that has never happened to me, and for that I'm very thankful.

I hope everyone has enjoyed the contest that our editor Omar DeWitt has presented through a series of passwords throughout the year in *The K*. Each password has described a part of a famous battle site, and it's been most intriguing trying to decipher it. Now that the contest is coming to an end for 2010, I'd like to ask our members to submit their own individual username and password to access the Member's Only section of our website. Creating your own name and password will hopefully make it just a little easier for you to log on and get to those back issues of *The K* or make some rolls

with the AHIKS Die Roller. You can pick any name and password you desire, just be aware that it will be case sensitive. Also, I would encourage you to pick a combination of letters and numbers for each, for security's sake. When you've decided on them, just send me an email at [chasmars@sbglobal.net](mailto:chasmars@sbglobal.net), and I'll get your new information into the database. From then on, you should only have to remember that name and password for your Member's Only benefits.

Sadly, I also would like to mention that Tom Thornsen is stepping down as webmaster. I've been filling in for Tom, but due to his hectic schedule he has asked me to find a replacement for him. Anyone with experience in posting webpages and administering a website as well as some database administration would qualify. We would prefer someone with PHP programming experience as a plus. Just send me an email if you're interested. My thanks go out to Tom for his pioneering work to get AHIKS on the web and the excellent Forum he created for our Society. He'll be missed!

On a game-specific note, I'm learning more and more about playing the U.S. in **Battle of the Bulge**. My opponent, VP Bert Schneider, has used his Panzers and infantry to good use and forced me into positions that have given me pause for thought:

1) To Reinforce or Not Reinforce an "Engagement." I think I could write an entire strategy article on that one! Unlike past games, I have opted to reinforce many of my Engagements in this game, but I'm not sure of the benefits of this tactic (yet).

2) Fortresses: Defend or Abandon? Can surrounded units in a fortress present enough of a delaying factor to be worthy of their eventual loss? Or would they be better evacuated to

nearby ridges or rivers?

3) How many more "Contact" results do I have to get before I tear my game-table apart? (As I said to Bert once in an email, the "Contact" result gives me the odd mental impression of opposing units hanging around, shooting the breeze, and exchanging business cards. "Hey, did you make 'contact' with those German paratroopers? Those guys are a riot! We gotta do lunch with them some day.") Oh well.

Happy Wargaming everybody and Happy Holidays!

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## From the Editor

Things are blooming here on the top floor of *The Kommandeur* Building. We have many articles to publish. Those who are getting the paper edition will be missing some articles and parts of others. Pete Menconi's series on Vassal will be in the Web version, unless, in the future, there is room in the paper *Kommandeur*. Starting with this issue, the *eK* will be getting the main emphasis. The current issue will run close to 20 pages. I recommend that as many of you as possible should opt for the web version. If you plan to get the paper version next year, don't forget to pay your dues *now*. Use the renewal form on page 11.

Sue and I will be driving to Fredericksburg, TX, and New Orleans this month to visit two WWII museums: the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg on December 7! And the WWII museum in New Orleans. I will share some of what we see in a future issue.

I, too, would like to thank Tom Thornsen for his excellent work and am sorry to see him leave the Officer ranks.

## Game News

This is a compilation of information gleaned chiefly from Consimworld (<http://www.consimworld.com>), Web-Grognards (<http://www.grognard.com>) and Boardgamegeek (<http://www.boardgamegeek.com>). Material correct at time of writing: 27 November 2010.

Alan Poulter

[grognard@grognard.com](mailto:grognard@grognard.com)

### NEW BOARD WARGAMES

#### Academy Games

**Price of Honour: Poland 1939** is an expansion game which requires either of the two award winning games in the **Conflict of Heroes** series—**Awakening the Bear!** or **Storms of Steel!** **Price of Honour: Poland 1939** covers tactical combat in the opening campaign of World War Two.

<http://www.conflictofheroes.com/>

#### Acies

**Sa Battalla** covers the Battle of Sanluri, June 30, 1409, and uses the game system from **Guelfs and Ghibelines** published by Europa Simulazioni. [www.aciesedizioni.it/Battalla-eng.htm](http://www.aciesedizioni.it/Battalla-eng.htm)

#### Avalanche Press

**U.S. Navy Plan Scarlet** is a 25-scenario supplement in the **Great War at Sea** series and covers hypothetical conflicts in a campaign against Australia, with potential involvement from Japan. This supplement is not playable by itself, but requires ownership of **Pacific Crossroads**, **Jutland**, **Cruiser Warfare**, **Sea of Troubles**, and **Black Waters**.

**Combined Fleet** is a 20-scenario supplement in the **Second World War at Sea** series, focusing on the options regarding the Battles of Midway and the Coral Sea. This supplement is not playable by itself, but requires ownership of **Coral Sea** and **Midway**. Some scenarios draw on **Bismarck**, **Bomb Alley**, **Strike South**, and **Eastern Fleet**.

**Indian Unity** is a 10-scenario supplement in the **Panzer Grenadier** series and covers the battles between India and Hyderabad in 1941. This supplement is not playable by itself, but requires ownership of **Eastern Front**, **Road to Berlin**, **Cassino '44**, **Desert Rats**, and **Elsenborn Ridge**. **Black SS** is also a 30-scenario supplement for the

## The Kommandeur

**Panzer Grenadier** series, on actions of Waffen SS divisions in the last years of the Second World War. **Black SS** is not playable by itself, but requires ownership of **1940: The Fall of France**, **Elsenborn Ridge**, **Road to Berlin**, and **Beyond Normandy**.

Finally, **To Hell With Spain** is a 10-scenario downloadable supplement for the **Infantry Attacks** series, on the battles in Cuba and Puerto Rico between June and August 1898. This supplement is not playable by itself: ownership of any boxed game in the **Infantry Attacks** series is necessary to provide the rules and markers. Maps are drawn from the following **Panzer Grenadier** series games and supplements: **Elsenborn Ridge**, **Road to Berlin**, **Battle of the Bulge**, **Kokoda Trail**, **Eastern Front**, and **1940: The Fall of France**. <http://www.avalanchepress.com/index.php>

#### Collins Epic Wargames

**Frontline General: Spearpoint 1943** is a card game that uses tactical Unit Cards, Command Cards, and Damage Cards to simulate tactical World War Two combat between infantry and individual tanks, artillery, and aircraft. <http://frontlinegeneral.com>

#### Consim Press

From newcomer Consim Press, **Beda Fomm** is a new edition of the classic Frank Chadwick game on the World War Two battle. <http://www.consimpress.com>

#### Critical Hit

New ASL **Comp Afrikakorp** series games on World War Two tactical combat are **Gazala**, on actions in the Battle of Gazala, **Frontier War**, on actions between Italian and British forces in 1940, **Reluctant Offensive**, on battles around Tobruk, **Along the Via Balbia**, on the Allied retreat from Gazala, **Hellfire Pass and Beyond** on actions around Halfaya Pass, and **El Guettar Stakes** on actions in Tunisia. <http://www.criticalhit.com/>

#### Dan Verssen Games

**Guns Blazing** is the second game in the **Down In Flames** series on tactical air combat in World War Two. It contains 55 new aircraft types and appropriate action cards and new

campaigns featuring the new aircraft. **Hornet Leader – Carrier Air Operations** covers American naval aviation throughout the service life of the F/A-18 Hornet from 1983 to the present day: mission planning of aircraft and pilots is a major part of the game. <http://www.dvg.com>

#### Days of Wonder

**Winter Wars** is a ten-scenario booklet in the **Memoir '44** series covering the crucial two weeks of Christmas 1944 in the Ardennes. The first six scenarios are playable with a single base game while the last four scenarios are all big ones and need the **Memoir '44: Eastern Front expansion**, and maps from **Memoir '44: Breakthrough**.

<http://www.daysofwonder.com>

#### GMT

**Labyrinth: the War on Terror** is a two-player game, the jihadists seeking to exploit world events to spread fundamentalist rule while the United States tries to neutralize terrorist cells while encouraging Muslim democratic reform, and uses a new card-based game system. <http://www.gmtgames.com>

#### Legion Wargames

**Saipan & Tinian, 1944** is the first game in the Pacific Island Series from designer Michael Taylor. It covers the American invasion and capture of Saipan in the summer of 1944. using standard series and exclusive rules. <http://www.legionwargames.com>

#### Lock 'n Load Publishing

**Operation Garbo** is an expansion in the **World at War** series and covers a hypothetical attack on Sweden by the Soviet Union. It requires ownership of either **Eisenbach Gap** or **Blood and Bridges**. **White Star Rising** is the first game in the **Nations at War** series. Based on the **World at War** series, it covers platoon level combat in World War 2, using a chit pull system and short rules. <http://www.locknloadgame.com>

#### MMP

**The Tide at Sunrise** covers the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05 on an operational scale. <http://www.multimanpublishing.com>

**Victory Point Games**

In **Star Borders: Humanity**, the two players are opposing viceroys in a region of space bypassed in the great struggle between the Imperium and the Alliance. While the war is elsewhere, they engage in a local power struggle. **We Must Tell the Emperor** is the latest game in the solitaire **States of Siege** series and is set in the Pacific War, 1941-1945, putting the player in control of Japanese forces.  
<http://www.victorypointgames.com>

**Worthington Games**

There are two new "battle packs" for **Napoleon's War. Battle Pack 1** covers the battles of Alexandria, Jena, Auerstadt, and La Rothiere. Jena and Auerstadt are linkable. **Battle Pack 2: America's War** includes four battles from the American War of 1812: Queenstown Heights, Chippewa, Bladensburg, and New Orleans. Both battle packs require ownership of **Napoleon's War Vol. I** to play.  
<http://www.worthingtongames.com>

**NEW MAGAZINE WARGAMES**

*Strategy & Tactics* #265 contains **Operation Jubilee: Dieppe, 1942** on the raid on Dieppe in 1942. It uses a simplified version of the **D-Day at Omaha Beach** game system.

*World at War* #15 contains, **Soft Underbelly: Italy 1943**, a Ty Bomba design using the **Victory in Normandy** game system.  
<http://www.decisiongames.com>

*Vae Victis* #95 contains **Sphactérie 425 AV J.C.**, on the land and naval battles of Pylos and Sphacteria, during the first phase of the Peloponnesian War. <http://www.vaevictis.com/>  
 Note that *Vae Victis* magazine and games are in French but rules translations are made available via:  
<http://grogard.com/vaevict.html>

**NEW DTP WARGAMES**

New from Australian designer Murray McCloskey, **Gathering Storm** is the first module in the **Soldiers of the Rising Sun** series, on the opening battles of the Kokoda Track Campaign in 1942, using company level with point-to-point movement. To order a copy please send an email to:  
[srsbilling@gmail.com](mailto:srsbilling@gmail.com)

**Wargamedownloads.com**

New from TCS Games, **Souls of the Brave** is a solitaire game covering the Alamo. Available from:  
<http://wargamedownloads.com>

**White Dog Games**

**Battles for a Continent** covers three battles of the Seven Years War.  
<http://whitedoggames.com>

**NEW WEB RESOURCES****Free games****Aero Squadron**

<http://aerosquadron.web.officelive.com/default.aspx>

**Outlaws : Adventures in the Old West** (David Murray) <http://www.mediafire.com/outlawsgame>

**Sink the Bismark** (Book Ranger) <http://www.bookranger.co.uk/sinkthebismarck/SinkTheBismarck.htm>

**Official Rules**

**Labyrinth: The War on Terror** (GMT) <http://www.boardgamegeek.com/file/download/6vxxptoadp/LabyrinthRules.pdf>

**Lonato 1796** (GMT) [http://www.boardgamegeek.com/file/download/6w6jn9519b/Lonato\\_1796\\_US.pdf](http://www.boardgamegeek.com/file/download/6w6jn9519b/Lonato_1796_US.pdf)

**Marne 1918—Friedensturm** (Hexasim) <http://www.hexasim.com/marne1918/M18F-basic-english-1-4.pdf>

**Errata**

**Antietam** (DDH) [http://www.boardgamegeek.com/file/download/6s7huo68qx/Antietam\\_FAQ\\_10-14-10.pdf](http://www.boardgamegeek.com/file/download/6s7huo68qx/Antietam_FAQ_10-14-10.pdf)

**Rules Translations**

**Sphacterie 425 av J.C., VV#95** (HC)  
<http://jours.de.gloire.pagesperso-orange.fr/download/rulesSphacterie.pdf>

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**The Mediterranean 2010**

by Omar DeWitt

The trip to Malta was a little rocky, with white caps on the waves. It took about 16 hours. We arrived in the sunshine at 12 noon. The high rock walls



Valetta and the Grand Harbour, Malta.

were a light brown; the sky was mostly blue; it was a great view. Theresa, at least a fourth generation Maltese, was our guide when we left the ship at a quarter to one. From the buildings at the top of the cliffs over the harbor, the view was spectacular across the water.

Malta has no natural resources and can support only about 30% of its population from its farms. There is some manufacturing. They are a member of the European Union and use the euro. Tourism is an industry; many Britain's come back or visit for the first time. We saw some French. A short



Valetta, Malta.

walk in the city showed no large stores, a fair number of people, and no cars. Cars, of which there are many, are kept out of the city except for certain times.

The trip to the Malta at War Museum was interesting but very limited. The WWII museum was being refurbished. What we saw was a bomb shelter that was cut out of the rock. All the paths and rooms had been chiseled out of the soft rock. Our guide was interesting, but he talked mainly about the people coping with the incessant bombing. Malta was bombed more than any other Allied city in the war. In a two-year period, there were about 3,700 air

(Continued on page 12)

## The Nature of Our Wargaming Hobby

by Tom Oleson

A friend uninformed about our hobby asked me for information. I wonder if others see it this way?

The type of historical board wargame which we recently played for 10 days at the 20th annual WBC convention is a tiny but viable slice of a huge market for what you might call conflict games.

A recent *New Yorker* magazine had a fascinating article about computer war games, often on fantasy/sci-fi themes, a market bigger than the movies. The NY Times recently reported that the internet game **FarmVille** is played by more than 61 million people!

The games we play are an alternative way to study military history in an interactive way, instead of reading a book, or watching a documentary film. Many are entertaining just as games, but few people play them for that reason, absent a specific historical interest. Where "hard-core" historical wargames are played, you will also often find "Eurogames," such as **Settlers of Catan**, often played by the same people. They have little or no historical frame of reference, the emphasis being on game enjoyment.

On most significant battles or campaigns, whether Alexander the Great or some near future possible clash, you

can find a board wargame which, if well done, will give you a better understanding of it. The game will be played on a board. Some easily fit on a small table, others need a board atop the biggest dining room table to accommodate the entire map, and there is every size in between. This board will depict the terrain of the conflict, divided in some fashion — hexes, areas, etc.—to enable units to move, governed by rules reflecting the constraints on such movement.

There also are computer versions of many games, either derived from the original board version, or computer from the start. These are distinct from the very popular computer games mentioned above.

At the recent WBC convention, nobody played computer wargames, although no doubt returning home, many will do so.

The units usually are small often colorful cardboard pieces, with numbers and illustrations on them to indicate their characteristics, or perhaps wooden blocks, the blank side of which faces the opponent, to disguise their nature and strength.

Rules range from a few pages to hefty phone-book size. Playing time may be from a few hours to days or even weeks.

New games on new topics, or new versions of old topics, come out faster than any one could ever try them. Many buy them just to leaf through, get an idea whether they would like to invest more time. The price of a typical wargame may be what a night out might cost, so the potential cost for time enjoyed may be very reasonable. The several magazines on the hobby also often include games, and some games, intended to kindle interest among those new to the hobby, are little bigger than a playing card, with a tiny map and playing pieces which must be cut out and mounted.

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### 12.4 REINFORCEMENTS

Reinforcements may enter at any friendly North, South, East, or West mapboard edge. New units may arrive by ground, rail, seairlift, or airlift and count against stacking limits. Reinforcements are fully combat-capable on Turn of entrance.

1605 Dennis Stamey, Katy, TX

1606 Stefano Roli, Marano Sul Panaro, Italy

1607 Henry Knapp, Beaver, PA

1608 Jim Barrows, Seymour, CT

1609 Peter Fayers, Coulsdon, UK

1610 Mike Haverty, Owasso, OK

1611 Allen Joslyn, Tappahannock, VA

1612 Lawrence Duffield, Ft. Bragg, CA

1613 Brian Berry, Boyds, MD

1614 Keith Mageau, Summerville, SC

1615 Peter K. Tsang, Fournier, Canada

## Upcoming Events

**Dec. 10-11**, Washington, Missouri  
**GAMEUPHORIA**  
<http://gameuphoria.com/>

**Jan. 14-16**, Columbia, SC  
**SCARAB**  
<http://www.s-c-a-r-a-b.com/>

**Jan. 28-30**, Champaign, Illinois  
**WINTER WAR 38**  
<http://winterwar.org/>

**Jan. 29-30**, Houston, TX  
**OWLCON**  
[www.owlcon.com](http://www.owlcon.com)

**Jan. 29**, Manhattan, Kansas  
**TENGAICON 6**  
<http://tengaicon.com/>

**April 30, May 1**, Kenosha, WI  
**MIDWEST OPEN 2011**  
**AREA1@ATT.net**

**August 1-7**, Lancaster, PA  
**WBC**  
<http://www.boardgamers.org/>

**August 12-14**, New Orleans, LA  
**HEAT OF BATTLE V**  
<http://www.nationalww2museum.org/calendar/educational-wargaming-at-the.html>

A good source for information on all kinds of conventions is the Steve Jackson game site:  
<http://sjgames.com/con>

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### The Winners

If you remember, in the first issue of this year, I said the passwords were points of interest on one battlefield. After reading the first password, Pry Ford, the following members got the battlefield correct. In alphabetical order:

Bob Best  
 Mark Fassio  
 Rob Schneggenburger

Congratulations!

**The answer is Antietam.**

## Open Match Requests from Paul Qualtieri

1870		Sidney Jolly (12) GN	Midway	Avl	Mel Yarwood (36) U
1914	AH	John Trosky (1554) UNV	Midway	GDW	Bill Scanlan (275) ENU
A Victory Lost	MMP	Ed O'Connor (1243) E	Montys D-Day	S&T	Chris Harding NE
Advanced 3R	AH	Paul Warnick (1430) C	Napoleon at War	SPI	Melvin Yarwood (36) AN
Afrika Korps	AH	Greg Dilbeck (1363) UFN	Napoleons Last Bttls	SPI	Melvin Yarwood (36) AN
Afrika Korps	AH	Paul Heiser (1051) UN	Napoleons Triumph 1		Barry Roy (1596) V
Afrika Korps	AH	Sid Driver (1567) D	NATO	VG	Kevin Reid (1315) E
Afrika Korps	AH	Brian Britton ELNV	Panzer Leader	AH	Peter Bertram (0790) V
Anzio	AH	Melvin Yarwood (36) AN	Panzerblitz	AH	Richard Passow (1453) ESL
Anzio	AH	Tim Brittain (1582) NV	Paths of Glory	AH	Thomas Scarborough (1345) WT
Anzio revised map/6th ed	AH	Tom Oleson (111)	Paths of Glory	AH	Clyde Longest (1413) LX
Arab-Israeli Wars	AH	John Pasitano (1590)	Red Parachutes	Avl	Sidney Jolly (12) GN
ASLSK 1	MMP	Barry Roy (1596) V	Red Star / White Star	SPI	Sidney Jolly (12) GN
Battles for Ardennes	SPI	Tom TenEyck (826) NV	Richthofen's War	AH	John Trosky (1554) EU
Bitter Woods	AH	Melvin Yarwood (36) AN	Rommel In The Desert		Pete Menconi (146) INV
Bitter Woods	AH	Greg Dilbeck (1363) UFN	Russia Beseiged	L2	Martin Svensson (1466) ED
Blue & Gray I-II	PI	Melvin Yarwood (36) AN	Russian Campaign	AH	Bob Johnson (73) EM
Brexit Normandy	AH	Clyde Longest (1413) CEINWV	Russian Campaign	AH	Paul Heiser (1051) U
Breitenfeld	SPI	Mark White (842) FNO	Russian Campaign	AH	Ron Brooker (1252) U
Bulge '65/'81	AH	Bob Johnson (73) EM	Russian Campaign	AH	Tim Brittain (1582) NV
Bulge '65/'81	AH	Tim Brittain (1582) NV	Stalingrad	AH	Sid Driver (1567) D
Caucasus	GMT	Chris Hancock (565) V	Stalingrad	AH	Joe Angiolillo (412) AN
Chicamanga	SPI	Joe Angiolillo (412) AN	Stalingrad	AH	Lawrence Duffield (1612) CN
D-Day '61	AH	Brian Britton ELNV	Stalingrad	AH	Brian Britton ELNV
D-Day 77	AH	Sid Driver (1567) D	Stalingrad Holcombe	AH	Bob Johnson (73) EM
D-Day 77	AH	Greg Dilbeck (1363) UFN	SOPAC	Avl	Graeme Dandy (916) E
<b>DAGC</b> Destruction of Army Group Ctr	S&T	Chris Harding NE	Sword and the Stars	SPI	Sidney Jolly (12) GN
Diplomacy	AH	Bob Herbst (1442)	Tamburlaine the Great	SPI	Albert Bowie (299) NE
Downtown	GMT	Paul Qualtieri (757) CN	Twilight Struggle	GMT	Lee Massey (1382) C
Drive on Paris	Gamers	Bill Scanlan (275) E	Victory in the Pacific	AH	Rick Roksiewicz (1108)
Eurofront2		Pete Menconi (146)INV	Vietnam	VG	Kevin Reid (1315) E
Fortress Stalingrad	S&T	Chris Harding NE	War and Peace	AH	Tim Brittain (1582) NB
GCAW	MMP	Clyde Longest (1413) LX	Waterloo	AH	Paul Heiser (1051) U
GCACW	AH,MMP	Gary Guyton (1015) CDEI/NLV	Waterloo	AH	Joe Angiolillo (412) ANO
Gettysburg '88	AH	Paul Heiser (1051) UM	Waterloo	AH	Brian Britton ELNV
Golden Horde: Kulikovo	ATO	Albert Bowie (299) NE	We The People	AH	Clyde Longest (1413) LX
Invasion America	SPI	Lee Massey (1382) C	Wilderness War	GMT	Gary Guyton (1015) CDEINLV
Jutland	AH	John Trosky (1554) U			
Kutuzov		Barry Roy (1596) CV			
Luftwaffe	AH	John Trosky (1554) EU			

### Match Codes

A:Area Rated Only  
 C:Cyberboard  
 D:ADC2  
 E:Email  
 F:Fast Play Desired  
 G:Will Gamemaster this Game  
 I: Will teach in "L" game  
 L:Learning Game Requested  
 M:Will Play New Member Only  
 N:New Member OK  
 O: US Only  
 P:Phone  
 S:Slow Play Desired  
 T:Acts  
 U:Snail Mail  
 V:Vassal  
 W:Warhorse  
 X:Non-rated Match

### Match Coordinator

To accept one of the listed matches or have a new match listed contact

Paul Qualtieri  
 114 Barrington Court  
 Summerville, SC 29485  
 Paul@pdqsc.com

The web version of this issue (in color) is available at our website ([www.AHIKS.com](http://www.AHIKS.com)).  
 User name = "AHIKS"  
 Password = "SunkenRoad" (Both are case sensitive; do not include the quote marks; there is no space between n and R. If you use the Caps Lock to write AHIKS, be sure to take it off for SunkenRoad.)

If you still have trouble accessing the web version, contact Charles Marshall at the address on page 12.

## Secretary's Notes Bob Best

Today is November 15, 2010. I'm sitting here at my computer looking out my den window and admiring a beautiful fall view. We have trees turning different shades of red and gold mixed in with evergreens and all this under a crystal clear blue sky with no wind. It is simply a fantastic view! It makes you glad you are alive and able to enjoy life and have fun! ☺

And having fun is what AHIKS is all about. For most of us it is about those times when you want to sit down and relax and enjoy a friendly game and some good camaraderie with a good reliable friend. Simply kicking back and have fun whether it is a face to face game or an on-line game or simply opening up that game move that came in today's mail is what it is all about, and AHIKS is certainly the place to enjoy all of this.

Our membership is growing, giving us a larger gamer pool. I am finding lots of interesting game matches being requested as I look over our Match Coordinator's page in both *The K* and on the AHIKS website. Lots of game requests should give us all a grand opportunity to find a game of our liking and get into a friendly match with a game we like.

The **Submarine** game GMed by Paul Qualtieri is winding down to its conclusion. Paul is starting a game of **Flight Leader** by Avalon Hill next, so look for it to be posted on the forum in the coming months. I would like to remind everyone that the website is open to any AHIKS member who wishes to run a game. Just get your players together or advertise for them on the website and start a new thread with your game. Its very easy to do, and the forum makes a great meeting place to run the game.

I have heard comments that members want to see more game tournaments. Well, don't be shy; step up and

run one. You can run it on the forum as I outlined above or you can run it yourself and just use the forum for game support and advertising for players if you like. The key here is that this is a volunteer organization, and, if you want to run a game or tournament, then set it up and run it. That is part of what the forum is for.

We have a number of new and returning former members this time who are looking for opponents. Let me introduce our newest members since last issue.

Chuck Sutherland	# 1604 from Danville, VA
Dennis Stamey	# 1605 from Katy, TX
Stefano Roli	# 1606 from Marano Sul Panaro, Italy
Henry Knapp	# 1607 from Beaver, PA
Jim Barrows	# 1608 from Seymour, CT
Peter Fayers	# 1609 from Coulsdon, UK
Mike Haverty	# 1610 from Owasso, OK
Allen Joslyn	# 1611 from Tappahannock, VA
Lawrence Duffield	# 1612 from Ft. Bragg, CA
Brian Berry	# 1613 from Boyds, MD
Keith Mageau	# 1614 from Summerville, SC
And returning former member,	
Robert Morss	# 1438 from Sanford, ME

So, Gentlemen, *welcome* to AHIKS!

And now my bi-monthly reminder. If you have a change of address or get a new email address please contact me at the address listed on page 12 of *The K* so that we can update the membership roster. As the Secretary, I will update the roster and forward your new information to the Editor and the Match Coordinator to make sure your subscription to AHIKS is uninterrupted.

I hope everyone had a really great Thanksgiving and will have a very Merry Christmas!

Until next time, Happy Gaming to you all! ☺



#### PUBLICATION DEADLINES

Articles will be accepted at any time though submission of an article does not guarantee its publication. News items will be accepted if received in sufficient time to allow production schedules to be met.

**Deadline for next issue: Jan. 31, 2011.**

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

*The Kommandeur (K)* is the official newsletter of AHIKS, an international society of mature adults who play historical simulation games by email and mail. AHIKS is an organization of amateurs, staffed by volunteers, and is not affiliated with any game company or publisher. Society dues are yearly. Additional information about current rates is available from the Treasurer. Subscriptions to *The Kommandeur* are available to non-members at \$5 per issue. We do not accept advertising. We do accept "ad trades" on an issue-for-issue basis with other publications. Direct inquiries to the Editor.

*As AHIKS strives to keep costs and dues down, there is something you can do to help. Our Perpetual Fund, started by Bruce Monnin and Frederick Kraus, can always use more donations. The interest from the Fund helps lower the dues. A few dollars from you could help AHIKS become totally cost free. Give it some thought. Send Brian Stretcher a couple of dollars.*

Brian Stretcher  
5282 Deer Path,  
Milford, OH 45150-9418

## Carlo D'Este: Airborne Problems in Sicily

This continues from my trip to The Heroic Shores exploring WWII sites in the Mediterranean. I taped and wrote out speeches by Carlo D'Este and Donald Miller. This piece took place in Sicily on the drive to Biazza Ridge.

We are going to stop and look across the valley at one of the great airborne battle sites. While we are in route, I wanted to give you a little more background.

You may recall yesterday when we were up at the Norman castle I made a reference to the fact that no plan survives first contact. Well, in the case of the Jim Gavin's 505th parachute regiment, their plan did not survive getting off the ground. They flew out of bases in North Africa, and from the very beginning they encountered incredible obstacles. This was the first major airborne operation of WWII, and it was exceptionally crude. They learned many, many lessons here that were later applied to great effect in future airborne operations. But in the Sicily operations there were so many more problems. For example, the use of pathfinders, which jump ahead of the airborne force and mark the drop zone with homing devices. That technique had yet to evolve. Gavin had a strong sense of what was coming. He privately said that many lives will be lost in a few hours.

Unfortunately the Husky planning was made by officers with no airborne experience. The transport pilots who flew the paratroopers had no training and were completely inexperienced. In order to get to Sicily and the drop zone, they really had to fly a dog leg. They flew from North Africa over Malta. Malta was their turning point. It was a marker. You could see the island then make a left turn toward Sicily. Well, a lot of the men missed the turnoff. It was interesting that one glider made a nice landing and it was on an airfield. The pilot was very pleased with himself. He thought "Gee, here I am. I made a perfect landing. We're all intact." Pretty soon a British officer walked up to him and said, "Sir, you have landed on the main airstrip at Malta. Now get this damned glider out of here."

They flew in 220 sessions. C-47 Dakota aircraft at 200 feet over the Mediterranean. Now the winds were expected to be in the neighborhood of 35 mph. 15 mph is the safe maximum velocity to drop a paratroop force. So here you're looking at more than double the wind velocity. However, they had no option but to go. The great many of the paratroopers were torn by dysentery before they ever got on those airplanes. The dust in North Africa once those propellers started turning was simply so thick that the pilots couldn't see and they had to make instrument takeoffs. It was just incredible.

What messed things up was so many missed the turning point in Malta. Normally a paratroop force would jump at 600 feet at 100 miles an hour. That's what they shoot for. When they came in here many of them jumped at 1,500 feet going 200 mph. A lot of the aircraft the pilots mistook Syracuse for Gela. Now that's about a 50 mile error, and that's one of the reasons that so many landed in the wrong spot. Some of the gliders ditched in the sea. Eight of them were shot down by enemy fire. The trigger fingers of the allied gunners at sea were exceptionally itchy. We talked yesterday about their sister regiment the 504th which literally got shot out of the sky on 11 July as they parachuted into Sicily. So the ships were shooting at the aircraft. You had friendly fire. Some of the paratroopers were shot and killed before they could even bail out of their aircraft. The pilots were off course and that simply compounded the problem of trying to find the correct drop zone. You had fires burning here on the island, you had smoke, you had enemy fire, and you had lack of training. They had never made any real test run in North Africa. There had been no real jump where they had a chance to practice together. So it was almost a lethal combination of circumstances. And that's what I think helps to explain why these paratroopers were scattered all over southern Sicily. As I mentioned yesterday when we stopped at Piano Lupo, hundreds of them managed to drop fairly

intact near this key road junction. But for the most part they were scattered around in small groups all over the island. 75 landed near the town of Avola on the east coast which was a D-Day objective of the British 50th division. That's how far off they were.

It's interesting because these young men were not deterred. A group of these paratroopers headed by the gung-ho young lieutenants thought nothing of attacking a city of 22,000 with carbines. They were so lightly armed; as you know they could only bring what they could carry on their person. These paratroopers are attacking the city and finally they decided they had bitten off a little much more than they could handle. They met up a group of some British Tommies, and they joined forces with them and participated in the liberation. There are a lot of really great stories that took place.

Here we are in the road junction of Piano Lupo, the plain of the wolf, where we stopped yesterday. Up on that hill were those 16 pill boxes of which there are still quite a few, and remember this little bistro here. A nice jumping off spot yesterday. We will soon be arriving in Ponte Drillo. When we get there it's going to be very, very tight. We've got to get the busses off the road.

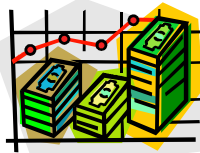
When we get there I'll tell you the story of Biazza Ridge and what happened there.

Carlo D'Este is the author of several books. The three I have are "Patton, A Genius for War" (1995), "Bitter Victory, the Battle for Sicily" (1988), and "Fatal Decision, Anzio and the Battle for Rome" (1991). The publisher is Harper Perennial.

★★

## Treasury Notes

Brian Stretcher



### Dues Announcement

Although the treasury is down a bit this year because of the costs of implementation of new services, we have decided once again to hold the line on dues and offer free membership in AHIKS for 2011! If you want to continue to receive the *eK*, you need do nothing. Your membership will be continued as is, just remember to update your contact information with either Omar or Bob Best.

However, printing costs have risen, and we anticipate postage costs to also rise in 2011. So, if you want the printed *K* sent to you, there will be a modest price increase this year. AHIKS needs \$9.00 from you by the end of January, or \$12.00 after that. That amount is necessary to cover the expense of printing and mailing. If you forget to send in your money, you will remain a member, but will not get the *K* after the January/February issue. We still encourage those of you who get the print *K* but could receive the *eK* to convert your membership if you can, because printing and postage costs remain our single greatest expense each year. If there are any of you who wish to convert to the *eK*, you may do that at anytime. Please let either Omar, Bob, or me know and provide your current email address. There is no reason for any of you to miss an issue, so long as we have all of your current information.

With no election again this year, dues should be sent directly to me. My mailing address is listed on page 12.

### A Call to Action!

AHIKS remains committed to providing increased services at little or no cost to its members. As you might expect, offering things like a forum, the server, and an improved website requires capital. Not much, but some. And, while we remain financially sound, we cannot continue to offer all of our services for free, especially now that it is no longer possible to earn most of our expenses back passively by resting on our financial laurels.

We can potentially head off the problems that come with instituting dues (deciding how much to charge, collecting, cancelling memberships, chasing after some people with a big stick, etc.) if you, our members, will step up to the plate and send in what you believe your AHIKS membership to be worth. How much is your membership worth to you?

## The Kommandeur

If we could collect a paltry \$5.00 or more from each of you who reads this each year, our long-term financial concerns would become virtually nonexistent, and we could look into providing ever more services for your enjoyment. So, please consider making a contribution to AHIKS this year if you have not in the past. And, for those of you who regularly contribute, I thank you on behalf of the entire Executive Committee and the membership!

### New Games, Old Games, Hot Games, Cold Games

I wondered last issue whether anyone was still buying and playing the new games often mentioned within these pages. Several of my current opponents responded, with a couple of others. Hardly a statistically meaningful response, but perhaps information current publishers should take to heart, and something we should carefully consider in developing future AHIKS services. I have edited the comments offered for length and clarity.

On the one hand, apparently there are members buying and playing new games:

*I am pumping the economy, especially in the major sector of wargame publishing. Twenty years ago I probably had a game closet with 500 games in it, too. Now mine has 1000, if you include lots of magazine issues with games inserted. I guess I'm a sucker for new games, but I've found many new titles to be improvements over the classics. New games from GMT, Multiman Publishing, Avalanche Press, and others have great components. Colorful maps, sharp counters and often well thought out rules with excellent illustrations and examples. I'll still pull out an oldie on occasion, but most my game playing is with new titles. I'm not into multiple mailings, and with often very interactive play sequences, I don't see many new games that would be good for play by mail. I play a lot of **Battleground: Civil War** by email with a former AHIKSer. **Battleground: Civil War** is a computer game supporting email play. Actually, my opponent and I have had some sort of game going by some sort of mail continuously since about 1972. I see many games listed in the opponents wanted listings that I can't imagine playing by mail. I'd like to know how they do those complicated play sequences by mail! —Dick Boyes*

Our esteemed Secretary adds:

*I still buy new games. Many of the ones I buy new have a connection to some era of military history that I am*

*interested in and many of these games are solitaire games like **B-29 Superfortress**. I enjoy a good solitaire game now and then plus you have the added benefit that there are some websites that take the solitaire game and turn it into a multi-player experience as with the narratives I have posted on the AHIKS Forum about the "Exploits of the Sweet Sue." I play most all of my games on-line or by snail mail. AHIKS is great for this as we have had ongoing games on the forum. The remaining games I play are solitaire or are two-person games that I play solitaire to get the flow of the game before I try a match with an opponent. I would think that the new remakes of the SPI Quad games would be quite playable. I just bought **Saipan and Tinian**. I haven't tried it yet though. I don't think it matters which way "you swing" here. It should only matter that you are able to find good reliable opponents here at AHIKS so that you can have fun in the process! As for the new cutting-edge games, I think AHIKS has the right venues for it with the possibility of games on the forum as well as games on line or by snail mail. It merely takes motivated players to use the venues provided by AHIKS to get the games going—just my opinion. —Bob Best*

All well and good. But publishers of new games, take heed of the following, from still active players:

*I read your article...and agree completely. I haven't bought anything in years. I canceled my S&T subscription because I have a drawer of unread issues. Last summer I cleaned out my game storage area and found four games I bought 9-10 years ago still wrapped in cellophane. —Bill Klitzke*

*I don't buy many games. To a large extent, this is because I have little or no idea of what's out there. The last games I bought resulted from attending the WBC in 2006. One of these was a card game about the Wars of the Roses. It can be played ftf, or solitaire, but because it is a card game, not by pbm. Another, **Blood of Noble Men**, is a game about the final Mexican assault on the Alamo. It's a good, simple game, playable ftf, solitaire, or pbm. But I don't think there's much interest, for although the Texans can win on points, everyone knows that by the end they'll all be dead. Four other games came with a one-year subscription to *Against The Odds* magazine. All these games have extensive rules with convoluted and/or interactive sequences of play. Only one of them has intrigued me sufficiently to request a game match—no takers so far.*



*The high cost of games is, in my opinion, a consequence of demographics and economics. The prime group of game players is young men, high school & college age. Today this group thinks of war games as video games, point-and-shoot rather than strategy. The decline in education makes things worse: who would be interested in a game about Napoleonic warfare if he never heard of Napoleon? As a result, the game market has drastically shrunk. Game designers/sellers can't make volume sales, so they must charge a high per-unit price. To justify such a high price, they put in a lot of "bells & whistles": maps much larger than they need be; counters so fancy that they are almost illegible; a multitude of rules (going overboard on realism); complex, interactive sequences of play. The product may have been fun to design, but who wants to play it? Who has the time to wade through all those rules? Then add in the high price, and the only ones interested are likely to be collectors, not players. Wish I could be optimistic and believe things will turn around, but sad to say, I think we're a dying breed. — Al Bowie*

*I see no purpose in collecting games I would no more than look over out of curiosity. I suppose there are some young people out there playing the video shoot-em-ups, or seeking treasure or wizards or something, but I have almost as little interest in them as they have in me. People who grow up texting and twittering will unlikely see any reason to step through the looking glass into a world of stiff game boards and pushing play pieces. Geography and history? Ever hear the phrase, "dead white men?" I'd pay what I have always considered a high price of \$30 for a game, but [publishers] want 2 1/2 to 4 1/2 times that. [Publishers] know the market is about 800 copies against the core constituency of 2,000 collector/'gamers' out there, and the dollar 'take' that they feel they deserve after paying off the production debts means that the copies they sell will have to fetch \$120 a box. And you pay the shipping and handling to boot. The grouping of everything produced into obscure niches or rehashes of the same old dozen classic titles (yawn), and the net result is an all too understandable "Who cares?" Compared to taking an old Avalon Hill classic out of the closet for free, their colorful offerings are passed over again and again, along with all the rest of the 'latest releases.' What I've bought in the past few years (make that many years)? Nothing. — John Michalski*

As Bob mentions, there is room for all tastes in AHIKS. It is nonetheless interesting to know where our members stand on these sorts of issues, because it might have an effect on where AHIKS decides to go and the services it offers in the future. I suspect we will be looking at this and other relevant issues among the membership soon. In the meantime, if any of you wish to comment further, I'd be happy to hear from you.

### Treasurer's Report

Our CD matured this month and we have our interest report. However, CD interest rates have become essentially non-existent (0.1% at this time). Therefore, the money that was in the CD has, temporarily at least, been put into a Money Market Savings Account earning 0.2% interest (Woo hoo!). The bank tells me it is unlikely that CD rates will improve anytime soon, but I will be informed of any promotional rates. Here are the numbers since last time:

<b>Checking Balance 10-1-10:</b>	\$1,527.35
<b>Income:</b>	
Dues and contributions:	\$ 7.00
Transfer from CD:	\$ 171.00
<b>Expenses:</b>	
K Sept/Oct Printing	\$ 86.35
Transfer to Perpetual Fund	\$ 171.00
<b>Checking Account 12-1-10:</b>	<b>\$1,448.00</b>
<b>Perpetual Fund, 10-1-10:</b>	\$ 2,980.72
<b>Interest Income reported:</b>	\$ 41.10
<b>Contributions transferred from checking:</b>	\$ 171.00
<b>Perpetual Fund 10-1-10:</b>	<b>\$ 3,192.82</b>
<b>Operating funds in CD, 10-1-10:</b>	\$ 5,790.49
<b>Interest Income reported:</b>	\$ 79.86
<b>Transfer to checking:</b>	\$ 171.00
<b>Operating funds in Savings, 12-1-10:</b>	<b>\$ 5,699.35</b>
<b>Total in Savings, 12-1-10:</b>	<b>\$ 8,892.17</b>
<b>Total Treasury, 12-1-10:</b>	<b>\$ 10,340.17</b>
And here is how we have done for the year:	
<b>Checking Account 12-1-09:</b>	\$1,943.29
<b>Income:</b>	
Dues and contributions	\$ 461.00
Transfer from savings	\$ 171.00
<b>Expenses:</b>	
K printing	\$ 454.09
Transfer of contributions to Perpetual Fund	\$ 171.00
Website/dieroller development	\$502.20
<b>Checking Account 12-1-10:</b>	<b>\$1,448.00</b>
<b>Net change in Checking Account for 2010:</b>	- \$ 495.29
<b>CD Balance 12-1-09:</b>	\$ 8,771.21
<b>Interest Income:</b>	\$ 120.96
<b>Net Transfers:</b>	\$ 0.00
<b>Total Savings, 12-1-10:</b>	<b>\$ 8,892.17</b>

<b>Net growth in Savings balance for 2010:</b>	\$ 120.96
<b>Treasury balance, 12-1-09:</b>	<b>\$ 10,714.50</b>
<b>Treasury balance, 12-1-10:</b>	<b>\$ 10,340.17</b>
<b>Treasury change for 2010:</b>	<b>- \$ 374.33</b>

This represents a total decrease for the year of 3.49%. This is the first decrease in total treasury we've seen for some time. However, this year saw the launching of the new AHIKS website and the die server, which account for *all* of the decrease. The bulk of those were one-time expenses. Even with the slowly recovering economy and despite charging nothing to actually belong to AHIKS now for three complete years, AHIKS remains financially healthy.

Nevertheless, postage and printing costs have crept back up, and we now have regular expenses for website hosting and occasional upgrades. Although we will be holding the line on the cost of membership for 2011, the Executive Committee will be examining the long-term outlook during the upcoming year, both in terms of investment and dues.

You can make our deliberations easier by considering a donation this year, whether you pay for the print *K* or not. On the table for consideration, among other things, is doing away with dues altogether and looking to maintain financial stability through donations instead, like public radio and TV. We also have to consider the viability of maintaining print memberships at all, considering that even with the added costs of maintaining and improving our website, printing and postage costs remain our single greatest expense. For those of you who have internet access and email but still receive the print *K*, I would ask you to consider again converting your membership to the *eK*. You can always print out your own copy if you want to keep it, and the online version frequently has additional content as well.

**Remember, for the third year in a row, there are no annual membership dues. If you want the print *K*, I need \$9.00 by the end of January. After that, it will be \$12.00. You may add any contribution to your dues check if you wish the print *K*. For those of you who receive the *eK*, I would ask that you not leave all of the contributions to those who are sending in money anyway; there are fewer and fewer members who receive the print *K* each year, and your inaction will increase the probability of re-implementation of dues in 2012. DUES CHECKS GO TO ME, THE TREASURER, AGAIN THIS YEAR!**

Good luck and good gaming to all of you in 2011!



## The VP's Corner by Bert Schneider

### War Rooms

In the movie "Dr. Strangelove," there is a memorable scene in which President Merkin Muffley yells at two of the War Room occupants who are having a bit of a scuffle: "Gentlemen. You can't fight in here. This is the War Room!"

### War Room Purpose

According to Wikipedia, a command center (often called a war room) is any place that is used to provide centralized command for some purpose. While frequently considered to be a military facility, these type of rooms can be used for other purposes (like running a political campaign, orchestrating a business pursuit, or coordinating an emergency response to a natural disaster). I needed a war room to command my AHKS armies!

After becoming an "Empty Nester" for over two years, I have been thinking about creating my own War Room to serve as a place to house my hobbies, war games, other games, and overall provide me with my own Man Cave. Our youngest son Chris moved out two years ago, but his stuff didn't. I finally convinced him to go through his belongings and either donate, get rid of, or keep various "items." We donated his old bedroom furniture (which he had outgrown) to the Salvation Army.

Before I get into the creation of my War Room, I thought I would share with you some of the War Rooms throughout the world that I have had the distinct honor of visiting or have had someone close to me visit.

### Cabinet War Rooms in London

According to the Imperial War Museum booklet "Churchill Museum and Cabinet War Rooms": "As the 1930s advanced and another conflict on the scale of the 'Great War' became more likely, military planners began to prepare for the expected air war. By this time bomber aircraft had been developed to a point that aerial bombardment of cities—which had been an ever more common feature of the First World War—was expected to be both a frequent and devastating occurrence. The decision had been taken in 1938 to establish a central emergency working refuge for the War Cabinet and the Chiefs of Staff as a safeguard against a

sudden air attack. The resulting 'Cabinet War Rooms,' the British Government's secret underground shelter, became fully operational on Sunday 27 August 1939, one week before the outbreak of the Second World War."

In September of 2006, I was attending a Ballistic Missile Defense Conference (where I not only had a chance to meet with Lieutenant General "Trey" Obering, who at the time was the Director of the Missile Defense Agency, but also Skunk Baxter, of Doobie Brothers fame). Skunk was hired by General Obering for some "out of the box thinking." I can't think of anyone else with more out of the box experiences (except perhaps Cory Wells!). While in London, I took the opportunity to visit the Imperial War Museum and the Cabinet War Rooms.

Illustrated in Fig. 1 is a photo of the Map Room in the London underground bunker called the Cabinet War Rooms. I wanted to create some semblance of this experience, in my War Room.



Fig. 1 Cabinet War Room—Map Room

### Stalingrad World War II Bunker

My nephew Michael Marcoux is currently on a one-year sabbatical in Moscow studying the Russian language, Russian culture, and Russian history. He speaks over a half a dozen languages fluently which he picked up mostly on his own! He recently spent some time in Volgograd (what used to be called Stalingrad). In Fig. 2 you see Michael sitting in the chair set up for Joseph Stalin to direct the war with Germany. Michael is of course role playing with the same phone that Stalin would have used.



Fig. 2 Michael in Stalin's WW II Stalingrad bunker

According to my nephew, Stalin was so paranoid that he had numerous secret doors installed that had a significant amount of armor on them and even included locks, but these doors all led to nowhere. He wanted to keep his enemies guessing where he really was.



Fig. 3 Photo courtesy of russiansentry.com

### SAC Underground

While stationed at Offutt AFB, NE (near Omaha) from December 1984 until May of 1989, I was able to get a tour of the Strategic Air Command underground, since in the last assignment I was there I worked in the 544th Intelligence Exploitation Squadron.

The saceliteguard.com web page reads: "UNDERGROUND COMMAND POST... Shown in the heart of SAC's command and control system located deep beneath Headquarters SAC. Senior operations personnel are in continuous contact with all SAC missile and bomber bases and with national civil and military centers. The SAC commander in chief can be contacted within seconds. SAC's famous 'red telephone' is located on the communications panel, center. Graphic and pictorial information is shown on the large screens at left." (Fig. 4)



Fig. 4 Photo courtesy of saceliteguard.com

### Offutt AFB Building D

Of course, one of the locations I worked at while stationed at Offutt AFB was in Building D for two different assignments (the 1000th Satellite Operations Group commanded the Defense Meteorological Satellite Program DMSP satellites and the 544th Intelligence Exploitation Squadron analyzed data from electronic intelligence platforms such as the RC-135 Rivet Joint and Combat Sent aircraft). Building D was originally a factory that was converted into operations centers, the base motor pool, and other offices (buildings within a building).

According to Offutt Air Force Base Pamphlet (OAFBP) 210-1 "History of Building D," 1981:

"More than a year before Pearl Harbor, General of the Army Henry H. ("Hap") Arnold made an urgent recommendation that two new bomber factories be constructed plus an additional one for fighters. The war in Europe had heated up and our rapidly evolving national policy now dictated that we begin serious production of high quality combat aircraft. Although not yet at war, we had already committed ourselves to provide war materials to our allies.

"Omaha and Tulsa were chosen as sites for the bomber plants because of their locations deep inside our borders and thus judged safe in the event that US cities would one day be subjected to the devastation that had so recently visited London. A contract was signed on 14 February 1941 awarding to the Glenn L. Martin Company of Baltimore the right to operate the Omaha plant. 531 B-29 Superfortresses and 1,585 B-26 Marauders were built in this facility. By the time the B-29s were built the building had expanded to

1,135,000 square feet (twenty-five full-size football fields).

"The B-29 was one of our nation's best kept military secrets whose sole purpose was to bomb the Japanese Empire. Of course the most famous B-29 built in Building D was the "Enola Gay." This B-29 dropped the first Atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

"During the Cold war that followed, Offutt AFB became the permanent home of the Strategic Air Command. In mid-1959 Building D was remodeled and became a guided missile assembly plant for SAC's new inventory of intercontinental missiles. This era ended in December 1965. Since then, Building D has housed many Air Force organizations."

### Current operation centers

Since living in near Tucson, AZ, I have also had the unique opportunity to tour the 612<sup>th</sup> Air and Space Operations Center at Davis Monthan AFB. An Air and Space Operations Center can plan and execute thousands of sorties a day, coordinating joint air forces as diverse as jet fighters, refueling tankers, and attack helicopters into an integrated air campaign. As the primary systems used by Joint Force Air Component Commanders to exercise command and control of air and space power worldwide, an AOC is a highly complex operation, with several dozen command and control systems that support diverse missions.



Fig. 5 AOC Photo courtesy of militaryspot.com

In Fig. 5, controllers in the Combined Air Operations Center at an air base on the Arabian Peninsula monitor the status of ongoing missions supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. The CAOC was the nerve center for all U.S. Central Command air operations when the first air strike occurred early March 20, 2003. Cruise-missile

attacks and the start of massive air operations with thousands of sorties a day followed this opening strike. (Photo by Ministry of Defence-Royal Air Force Sgt. Gareth Davies)

### My War Room

I wanted to create an atmosphere of a World War II style bunker but yet not make it so dark that I would need to turn the lights on, even during the daylight hours. I wanted a place to store all my games and other hobby paraphernalia out of the way. Shelves are nice, but they can get too cluttered. So I converted a normal bedroom closet into a gaming and hobby storage closet.

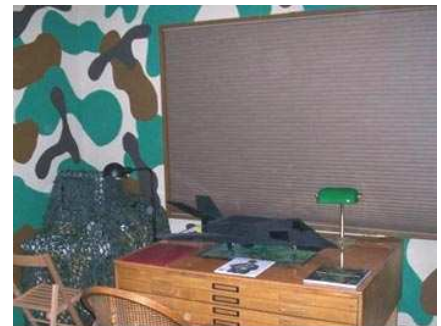


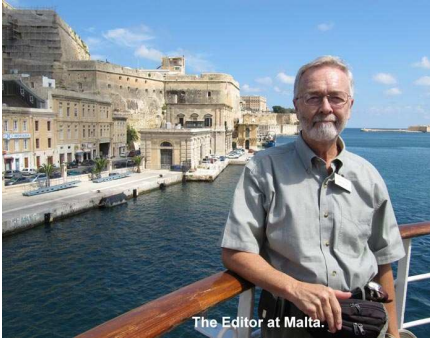
Fig. 6 Map Table stores wargames in progress

I basically overhauled my son's old room to include: hardwood floor, new paint, new blinds, and a completely revamped closet. This project took me close to two months to complete and prior to that about a month to design everything and get all of the materials. I did all the work myself, so the only cost was for materials. I discovered through this operation that Home Depot provides a 10% discount to active duty military and retired military for all purchases. I wish I would have known this over the years as I could have saved a ton of money for all my home improvement projects. While I was working on this project, we basically had two rooms full of stuff in the other spare bedroom (which eventually my wife wants to convert into a guest bedroom). If you've ever seen one of those TV shows about hoarders, then you know what that other room looked like for a couple of months. At some point, during the remodeling effort, my wife laid down the edict that I had to get the room done before Thanksgiving, since our son and his girlfriend were going to visit us for the holidays, and we needed

(Continued on page 25)

(Continued from page 3)

raids. At one point the number of planes defending Malta was so low that Kesselring was ready to invade. But it never happened. Hitler did not give the OK. Malta has been independent since 1957, after centuries of being under the control of the invader of the day. English and Maltese are the two main languages. Most of the population is Catholic.



The ship left Malta at 10 PM. The walls of Valetta were lit up from the sea to the top, making it quite attractive.

The ship arrived in Licata, Sicily, by 6:30 in the morning, and we were off by bus at 8:15. There was too much bus riding on Sicily, but I don't know what else could have happened. The roads were all two lane (except for a short bit near Syracuse and another

short bit near Massena), and there was usually quite a bit of traffic. For over an hour we drove inland and then up a hill so we could look back to the coast and see what the defenders saw. What they saw was a flat landscape all the way to the beaches where the 1<sup>st</sup> division landed. There had been a small Italian airfield on the flat plain, but there is no evidence of it now, and no one can definitely say where it was. Carlo spoke about the landing and the situation. Above us was an old castle and at least one pill box left over for 65 years. On the road up to the castle we had passed three other pill boxes still standing.

We were then driven past Gela [Jai-la] to Piano Lupo and the Y road junction that was important to the Big Red One. It hasn't changed much over the years except for a set of the white plastic greenhouses that pretty much cover the countryside now. The roads are narrowish two-laners. A couple of pill boxes are still visible in the trees and bushes. The U.S. paratroopers had been dropped all over the southern part of Sicily the night before the landings, and a small group of about 100 congregated here to protect the right flank of the First. At the Y, Italians occupied the pill boxes with machine guns. One of the

paratroopers spoke Italian and asked the Italian leader how he would feel about surrendering. The Italian officer thought it would be a great idea. The troops were able to slow down the panzers from the Hermann Goering division when they appeared, but some of them got by and went a mile or so down the road. They were poorly led, and fairly quickly returned up the road to Niscemi. Later a better led and larger force from the Hermann Goering division got by the Y junction and got to within 1,000 yards of our troops on the beach. There they ran into a rain of fire from destroyers, artillery, and some of our tanks. When they retreated, they left 16 dead tanks.

After lunch we were driven to Agrigento to visit the "Valley of the Temples." This "valley" was atop a high piece of land; two of the temples were still in good shape, no roofs, of course. A fair number of other tourists were visiting as well. Sue and I skipped the last temple. I spent the euros I had brought from the States on a calendar with photos of Sicily.

The next day was a day of driving. We drove to Syracuse with one stop at Ponte Drillo and Biazza Ridge, where Colonel Gavin and some paratroopers, who had marched 25 miles to get there,

(Continued on page 18)

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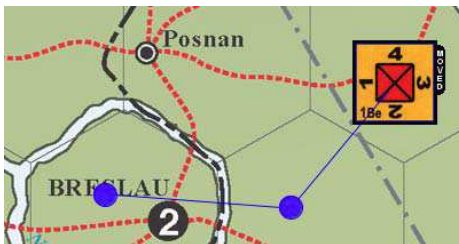
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## More on Vassal by Pete Menconi

### Moving Units In Vassal

And now let's do a little demo. Place a unit on the map, then click and drag it. You will notice it leaves a blue trail and a blue dot for move segments:



First, note that this helps track what you already did with that unit; in many games the exact pathway is important. Second, you just invaded Poland with the Belgian army! The modules may or may not recognize a degree of "legality" in moves; it's apparently a function of the module author.

If you find you've made a mistake, you can either use the "Undo" button (simply click twice in this case), or you can drag the unit back to its starting position. For an individual unit, you can then right click on the unit and select "Mark Moved" which will erase the blue dot/trail and the "Moved" bar along the right side of the unit.

The blue tracks become distracting after a while, so there is a button on the display top line that erases all the moved marks at once in order to clear the map. This feature really helps keep track of which units have moved, and pathways, and rail moves, etc.

### Vassal: The Units

Again, somewhat dependent on how each module's author sets up the graphics, there are a lot of commands for units. Let's use everyone's favorite (whether you're running for office in Ohio or not: the Afrika Korps ("DAK")). First of all, when your cursor hovers over a unit, you get an expanded view of the piece: handy for eye strain victims. (And if it's a stack of units, you get all the units spread next to each other.) Note that there is a tag in the upper left corner of the unit showing its location.

If you right click on the unit, a window appears that shows the different actions you can take, either by clicking on the action, or using the key sequence shown. We'll explain each choice:

"Mark Moved" allows you to either add or delete a "moved" tag from a unit; this also removes the blue trail showing the route. This is handy if you take a move back (which does not erase either the "moved" tag nor the blue trail).

"Dead pile" is used when a unit is eliminated. They go to an accessible window (where they can be pulled back into play if the game allows it).

"Hide" is used to prevent an opponent from seeing the unit face. When the owning player hides a unit, he sees a white border around the unit; the opponent sees the "back"

color of the unit. The player Preferences menu can be set to allow an opponent to peek.

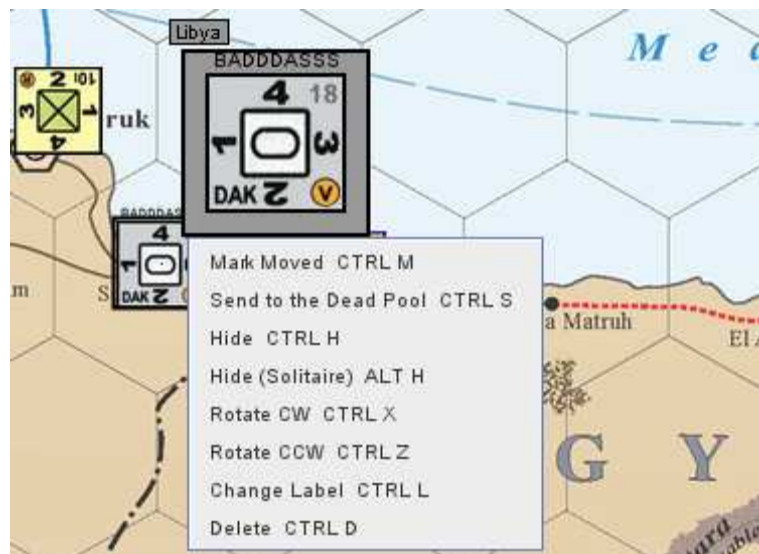
"Hide (Solitaire)" turns the unit over to its back color to the player giving that command. It's used for solitaire play (duh), especially for those of us with short term memory loss!

"Rotate xxx" commands (CW and CCW) are used in block games to add or subtract the strength of a unit. In step games like **Anzio**, this command rotates the versions of the same unit until you arrive at the desired strength indicators. If you've ever scrambled through a pile of substitute counters, you'll love this feature.

"Label" allows you to tag the unit with whatever you like. In EuF, it's handy to mark which units were the "original defender;" in **Anzio** (one of the new multi-player variants), you might mark it as belonging to a specific army group. If you look closely at the example, you will see a non-typical label on DAK.

"Delete": usually you get a unit counter off the board via the Dead Pile, but in some cases (**Poland '39**) the units never get to come back, so maybe you don't want them cluttering up the DP window. Most informational counters (weather, storms, supply, railhead) get deleted when done with them because they are so easy to re-generate (more on that in another article).

★★



## More on Vassal by Pete Menconi

### Vassal: Setup Once and Never Again

Ready for another cutie? In another article, we looked at how the pieces/units are generated. Of course, every game comes with some kind of OOB form, usually involving the same graphics as the unit counters. If you click "Setup Sheets" in Vassal, the game OOB shows up. Notice that the various OOB "cards" all have their own tabs. In most instances, you bring up the OOB, click on "Pieces," use the menus to find the piece you need, and then click/drag it to the OOB card. So, here's the neat thing: once, and only once, you "populate" all the OOB cards for the game, and then save that file. You never need to use the "Pieces" button again: for every new game you just open that original file with all the

pieces already set up. But, there's more.

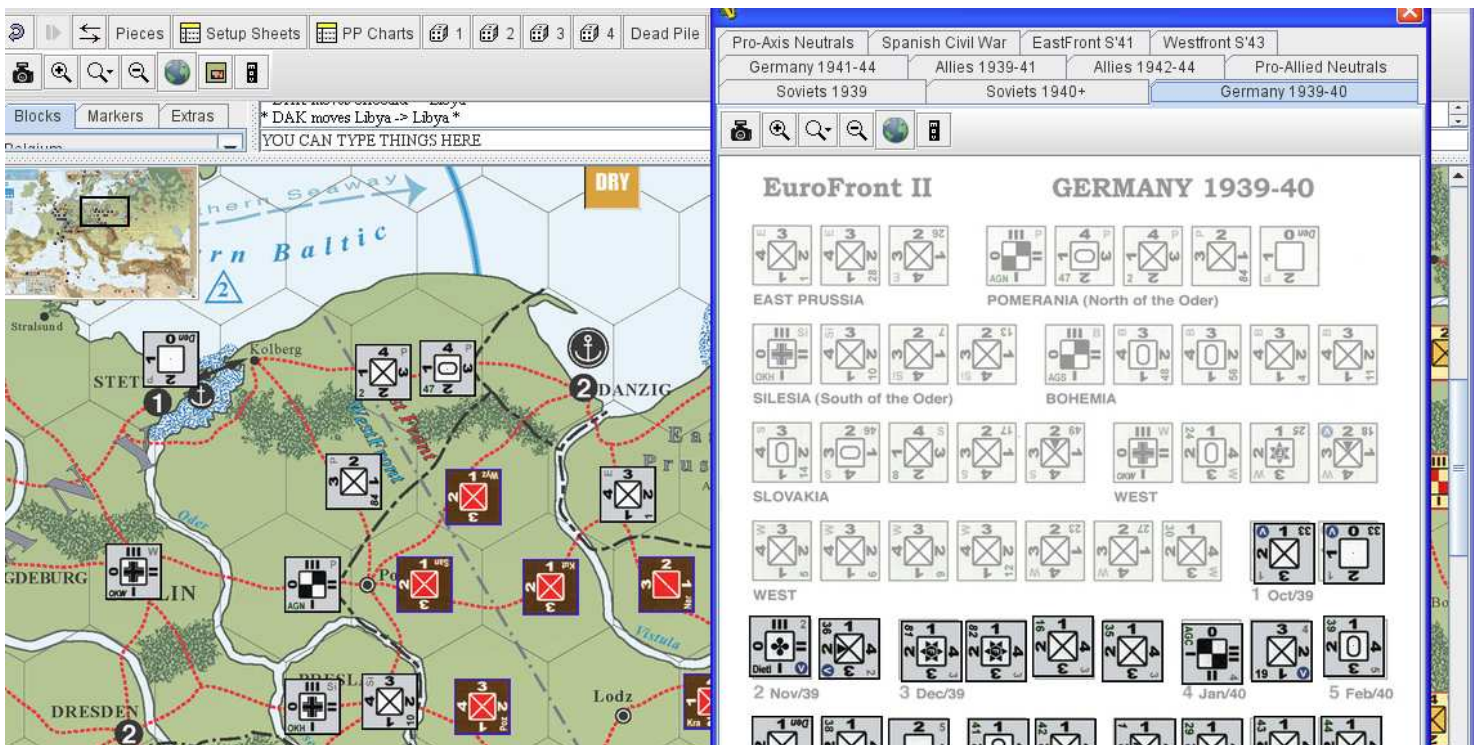
In most games, if the units do not start in exactly the same place in every game, they usually start pretty close (at least, probably in the same country?!). So, once your OOB cards are populated, you can drag units off the card onto the map. Save that version, too. Now, for a new game/opponent you open the file, and the units are largely placed, and even if you need to do some tailoring of the placements, the amount of work you have to do is dramatically reduced.

Less time in setup, more for play. That's my motto!!

In the accompanying display, the German OOB for '39-'40 is open, and you can see the first four rows have

the units moved to the map, with the rest of the OOB card (starting in Oct '39) filled with the reinforcement units. This feature of Vassal, all by itself, sold me forever. In the last 50 years of gaming, I hate to think how much time I spent just figuring out how to store these little puppies. Now that I think about it, after 50 years of gaming, I can't really remember much past yesterday, anyway!!

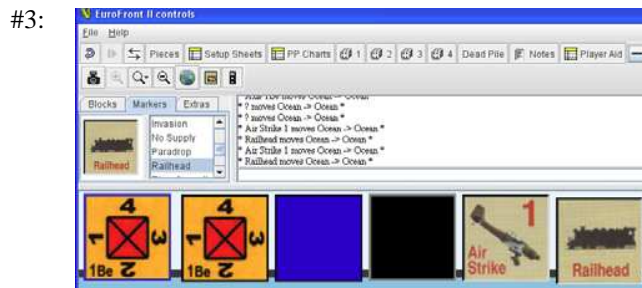
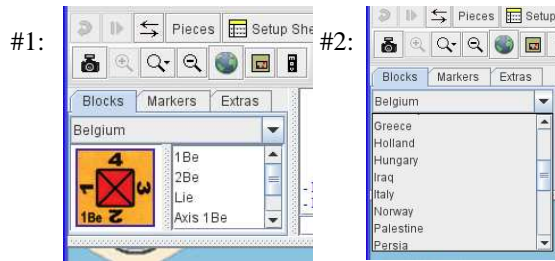
With the WWII game shown (**EuroFront**), many minor country armies won't come into play for a number of turns, but just leaving them in their home country is handy because it reminds you of their rough strength, number, etc., and you don't have to go rummage around for them when the time comes.



## More on Vassal by Pete Menconi

### Counters In Vassal

Let's find the blocks to play with. See the button marked "Pieces"? It's my favorite. Click it. Be amazed.



Window #1 shows the initial Pieces display; clicking on the drop down menu (#2) shows all the nations that have pieces in the game. Window #3 shows the lineup of the Belgian

army: typical of a number of nations that could have entered on either side, there are (3) Allied Belgian counters and (3) Axis. Window #3 shows what appears to be two identical counters for the 1<sup>st</sup> Belgian army: if you look close enough, the one on the left has a thin blue border (Allied), and the one on the right is black (Axis). The blue and black squares are the same two units, after using the "Hide" command: to an opponent, all they see are the squares of color.

The two counters at the right side of window #3 are used to track other game functions, such as Air Strikes, Invasions, Paradrops, Supply, etc. Especially in the electronic display environment this kind of counter is really handy, in part because it is easy to pull out of the way on-screen.

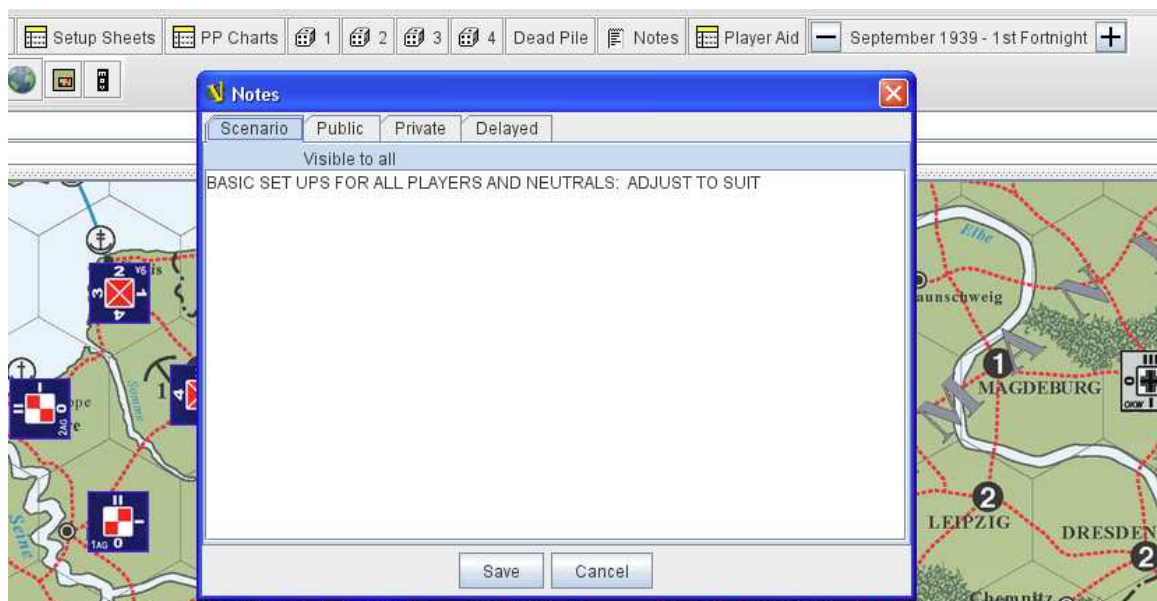
The counters for different games are unique. In general the access to those counters tends to be the same between Vassal modules, although there are differences.

Something that throws you at first (depending on how long you've been using computers): unit counters are listed in ASCII sort order. What's that? ASCII would sort numbers as 1, 11, 111, 21, 40, 4000; in other words it sorts off the first character. This is annoying at first but don't get upset: see the article on setting up games with counters. You end up dealing with the oddity of ASCII only once. (Less than once if you have a friend who's already sorted the counters.)

### Vassal: Notes

The Notes feature in Vassal is rather interesting. Do you lose your game thoughts? Do post-its float around your desk? Notes is for you. Access them from the rows of icons (feature may vary with module design):

In the EuF version, two of the tabs have visible content all the time ("Scenario" and "Public"), the Private tab shows info that only the one player can see, and a rather interesting feature is the "Delayed" tab, which delivers the information contained therein to the opponent at the time specified. I'm not sure how I'd use that. I do use the Private one to record monthly unit construction and reinforcements.



## More on Vassal by Pete Menconi

### Vassal Function Controls

Let's go back to the toolbar on the top, and summarize what each one does. The specific toolbar is for **Eu-roFront**. Each toolbar changes with the game, although the features are fairly common.

**FILE COMMAND:** save/as, start logfile, close logfile, etc.; basic file management.

**HELP:** standard help functions; some explanations of the Vassal application.

The **UNDO** button (far left, upper icon row) reverses actions, in order performed.

The **LOGFILE BUTTON** (grayed out): active when playing a logfile; allows stepping the log moves.

**SERVER CONTROLS** (two arrows): used for online play.

**PIECES:** drop down menu of all the unit and other counters.

**SETUP SHEETS:** Order of Battle (OOB) forms (as provided with the game).

**PP charts:** for EuF, tracking form for Production Points and weather.

**DICE ICONS:** they generate 1-4 random d6 rolls, displayed in the logfile window as integers.

**DEAD PILE:** window opens showing killed units (convenient for rebuilding).

**NOTES:** built in diary that has tabs for public and tabs for private notes

**PLAYER AID:** nice assemblage of useful charts drawn from the rules books.

**DATE BAR:** manually adjusted, easy way to show the date of the turn.

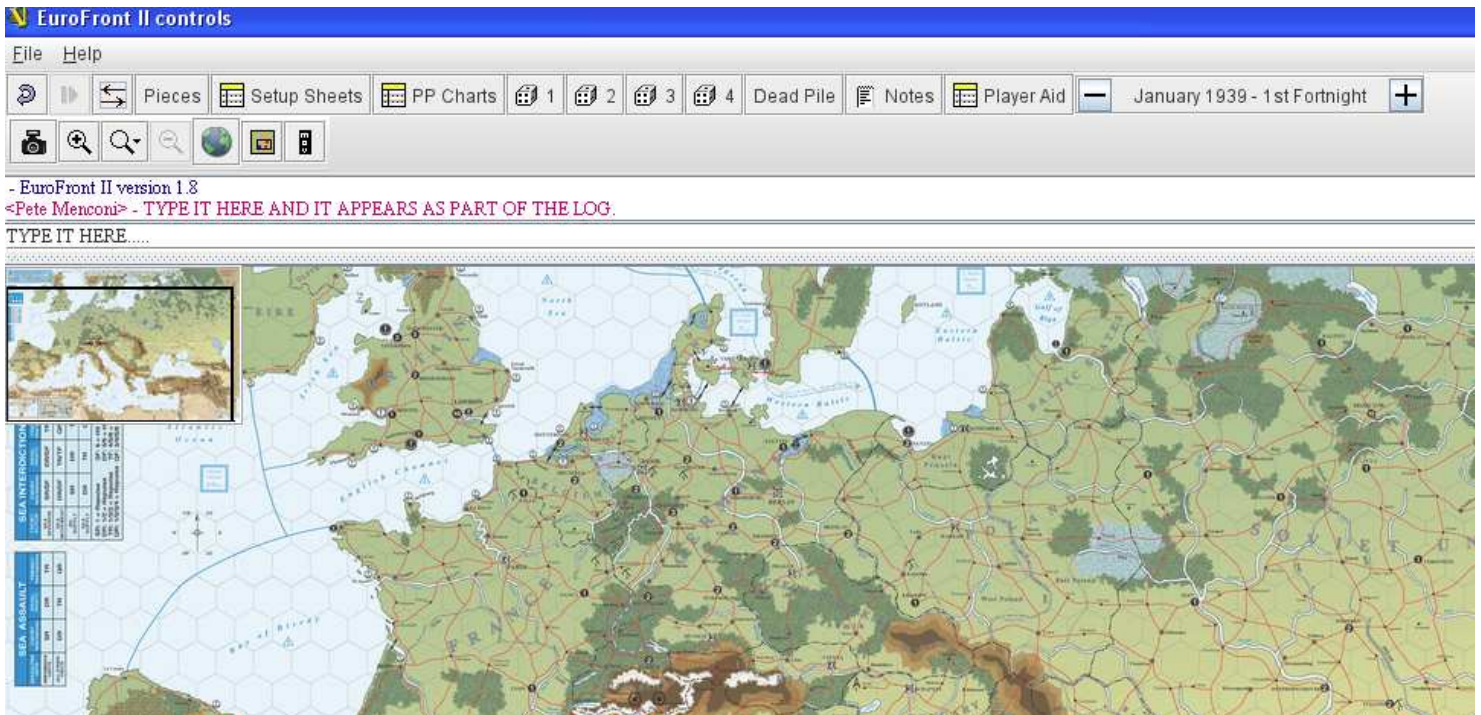
(next row) **Camera** makes PNG files of the map (all of it).

**+/- ZOOM CONTROLS:** allows variable scale of the board; middle button picks any resolution.

**GLOBE (hide):** allows hiding all the pieces on the map.

**OVERVIEW WINDOW:** shows where your view window fits on the full map. You can click on the overview, and the view window shifts to center on the click. Useful on full-map games.

**MOVE BUTTON:** erases the "Move" tag and blue trail on every unit





## Carlo D'Este Discusses the Combat at Biazza Ridge

That is Biazza Ridge to your immediate front. If you can get a good look at that, that is what we're going to be talking about.

The great fight they had at Piano Lupo to guard that intersection on D-Day and D+1 was very important. That was a critical site, but there was a second one. That second one was across this valley at a place that the Americans later came to call Biazza Ridge, and on D-Day the 45th division, whose beaches are down that way, got in a big scrap with the German forces of the Hermann Goering Division. On 11 July D+1 the 180th regiment of 45th division had to retreat back to beaches. They were in serious jeopardy of this flank of the Germans coming with a major task force from the area of Biscari (Acate) coming down this valley across the Cote River, which is immediately to our right. You can see up behind you a number of pill boxes that guarded this valley and which made it a key place.

Now, Jim Gavin the 505th commander landed about 25 miles to the east on D-Day. What Jim Gavin was taught at West Point as a young cadet was that when you get in a situation like this, you march to the sound of the guns. They could hear the artillery fire and the naval gun fire. So all of D-Day, he and a small group of paratroopers marched to the west. Early on the morning of 11 July, Jim Gavin and this small group of paratroopers ended up on that ridge on your immediate front.

What I'd like to do for the next couple of minutes is give you a brief reading from my book "Bitter Victory."

"Colonel Gavin's quest for the battlefield was finally ended when he made his way to Route 115 about 0830 hours, 11 July. As he headed west on foot along the Vittoria-Gela road Gavin began rounding up scattered groups of paratroopers and infantry from the 45th Division and succeeded in attacking a ridge overlooking the Biscari road and the Biscari-Gela road junction. Called Biazza Ridge by the Americans, it held the same critical importance as the Piano Lupo site further west, and it became the place where Gavin and his men made a valiant stand against an overwhelmingly superior enemy force. Supported by only a few 81 mm mortars and two 75 mm howitzers, Gavin ordered his men to establish defensive positions pending the arrival of help. When Gavin and his men attempted to dig protective foxholes for protection against the attacking German infantry and Tiger tanks they found the hard shale

of the ridge virtually impossible to penetrate. Gavin's entrenching tool bent and even using his heavy steel helmet it was all he could do to scrape out a small trench deep enough to avoid the treads of the Tigers. Even worse was the lack of effect his bazookas were having on the heavily armoured Tigers: the projectiles would bounce harmlessly off the steel plates while they continued their relentless advance. Over forty years later the sense of frustration and determination was still evident in Gavin's voice.

"By chance, Gavin and his pathetically small bank of men found themselves the only Allied force between the Germans and their unhindered exploitation of the exposed left flank of the 45th Division and the thinly held right flank of the 1st Division. Against Gavin was the entire eastern task force of the Hermann Goering Division: over 700 infantry of the 1st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, the armoured artillery battalion and the company of Tiger tanks."

The two sides exchanged fire throughout that terrible day. Gavin's tiny force held out, despite fierce German pressure and steadily mounting casualties. The defenders of Biazza Ridge had been told by their commander that "We're staying on this God damned ridge no matter what happens." Gavin's men had somehow acquired two pack 75 mm howitzers both of which were being used as direct-fire antitank weapons. By early evening the situation had become very grim. Then relief appeared in the form of six Sherman tanks, which suddenly appeared with the accompaniment of loud cheers of wearied paratroopers. It was a very dramatic moment recalled Gavin. During the day, individual paratroopers had materialized to join the fray. Using every man he could round up, infantry, engineers, clerks, cooks, truck drivers, even two navy fire control officers, Gavin decided at dusk the time had come when he could strike back at the Germans, whose attempts at advance, however inept, and they were inept, had been held up by a vastly inferior, out-gunned force of American paratroopers.

Gavin launched his attack with the Shermans in close support. Things began to happen quickly. Lt. Harold Swingler, one of his paratroopers, captured one of these 60 ton monsters intact. Others overran and captured twelve 120 mm mortars. Although the

Germans had not been inclined to be aggressive at Biazza Ridge, on 11 July, they had nevertheless posed a severe threat, and there is little doubt that the furious defense of this ridge deterred the German commander from pressing their considerable advantage.

After the battle, brief services were held on Biazza Ridge for the American dead. A somber Gavin stood with head bowed in prayer and tears in his eyes as the Chaplin prayed for their immortal souls. Gavin's valor and superior leadership on Biazza Ridge earned him the



Distinguished Service Cross. Now, this memorial here to the 82nd airborne contains the names of 39 dead. These were men who fought not only primarily on Biazza Ridge but who were also killed at Piano Lupo. The first name that you will see on this memorial is the name of Lt. Col. Arthur Gorum, who you may recall I mentioned had knocked out a Tiger tank. He was killed on July 12 trying to repeat the same feat. He, too, earned two Distinguished Service Crosses.

So what I'd like to ask you do now, please, is assemble in front of the memorial and have a moment of silence.

★★

## Realism and Playability by Tom Oleson

Have you noticed that in recent years the debate over realism vs. playability in wargames is seldom mentioned? I attribute this to the proliferation of games, some quite complex, providing ample choice.

There is an assumption that the playable game favors simplicity, while the realistic game is more complex. This is not necessarily the problem. Instead, the problem may be that even something rather simple in terms of realism, won't fit into the framework of a game.

One of the reasons for my enthusiasm for block **EuroFront** is that it is very playable, without sacrificing that realism necessary to make the players feel they are re-experiencing WWII, and especially quick to reset. I marvel at these multi-thousand counter monster games, and the time taken to just set them up. But of course my favorite game also has apparently insoluble problems.

Having been to Gibraltar, I don't see how it could have been defended from German attack in 1940 or 41, always presuming of course that they got there through Franco's Spain, but in the game, it is a very tough nut to crack. Were that not the case, a Mediterranean strategy would probably displace Barbarossa as the preferred, but not mandatory, Axis path to follow. Designer Craig Besinque has tried to skew the game towards history, while keeping "what-ifs" possible. Another necessary compromise with realism about Gibraltar is the crowd which can be garrisoned there once the Second Front occurs.

For several years I have been redoing the Advanced Game of **Anzio**, which has also posed realism vs. playability problems, not soluble by adding complexity.

Italy was a reluctant sideshow for the Americans, increasingly so after Overlord. The Germans always feared Allied invasions after Shingle (Anzio) which the Allies had no intention of mounting, in part because the sea-lift capability had gone elsewhere. I have had to somehow recreate the situation where the Germans must protect against an invasion capability which, if given to the Allies, would be unrealistic.

A related question is the use of "port counters" in Anzio to represent invasion capability. They were like magic bullets, which you could save to use at your convenience, hardly a realistic representation of Allied sea-lift capability. The commanders in Italy had to beg for it even when the Salerno invasion hung in the balance. So this had to be changed.

Another problem is "Operation Strangle," the Allied use of air power to soften up the Germans ahead of Diadem, the breakout from Anzio and the main front. From the early days of Anzio, this was criticized as the "thermonuclear air strike." A fair criticism, but trying to more realistically put Strangle into game form just would not work.

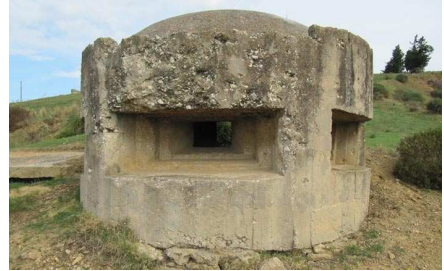
The Allies made German movement very difficult. Suppose in a turn of **Anzio** this resulted in a gap in the line. The Allies could pour through it in a most unrealistic fashion. The air strike in *form* is unrealistic, but in *result*, it is.

There just are limits to how a game can simulate history, for which complexity is not always the solution.

★★

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with some soldiers and two mountain howitzers held off other parts of the Hermann Goering division from attacking the flank of the 45<sup>th</sup> division. Carlo spoke to us about the battle and was extremely impressed with Gavin's fight against a superior force. We stopped on the German side, where there were at least four pill boxes still standing.



None of the pill boxes I saw showed any indication of having been attacked. On the side of a farm building facing the road was a small plaque listing the men who were killed in the nearby fighting.

After arrival in Syracuse at about 1 PM, we walked slowly over to the Hotel des Etrangers et Miramare where we were having an interminable lunch. We sat down and were, finally, served our first course, but people kept dribbling in for another half hour. Only when they had finished the first course did they serve the second. Wine was on the table and the food was good, but the wait was very long.

I stood around after lunch while our guide talked and talked. He spoke almost in a monotone and went on forever. Forever eventually came, and we walked back to our busses for a ride to the local Greek/Roman site. The 15,000 seat Greek theatre was impressive, especially since it had been carved into one existing rock. An ancient quarry was on the visit list, but what is there to see? A spot where there had been rocks.

The bus got us back to the boat side, where we waited for 30 minutes while the local authorities were doing whatever local authorities do. The ship pulled out of port at 11 PM.

Arrival at Messina was about 7 AM. There was nothing military to see in the town, so we visited Taormina, another ancient Greek/Roman site. Two other ships had arrived in port shortly after we did, a bigger ship and a

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<b>BOOK REVIEW</b> BY JOHN MICHALSKI
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**The Battle of Sicily**

by Samuel W. Mitcham Jr., and

Friedrich von Stauffenberg

Stackpole Military History Series

326 pages plus notes and appendices.

Review and Analysis by John Michalski

I bought this paperback book from the Edward Hamilton bargain catalog as a filler item, figuring what the heck, for five bucks, how bad can it be? Turns out to be very entertaining. The authors provide a lot of detail as to how ramshackle most of the units were, primarily the Axis throughout, but the Allies as well. The Allies started out fully equipped, but then lost a lot when, at least in the American sector, lack of any advance beach inspection made a shambles of landing attempts. Montgomery's mishandling of his army resulted in the British leaving many of its vehicles behind because of his mood swings and wrong guesses during planning.

Montgomery put himself ashore on good beaches, but believed the Italians would fight like lions to defend their homeland. He therefore put his soldiers up front, artillery right behind, engineers galore, and tanks to follow as soon as they could be landed safely. A perfect loading to invade the Pas de Calais and batter your way forward through the Atlantic Wall perhaps, but at Syracuse this left a huge infantry army that would have to march across half of Sicily on foot after coming ashore, the opposition having either fled or changed into civilian clothes and melted into the local population. So Eighth Army landed on foot, without transport or adequate communications or means of promptly forwarding supplies. Montgomery took Syracuse intact and Augusta just to the north shortly afterward; the Italians gave no thought to destroying their own port facilities. But while some cranes and such were available, it took quite a while to get much out of the ports. Allied pre-invasion air attacks had destroyed so much of the dock areas that, although ships could unload, there were no clear roads to move anything off the docks.

One Italian admiral in command of the port of Augusta found that most of his troops had vanished during the night as the British approached. One bold British admiral brought his warship into the harbor to seize the port with his own men.

The defending admiral took his immediate HQ staff to one of the abandoned guns in the harbor and fired on the British ship, joined by another gun whose crew had remained. Although no damage was inflicted, the British opted to withdraw. The authors claim this was perhaps the only time in WWII when one admiral personally fired on another. The next day, a slightly larger RN contingent sailed up to the docks and unloaded without opposition.

At the American beaches, the Italians had blown up the only two piers along the entire three-division front. Between what the authors call a "false beach" or sandbar out a ways from the main beach, akin to what would be found at Tarawa, and the soft sand and dunes immediately ashore, little more than infantry could land. The tank carriers were blocked by the sandbar "reef," except for one spot discovered in the center. There, exactly one landing craft at a time could unload on the beach, then withdraw to be replaced by the next in line. Only in this way did Patton get any armor ashore at all. There were no frogmen employed by the Americans yet, and apparently no one in photo recon with a very big magnifying glass!

When half of the rebuilding Hermann Goering division struck the 45<sup>th</sup> Division on the American right on the second day, the Americans were pushed down to the dunes. There the infantry made their stand, supported by their own field guns and three tanks bogged down in the sand. As would be true throughout this campaign and the war, Allied naval gunfire was able to break up the German attack. The attackers were restricted to what the Sicilians called "roads" but that the Allies would call "tracks," and the 45<sup>th</sup> division held. The Big Red One faced uncoordinated counterattacks in the center, against pieces of three divisions. This attack started from 26 miles inland, and inexcusably "took longer than anticipated" to even reach the American lines. We would see the same stupidity again a year later on another invaded coastline.

The further I got into this campaign, the stranger it got. Both sides went day to day trying to out-bungle the other. As the story unravels, one can see how even unlikely outcomes for this weight of forces can turn into coin-toss situations. The Allies had air superiority and naval supremacy; Allied ground forces outnumbered the Germans 6 to 1 (400,000 to 60,000 at their peaks); the Italians usually dissolved at or before the first shot. One in five actually fought and surprised both sides. The Allied superiority on the ground and air was largely frittered away by command stupidity. Montgomery may have started out gloomy and dreading a hard fight, but finding only token resistance ashore, he came to believe everyone would dissolve in front of him, and acted as if his army could do everything at once. But the Germans did not dissolve away at the mere mention of his name.

The scene from *Patton* where Karl Malden/Bradley asks George C. Scott/Patton, "What's this talk about Monty taking the Vizzini-Caltagirone road away from me?" didn't mean much to me before; I thought it was just one of many north-south roads west of Mount Etna that would allow Montgomery to widen his approach to Messina. True in broad theory, but in fact it was the one and only serious highway that ran across the island from SE to NW, roughly perpendicular to the American advance. US troops were only a half mile south of the highway and moving up along its length, but at that point Montgomery decided that Eighth Army could run to glory alone. So, he ordered his units to seize the highway, moving from end-to-end. The Americans, approaching laterally the entire highway from the south, were required to stop and turn back. This was supposed to allow Eighth Army to "wheel" (Montgomery's word) around Etna in a broad sweep and attack the east coast force that was holding him there. The US Seventh Army was ordered to pull back and sit, to do nothing but sit and applaud (officially, "guard the beachhead and the airfields ashore"). This is why Malden/Bradley asked about Patton's "reconnaissance in force" to the

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(Continued from page 19)

northwest, and why Alexander repeated what Montgomery had asked: that Patton hold, and specifically *not* take Palermo. With the book, map, and the orders, it is much clearer now why Bradley objects in the movie.

The 45<sup>th</sup> Division had to turn around and go back to the beaches, go around the 1<sup>st</sup> Division in the center, and move into position between it and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, then moving west along the coast. Bradley was understating that his corps was put out of business. Montgomery felt that he no longer needed to pay attention to his allies, and allowed his contempt for the Americans to be shown openly. It was here that Patton learned to do what Montgomery had already known about Alexander as area commander: do what you want to do, and ignore what he says unless you agree with it already. It was a valuable lesson.

The book provides Kesselring's explanation as to how his far-inferior air force could still wreak havoc on the Allied naval and ground forces despite its lack of training, replacements, and equipment. An American colonel in charge of the air forces assigned to support Patton's Seventh Army had set up his HQ next to Patton's. The man was relieved by his British superior for doing this because the British general did not want air force officers reduced to taking orders from ground commanders. His replacement inaugurated a more traditional system of accepting mission requests, 12 hours in advance! The obvious result was the total lack of air support often cited, and a number of friendly fire incidents against fast advancing US units that were not so often mentioned. Kesselring later explained that the Luftwaffe very rapidly learned that it could operate and conduct raids, resupply missions, and at least one airborne drop near Etna that delivered critical reinforcements in a daylight drop, because they realized that the American and British airmen took their meals at about the same time. If missions were flown during those daily lulls, they were unopposed! What kind of command is in effect when something like that can occur?

I had wondered which division it was that held up the Eighth Army before Mount Etna for 38 days. It turns out that the answer is: none. Something

## The Kommandeur

called "Group Schmaltz," made up of two German battalions and a handful of very small Italian company-or-less sized units that had fled from Syracuse. Part of a parachute division arrived about two weeks into the battle, but that was all. This force held the entire British 13<sup>th</sup> corps to a snail's pace up the east coast despite unanswered naval gunfire, at least two airborne drops, commando landings in the rear, plus the frontal attack of two to three British infantry divisions and an armored brigade. The familiar 30<sup>th</sup> corps, famous for taking tea along the road to Arnhem 14 months later, was the other half of Montgomery's army, and was to be the unit to swing around through the interior. Or rather, try. Patton was able to cover three times the distance swinging around *them* and still got to Messina ahead of both corps of Eighth Army.

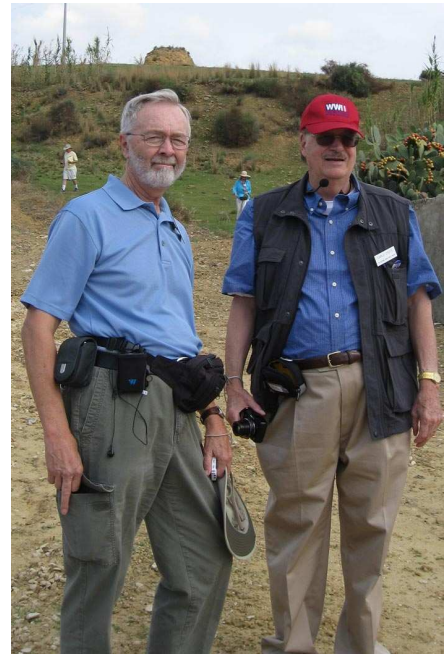
The authors state that they don't like the term "race" for Messina, and add that if it were to be called a contest, it should be seen as a three way contest, won by the German Commander Hube. Other sources describe how Hube boarded the last ferry and sailed across to the mainland, the German withdrawal being complete. I would agree he won the "race."

★★

(Continued from page 18)

*much* bigger ship, almost the size of the one we took across the Atlantic. They sent up about 30 busses, so Taormina was quite crowded. Taormina also had a Greek theatre in pretty good condition. Mount Etna had been visible from the bus as we approached the town, but it was behind clouds when we arrived and could actually have taken a picture. Haze is everywhere around the world, here, too. I spent most of the time trying to change some dollars into euros. The bank I visited did not change money. Lila, our guide, said the best place to change money was the post office. On the way to the post office, we passed a business that would exchange money, but their rates were \$1.38 plus a 3% surcharge. The post office charged \$1.32. We had to wait behind four other people to get to the desk, and then the clerk wanted my passport. Explaining that the passport was on the ship did not phase her. However, Lila gave her a driver's license, and that seemed to work. The Italian post office works like the U.S. motor vehicle departments. Slowly. We had to walk fast to make it back to the bus.

*In the next issue, we will continue on to Italy.*



The editor and Carlo D'Este at Ponte Drillo

## Flattop© Decision in '43, The Philippines Scenario, After Action Report

by Andy Johnson

Continuing from the last issue:

### Day 1. 15 May 1943 1000-1200 USN

The CinC's search aircraft begin searching the edge of the potential target areas. At 1100 search aircraft from Tacloban find two IJN TFs, each with a CV in 2-V-23. Task Groups A & B remain moving slowly north into sector 3 while using cloud cover. Task Group C continues moving north, north east under cloud cover. The invasion force continues its progress north through sector 4 while detaching its AVs and the fast battleship group with the APDs. These AV begin moving toward an anchorage at Tacloban. CinC issues an intelligence bulletin to his Task Group commanders ordering A & B to strike the enemy carriers as soon as possible. A 1200 sighting confirms the two enemy CVs now in X-23 heading south, south east. Another surface contact is noted 20 nm further south. A flight of Corsairs from Maasin strafe Subic at 1200 destroying some enemy aircraft .

### IJN

Task Group A continues operating in the sector 5 row O while Task Group C continues south at high speed. By 1200 they are 160 nm apart. The CinC continues to prepare and launch CAP patrols to support Task Groups A & C (which he believes are still together). Task Group B begins slow movement east to get in position for its run to the landing area tomorrow. TF 18 begins moving down the west side of Luzon. One of the CinC's designated aircraft uses a code word to report it has sighted a friendly task force.

### GM Comments

Neither IJN carrier Task Group Commander has informed the CinC of their location or the fact they are now operating independently. Commander C has not told his CinC he has been spotted. Still no communication from the CinC to his commanders. The USN

strike forces can just get a daylight strike in.

### Day 1. 15 May 1943 1300-1600 USN

The CinC's search aircraft begin searching the edge of the potential target areas. Search aircraft continue shadowing the IJN TFs moving south in sector 2. Task Groups A & B remain moving slowly north into sector 3 while using cloud cover and end in 3-F-11 at 1600. Task Group C continues moving north, north east under cloud cover and ends in 8-GG-31. The invasion force continues its progress north through sector 4. The fast battleship group with APDs accelerates and ends in 4-Z-6 while the slower battleship group with APs ends in 4-EE-8. The AVs continue moving toward an anchorage at Tacloban and end the 1600 turn at 4-EE-15. CinC launches a B-24 strike against Clark. CinC issues an intelligence bulletin to his Task Group commanders reconfirming his orders to Task Groups A & B to strike the enemy carriers as soon as possible. Task Group A & B prepare and launch a joint strike force with an ETA of 1700 depending on the enemy's movement.

### IJN

Task Group A continues operating in sectors 1 & 5 rows Q & R ending in 1-R-20 at 1600. Task Group C continues south at high speed, ending the 1600 turn in 6-DD-23 (TF 3 and 9) and 6-FF-24 (TF 2). By 1600 Task Groups A & C are 240 nm apart. The CinC continues to prepare and launch CAP patrols to support Task Groups A & C as well as some CAP support for Task Group B. CinC begins bombing missions against Allied troop positions. Task Group B continues its slow movement east and ends the 1600 turn at 5-Q-26 taking advantage of all available cloud cover. TF

18 continues moving down the west side of Luzon ending in 6-W-36 at 1600.

### GM Comments

IJN Task Group B Commander has not informed the CinC he has been spotted and has only put up about 50% of his available CAP aircraft. Still no communication from the CinC to his commanders.

### Day 1. 15 May 1943 1700 USN

The strike force finds the Kaga and Soryu in 6-DD-23. CAP cannot break through the escorts. Torpedo and dive bombers hit both CVs which have readying and ready aircraft on the decks. Kaga explodes and sinks while Soryu is dead in the water and burning. The CinC's B-24 strike force reaches Clark, but heavy CAP and AA destroy 4 of the 8 air factors while Clark takes 3 hits.

### IJN

Task Group A continues operating in sector 1 rows ending in 1-Q-20 at 1700. Task Group C held TF 3 and 9 in DD-23 while sending TF 2 further south ending in 6-HH-24. All surviving aircraft are sent on to Luzon airfields. The CinC intercepts friendly and enemy radio traffic from the battle location.

### GM Comments

This is a devastating loss for the IJN team. Two CVs now out of the battle and still no idea where the enemy is located. I was surprised Commander C didn't turn back north and launch more fighter cover. **Flattop** is unforgiving if you get caught with aircraft on deck.

### Day 1. 15 May 1943 1800-2400 USN

The one night-capable CV force launches a strike that sinks Soryu at 2400. The CinC had kept shadows in close watch over Soryu while it was being towed toward Baylor Bay. Task Groups A & B end the day in 2-II-9. Task Group C ends in 8-T-22. A DD dispatched earlier from TF 22 now reaches and begins patrolling the San Bernardino Strait. The CinC's B-24 strike force reaches Clark, but heavy CAP and AA destroy 4 of the 8 air factors while Clark takes 3 hits.

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## IJN

Task Group A continues operating in sector 1 rows ending in 1-S-19 at 2400. Task Group C has the remaining capital ships in TF 3 and 9 rejoin TF 2, and they end the day in 6-MM-24. Task Group B ends in 2-EE-22 and prepares for its run to landing beaches.

## GM Comments

At this point the IJN communication breakdown began to be sorted out. Mark was under an incorrect impression that all aircraft communications from his search aircraft went to all players. This communication breakdown and the separation of the two fast carrier groups was a material factor in the damage suffered on day 1.

## Day 2. 16 May 1943 0100-0800

### GM Closing Comments

Both sides continued their search and planning during the hours of darkness and first light. The USN got a large B-24 strike in on Tuguegarao which takes 6 hits. The IJN CinC launches several strike forces in preparation for possible sightings, and he is rewarded with finding the USN main carrier forces in the 2-GG-8 area. The USN search aircraft discover the IJN carriers in sector 1 and the remaining carrier now in sector 3. All the remaining carriers on both sides now launch strikes.

The Ryujo had its small strike force completely wiped out, but it distracted enough CAP to allow other strike forces to inflict damage on Lexington and Hornet while sinking Essex. The USN strikes sink two carriers from Task Group A and another large strike force, 10 Helldivers escorted by 6 Hellcats from Task Group C, is inbound to IJN TF2's remaining carrier with an ETA of 0900.

At this point I decided to call the game as the IJN has lost 4 of its 6 CVs, a fifth one is very likely to go down at 0900 and the single IJN CVL has lost all its strike aircraft. Neither side appears capable of making a successful landing and gaining those victory points. A prolonged land-based air versus fleet game is not appealing and not what the players signed up to play.

## Conclusions

While both sides had viable plans only the USN team followed theirs.

The communication confusion on the IJN side limited their coordination. While the USN had a CV advantage (8 CV versus 6 CV and 1 CVL) the IJN had a land base advantage (10 versus 5). It appears that the CV advantage was more valuable than the land-base advantage. It also became apparent that CAP cannot stop a strike force with adequate escort from inflicting major damage. Without escort the strike aircraft become easy prey. Luck was not a major factor for either side.

If I restructure this scenario I will make several changes. The key changes will be:

I will require the USN to keep its carrier force commands further separated. By their close positioning, the USN were able to amass almost unstoppable strikes, and that is not what I had intended.

I'll not allow the IJN CinC to restructure the CV distribution. This left one player with only the CVL.

I'll increase the quantity of IJN CVs and ship-based strike aircraft. Neither side began to make effective use of their land based strike forces until Day 2.

While this was a USN victory at sea, neither side achieved their land objectives and may meet again another day to decide the fate of the Philippines.

My thanks and appreciation to each of you for your interest, consideration and thoughtful comments throughout the game.

Andy

## APPENDIX

This is a hypothetical multi-player **Flattop**© scenario set in the Philippine Islands in May 1943.

### Premise

The decisive naval battle of World War II occurred in the Philippines in 1943. The battle of Midway did not occur and both nations accelerated the military technology and production. This provided both nations aircraft and ships that did not historically become available until later in the war.

By mid May 1943 the Imperial Japanese's invasion of the Philippines had seized Luzon but is deadlocked in its struggle with American and

Philippine units to control the remaining Philippine Islands. Withdrawal from the Solomon Islands, the loss of New Guinea and New Britain has caused tremendous loss of face for the Imperial Army and Navy in Tokyo. Capture of the remaining Philippine chain is critical to prevent the enemy from gaining operational capabilities within striking distance of the home islands.

Allied success in driving Japan back from New Guinea and the Solomon Islands and seizing New Britain has placed tremendous political pressure on Washington to regain control of the Philippines. Meanwhile, military leadership in Tokyo is demanding success in the Philippines to achieve continued expansion of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere.

To these ends both nations prepare operations to achieve their military and political objectives.

**ALLIED PERSPECTIVE.** Initial enemy successes at Pearl Harbor, in Indochina, and in the Indian Ocean have been offset by the success of defensive actions in the Philippines and New Guinea, and the successful seizure of New Britain and the Solomon chain. American and Philippine forces continue to hold the southern Philippines and have built new fields on Leyte at Tacloban, Omac Field, and Maasin Field as well as expanding the capabilities of Del Monte field on Mindanao and Australia (off board to the South). This success in stemming further Japanese advances in the Southwest Pacific has shifted planning priorities from the European theater of Operations to a balanced allocation of resources between theaters.

**JAPANESE PERSPECTIVE.** The war opened with a partially successful attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th. Operations in Indochina and the Indian Ocean went as planned. But, operations in the Philippines are behind schedule. Imperial Japanese Naval and Army forces are now operating from airfields in Formosa and Okinawa (both off board to the North) as well as the captured American fields on Luzon; Tuguegarao, Iba, Clark Field, Nichols Field, Neilson Fields, and Subic Bay. Additional airfields have been constructed at Aparii and Bayler Bay to

provide expanded capabilities. The remaining Philippine Islands have yet to be captured. The delay in completing Philippine operations combined with an American air strike on the home islands has changed planning and operational priorities at Imperial Headquarters.

**Rules of Engagement**

Game Length:

60 turns, 0100 May 15, 1943, to 1200 May 17, 1943.

Environment:

1. 1st hour of daylight: 0600
2. 1st hour of darkness: 1900
3. Prevailing winds (all sectors): From direction 4 to direction 1 (West to East)
4. Weather reports: provided to each player hourly plus a complete command wide report every 6 hours.

Map:

An original **Flattop**© map was modified, replacing the Solomon Island and New Guinea geography with the Philippine Island chain. A Cyberboard® version was prepared to aid in managing a large multi-player scenario, see Figure 1.

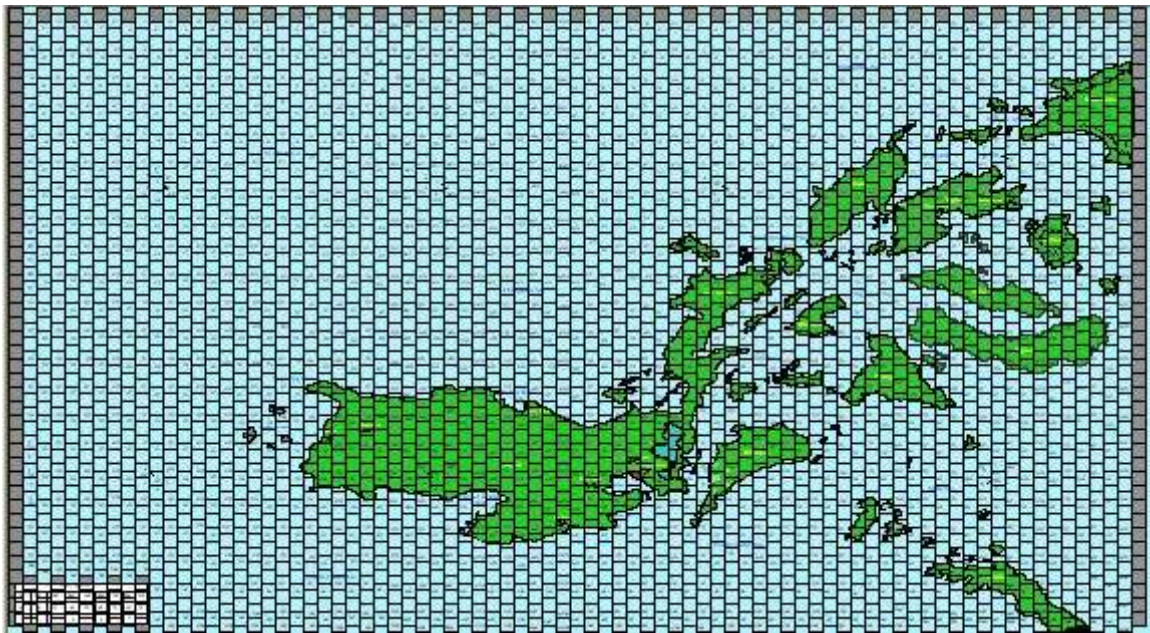


Figure 1. Flattop Map, Philippine Island Chain. Orientation: North is to the left.

**Players**

IJN		USN	
<b>CinC</b>	Mark McGilchrist	<b>CinC</b>	Scotty McPherson
<b>CC B</b>	Dave Bergman	<b>CC C</b>	Pat Dowd
<b>CC A</b>	Chris Geggus	<b>CC A</b>	Tom Hanover
<b>CC C</b>	Steve Etzelmueller (replaced Steve Broom at 1000 Day 1)	<b>CC B</b>	Nick Harmon

## Order of Battle

Table 1. Surface Forces

IJN		USN	
<b>CV (6)</b> <b>CVL (1)</b>	Akagi, Kaga, Hiryu, Soryu, Shokaku, Zui-kaku, Ryujo	<b>CV (8)</b> <b>CVL (0)</b>	Enterprise, Hornet, Saratoga, Wasp, Lexington, Yorktown, Essex, Bunker Hill
<b>BB (6)</b>	Haruna, Hiei, Kirishima, Kongo, Nagato, Yamishiro	<b>BB (8)</b>	N. Carolina, Washington, Idaho, Indiana, Colorado, Mississippi, Maryland, S. Dakota
<b>CA (13)</b>	Aoba, Ashigara, Atago, Chokai, Furutaka, Haguro, Kako, Kinugasa, Maya, Mikuma, Myoko, Suzuya, Takao	<b>CA (12)</b>	Chester, Chicago, Indianapolis, Louisville, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Pensacola, Portland, Quincy, San Francisco, Vincennes, Wichita
<b>CL (13)</b>	Isuzu, Jintsu, Kashii, Kashima, Katori, Kiso, Kitakami, Kuma, Natori, Oi, Tatsuta, Yubari, Yura	<b>CL (9)</b>	Atlanta, Detroit, Helena, Honolulu, Juneau, Nashville, Raleigh, San Juan, St Louis
<b>DD (35)</b>		<b>DD (50)</b>	
<b>AV (2)</b>	Chitose, Kamikawa Maru	<b>AV (2)</b>	Albermarle, Biscayne
<b>CAV (2)</b>	Chikuma, Tone	<b>CAV (0)</b>	
<b>APD (6)</b>		<b>APD (4)</b>	
<b>AP (3)</b>		<b>AP (4)</b>	
<b>SS (6)</b>		<b>SS (4)</b>	
<b>Troops (24)</b>		<b>Troops (21)</b>	
<b>Bases (10)</b>	Aparii (V V-30), Baler Field (VI JJ-28), Clark Field (VII A-34), Formosa (off bd 1 turn), Iba (VI MM-37), Neilson (VII E-33), Nichols (VII D-32), Okinawa (off bd 3 turns), Subic Bay (VII B-36), Tuguegarao (VI Y-30)	<b>Bases (5)</b>	Australia (off Bd 8 turns), Del Monte (off Bd 1 turn), Maasin Field (IV-EE-14), Ormac Field (IV Z-14), Tacloban (IV W-14)

Table 2. Aircraft Forces

IJN (532)		
Type	Ship Based	Land Based
<b>Fighter</b>	Zero (66)	George (36), Oscar (24), Rufe (15), Zero (94)
<b>Torpedo Bomber</b>	Jill (36), Kate (20)	Kate (12), Nell (36)
<b>Dive Bomber</b>	Judy (36), Val (20)	
<b>Recon</b>	Dave (4), Jake (4), Pete (9)	Emily (10), Mavis (8)
<b>Level Bomber</b>		Betty (48), Dinah (12), Peggy (30)

USN (511)		
Type	Ship Based	Land Based
<b>Fighter</b>	Hellcat F6F-3 (60), Corsair F4U (34)	P-38 (24), P-39 (6), P-40(12), Corsair F4U (48)
<b>Torpedo Bomber</b>	Avenger (65)	
<b>Dive Bomber</b>	Dauntless SBD (34), Helldiver SB2C (50)	
<b>Recon</b>	Catalina (6), Kingfisher (7)	Catalina (9), PBM-3 (6)
<b>Level Bomber</b>		B17 (36), B24 (36), B25 (66), Hudson (12)



*(Continued from page 11)*

some place for them to sleep. We have two extra inflatable air mattresses that were designed for temporary beds. They work quite nicely and store in a small space.

After remodeling the closet to accommodate shelving and a light, I next completed the hardwood floor and trim (what a chore!). Painting was the most laborious task. I sketched out the pattern by hand after painting the entire room a light tan color. I chose the same dark brown for the trim color, only in a satin finish.



Fig. 7 Clouds adorn the ceiling

I decided to paint clouds on the ceiling to give my War Room a distinct look and feeling of the outdoors. Other accent pieces include camo netting on top of my old vintage color computer (Fig. 6) along with a replica phone (Fig. 8) similar to those found in the Cabinet War Room (only this one is touch tone!). I plan on hanging camouflage curtains, once I get them sewn.



Fig. 8 War Room phone

The closet (Fig 9) now houses all of my games and various hobby stuff and frees up my shelves for memorabilia and books.



Fig. 9 Converted closet to game storage

I removed the old sliding closet doors and added two bi-fold doors (what a chore this was!). Of course when the bi-fold doors are closed, it's hard to find where the games are. I would not suggest having a hangover, in this room!

The shelves that I originally used to use to keep all of my games on now can hold some books and other items as illustrated in Fig. 10.

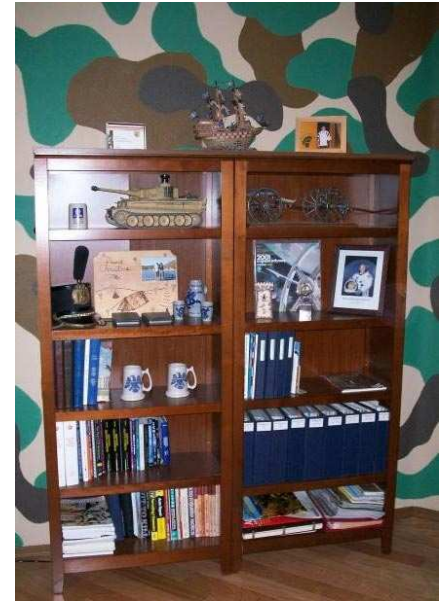


Fig. 10 Shelves for books and memorabilia

On Consimiworld's Social network, Eric Walters commented on my war room: "I like it. The camo pattern reminds me of command bunkers in South Korea when I was stationed there. Very classy. I have to show this to my wife. Maybe she'll let me have one/build one someday!"

★★